

**FACTORS THAT LEAD TO LOW READING LEVELS IN CHINYANJA AND ENGLISH LANGUAGES AT
THE MIDDLE BASIC LEVEL: A CASE OF GRADE 5 PUPILS LEARNING UNDER READ ON COURSE
(ROC) IN SELECTED BASIC SCHOOLS IN LUSAKA DISTRICT.**

BY

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**A dissertation submitted to the University of Zambia in partial fulfillment for the award
of the Degree of Master of Education in Literacy and Learning.**

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DECLARATION

I, Chibamba Chileshe Agnes, hereby solely declare that the work contained in this dissertation has been composed and written by me and that this work is as a result of my own individual effort. I further sincerely declare that this research has not been previously submitted for any academic award, and that all the work from other researchers has been acknowledged.

Signature:..... Date:.....

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APPROVAL

This dissertation by Chibamba Chileshe Agnes is approved as a fulfillment of the requirements for the award of the degree of Master of Education in Literacy and Learning of the University of Zambia.

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DEDICATION

I dedicate this piece of work to my children Chanda and Mwamba, my parents, brothers and sisters, and all my cousins for their encouragement and moral support. Special dedication goes to Fr Chisanga for buying a laptop for me which I used throughout my research.

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LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS AND ACRONYMS

DEBS – District Education Board Secretaries

ECZ - Examinations Council of Zambia

FGD – Focus Group Discussion

HQ – Head Quarters

ILA – Independent Learning Activity

MOE – Ministry of Education

NBTL – New Breakthrough To Literacy

PEO – Provincial Education Officer

PRP – Primary Reading Programme

ROC – Read On Course

ROCABS – Read On Course Activity Books

RRL – Rainbow Reading Ladder

SACMEQ – Southern African Consortium for Monitoring Educational Quality

SE – Special Education

SITE – Step In to English

TS – Teaching Station

UNZA – University of Zambia

ZATEC – Zambia Teacher Education Course

ZBEC – Zambia Basic Education Course

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ABSTRACT

The study's main purpose was to investigate the factors that contributed to low reading levels in both Chinyanja and English languages among Grade 5 pupils learning under ROC in selected basic schools in Lusaka District. The study employed qualitative data collection and analysis procedures to establish the reasons for low reading levels in Chinyanja and English languages among Grade 5 pupils learning under ROC ten years after PRP had been introduced. The researcher employed interviews and Focus Group Discussions to collect data from 68 respondents comprising of 4 school managers, 16 teachers, 8 parents and 40 pupils from the four selected basic schools. Data was also collected using observation methods and documents analysis. The instruments used were observation checklist, interview guide and focus group discussion guide.

The present review establishes clearly that the factors that seemed to have the greatest impact on the low reading levels among Grade 5 pupils learning under ROC are family, pupil, teacher and school related. Some of the factors cited include; lack of ROC materials and classroom libraries, lack of supervision of ROC teachers by relevant authorities, teacher and pupil transfers from regions with different language background, teachers and pupils language background which did not agree with the language of instruction – Chinyanja, new technology, home environment which did not support continued practice in reading and poor or inadequate training of teachers in literacy teaching.

A number of recommendations have come out of this study and the following are some of them: The MOE should secure the ROC Teaching and Learning Resources in schools for teachers to use when planning lessons. Teachers too, should be creative enough so that they can obtain the teaching and learning resources from the surrounding environment such and pamphlets from other disciplines. Above all, the MOE with support from other stakeholders (e. g Room to Read) should take up the challenge and develop the training programme for both school managers and teachers to facilitate effective implementation of ROC. School Managers too, should encourage ROC School-Based Training such as revitalization of Teacher Group Meetings. A form of 'parents' education' is required to prepare them to support their children's literacy development despite their economic and language background.

CHAPTER ONE: INTRODUCTION

1.0 General Introduction

This chapter presents the background information to the study and an overview of the Read On Course (ROC). The chapter also presents the statement of the problem, purpose of the study, objectives of the study, research question, significance of the study, delimitations of the study and the operational definitions of terms.

1.1 Background to the Study

Reading is a very important skill which does not only facilitate enjoyment but is also a necessity for learning in school. Reading makes way for a better understanding of one's own experiences and it can be an exciting voyage to self discovery (Panigrahi and Panda, 1996; Eyre, 2005; Mokatsi, 2005). Unfortunately, Several studies (Sharma, 1974; Williams, 1998; National Reading Committee, 1997; SACMEQ, 1995, 1998; Serpell and Kanyika, 1999; Nkamba and Kanyika, 1998) assessing the literacy levels among Zambian children showed that the reading levels in Zambia were exceptionally low. The definition of low reading levels that is adopted for this study is that it is a situation in which a learner is not reading up to the set standard in Zambian language and English. Such a definition therefore, suggests that learners require instruction in reading and writing in both Zambian language and English at middle Basic level in order to improve their reading standards. Without the ability to use reading and writing to engage in a variety of ways of thinking, learners will be incapable of communicating and surviving in this print based education system and society.

The concern about the low literacy levels among school going children in Zambia led to the introduction of a new national language policy according to which initial literacy instructions were to begin in a familiar local language before the introduction of the English language in Grade 2. The Primary Reading Programme (PRP) was an initiative which was introduced in 1999 to improve literacy levels among Zambian school children. PRP therefore was concerned with improving reading and writing levels in all primary schools through targeted interventions at every Grade level 1 to 7.

One of the early successes of the PRP was the production of New Breakthrough to Literacy (NBTL), a course and method that should help children to learn to read fluently and write easily as well as accurately in their local language. The NBTL course is followed by a course called Step In To English (SITE), a literacy course which is meant to enable learners to read and write fluently and accurately in English in Grade 2. With the PRP arrangement Learners should be building on skills developed in the Zambian language course in Grade 1 (MOE 2002). Alongside NBTL and SITE, there is Pathway (Oral English Course) 1 and 2, a teacher's guide for oral competence in English to equip learners with enough oral vocabulary in English in readiness for the Read On literacy Course which is offered in Grades 3 to 7 (MOE, 2002; MOE, 2001).

In the new curriculum reform, time to teach literacy courses had been increased to 60 minute periods while the teaching of Zambian language and English language still remained and continued following the Zambia Basic Education course (ZBEC) time allocation of 30 minute periods. This indicates that in addition to teaching of Literacy through the medium of Zambian language and English, ZBEC courses for Zambian language and English language at the middle basic level still remain and continue to support the learning of literacy in both languages, and teach other aspects of language and culture not contained in the literacy courses (MOE, 2001).

Overview of the Read On Course (ROC)

In literacy teaching, the focus is on teaching skills involved in the process of reading and writing because if children do not learn to read and write early enough or well enough in primary school, they cannot learn other subjects properly (Conley, 1992).

In line with this, Conley (1bid) observes that learning-to-read strategies offer students a broad foundation for learning, but not the specific kinds of strategies that are necessary for reading and writing in subjects such as mathematics, science, social studies or music. For this reason, therefore, one year of Literacy instruction in Zambian language, followed by one year of applying those skills in English, only establishes the basic reading skills, but

does not equip learners with enough reading and writing skills to make them write, and read on and on in middle Basic school.

The Read On Course (ROC), therefore, is one of the courses under PRP literacy programme which was developed with the mission to improve literacy levels among the Zambian school going children at the middle basic level. ROC is a single literacy handbook for Grades 3 to 7 designed to consolidate and support the reading skills acquired in Grades 1 and 2 in both Zambian language and English (MOE, 2002). The ideal situation is that, NBTL feeds into SITE and SITE feeds into ROC. This suggests that if pupils do not break through to literacy in their mother tongue in NBTL in the given one year, they have nothing to transfer to SITE and therefore nothing to build on in ROC. However, the path way 1 and 2 can also make pupils breakthrough to literacy in English (SITE and ROC) in terms of speaking and listening.

In a ROC classroom, the two languages (Zambian language and English) should be given equal attention so that they can complement each other. To achieve this, there is a literacy hour allocated for Grades 3 and 4 every day. The arrangement is that the teacher teaches each group twice in the Teaching Station (TS), and the fifth day, called day 5, is for revision or remedial work. Teachers are therefore, expected to alternate the two languages, Zambian language and English. For Grades 5 to 7, the teacher will teach each group once a week at the TS and the weakest group again for a half-hour in both Zambian language and English.

Following the ROC arrangement, one of the expectations of the Ministry of Education's Primary Reading Programme as outlined in the 2002 Read On literacy hand book is that, ROC is expected to teach pupils everything they should ever need to know about reading in both English and Zambian languages by the time they enter Grade 8. In support of this, the MOE (2002:5) states that "the aim of the ROC is to develop learners who are able to cope with the reading and writing requirements of grade 8 and who are functionally literate in a modern society." However, these expectations have proved unrealistic because since the inception of the (PRP), particularly the ROC in 2003, studies such as the Kanyika, (2003); MOE 2006, 2008); and Sampa, (2005) have provided the latest information on the reading

levels among Zambian children, and results have shown that, on the overall, reading achievement levels are still low and the mean performance is below the set standard in Zambian language and English.

The MOE (2006) for example, revealed that by province since the 1999 survey, the trends in mean performance indicated a constant and sustained performance between 1999 and 2006 performance in reading in English while minimal improvements in means were also recorded in all Zambian languages.

The mean performance in English reading at Grade 5 level indicated that reading levels between 1999 and 2006 were relatively the same with **33.2** percent in 1999, **33.4** percent in 2001, **33.9** percent in 2003 and **34.5** percent in 2006. In Zambian language, the mean performance was **37.79** percent in 2006 compared to **35.53** percent in 2003 (MOE, 2006) (see table 1 below).

Table 1: Trends for mean performance by Province

Province	English % mark				Zambian lang. % mark			
	1999	2001	2003	2006	1999	2001	2003	2006
Northern	32.2	31.3	32.89	32.81	39.1	38.7	33.79	40.35
Luapula	32.9	35.11	31.22	31.76	38.8	40.48	35.37	42.62
Southern	30.4	34.77	33.33	33.12	-	34.17	29.6	36.91
Eastern	30.8	33.34	31.8	33.66	-	34.95	31.51	36.83
C/Belt*	33.6	33.68	32.21	36.13	-	-	-	-
N/Western*	32	29.36	36.55	30.71	-	-	-	-
Central*	32.	32.26	35.54	34.55	-	-	-	-
Western	35	32.28	34.27	36.29	43.3	39.22	37.19	40.89
Lusaka*	38.5	37.43	37.55	40.32	-	-	23.94	30.00
Total Zambia	33.2	33.43	33.93	34.50	-	-	35.53	37.79

*There was no Zambian language testing

Source: Zambia's National Assessment Survey-2006

Kanyika et al (2008) also reported that generally by province, the mean performance at Grade 5 level in reading in English was **35.3** percent, and **39.4** percent in Zambian languages with minimal improvements. This showed stagnation in pupils' performance when compared to the 2006 survey results which were at **34.50** percent in English and **37.79** percent in Zambian languages.

These results, therefore, imply that on the whole, reading achievement levels are still low in the country across all provinces. The mean performance is below the criterion

percentage mark of **40.0** percent for minimum level of performance set for the nation in Zambian language and English (MOE, 2008).

However, there is empirical evidence about the low literacy levels in the country, but there has been no attempt to conduct studies on the factors that lead to the low literacy levels in reading in both Chinyanja and English languages at the middle Basic level since ROC was introduced. This study therefore wished to establish the factors that led to low reading levels in both Chinyanja and English languages among Grade 5 pupils in Lusaka district.

1.2 Statement of the problem

Given the massive investments in literacy development through the PRP, one of the expectations of the Ministry of Education's PRP as outlined in the 2002 ROC hand book is that, ROC is expected to raise the reading standards of pupils in both Zambian language and English at the middle Basic level up to the time they enter the upper Basic level. Contrary to this expectation, some studies (Kanyika, 2003; MOE, 2001, 2006, and 2008; Sampa, 2005 and Matafwali, 2010) have revealed that reading levels have remained low in both English and Zambian languages ten years after PRP had been introduced. The factors that led to the continued low reading levels in both Chinyanja and English languages among Grade 5 pupils learning under ROC in selected schools of Lusaka District were not known, hence this study.

1.3 Purpose of the Study

The purpose of this study was to find out the factors that led to low reading levels in both Chinyanja and English languages among Grade 5 pupils learning under ROC in selected basic schools of Lusaka District.

1.4 Objectives of the Study

Main Objective:

To determine the factors that led to low reading levels in Chinyanja and English languages among Grade 5 pupils learning under ROC in Lusaka District.

Specific objectives

The study was carried out to achieve the following specific objectives:

1. Determine the teachers' views on the time allocated in practice to the teaching of ROC in both Chinyanja and English languages.
2. To determine whether or not the teachers are following the daily routines for the teaching of ROC
3. To investigate the materials used to teach and learn under ROC in grade 5 classes in the selected schools.

1.5 Research Questions

Main research Question

What are the factors that lead to low reading levels in Chinyanja and English languages among Grade 5 pupils learning under ROC?

Research Sub- Questions

The study attempted to answer the following questions in relation to the objectives outlined above:

1. What are the teachers' views about the time allocated to the teaching of ROC in both Chinyanja and English languages?
2. How are the teachers following the daily routines for the teaching of ROC?
3. What are the materials used to teach and learn under ROC in grade 5 classes?

1.6 Significance of the Study

It is hoped that the findings of this study may provide useful information that will add knowledge to the already existing literature in the area of literacy in Zambia. In addition, the study may inspire other studies on the issue of the ROC classroom procedures in Basic schools. For the Teachers and school managers, the findings may help them reflect on the factors that lead to low reading levels at the middle basic level so that they can find ways and means of addressing them to achieve better reading achievement among their learners.

1.7 Delimitation

This study was only confined to four public basic schools of Lusaka District. Moreover, only Grade 5 pupils and teachers for Grade 5 pupils were included in the study.

1.8 Operational Definition of Terms

In this study, the following operational definitions of concepts and terms were as used:

Desirable reading level – when pupils are able to read materials of their Grade level with understanding.

Independent Learning Activities (ILA) – Tasks which the teacher gives to learners in groups which are not in the teaching station.

Languages in complementation – Languages that support each other or complement each other in supporting literacy development in learners such as Chinyanja and English under ROC.

Literacy - it is the development of reading and writing skills in both Zambian language and English.

Low Reading Levels – A situation in which a learner is not reading up to the set standard in Zambian language and English.

Lower Basic schools – Covers Grades 1 to 4 in Zambian school system.

Middle Basic level - covers Grades 5 to 7 in Zambian school system.

Minimum reading level – when pupils are just able to survive in the reading.

New Breakthrough to Literacy (NBTL) – refers to a literacy course that helps children to learn to read fluently and write easily as well as accurately in their local language in Grade1.

Pathway 1 and 2 – a course designed to teach oral English in Grades 1 and 2 respectively.

Primary Reading Programme – The literacy programme in Zambia which has three literacy courses that have been implemented in order to improve the reading and writing levels of children in schools so that they learn more effectively in all subjects across the curriculum

Reading achievement – Used synonymously with **reading levels**.

Step In To English literacy course (SITE) – a literacy course in English that builds on the Grade1 work using familiar materials and methods in English.

Teaching Station (TS) – This is a particular place in front of the classroom, near the chalkboard, where teaching of individual groups takes place.

The Read On course (ROC) – a literacy course for Grades 3 to 7 designed to consolidate and support the reading skills in grades 3 to 7 in both English and Zambian languages.

Upper Basic Level - Covers Grades 8 to 9 in the Zambian school system.

CHAPTER TWO: LITERATURE REVIEW

2.0 Introduction

The literature reviewed in this study is on the reading levels in African countries, reasons for low reading levels in SACMEQ countries, reading levels in Zambia before the introduction of ROC, and reading levels in Zambia after the introduction of ROC. A relatively large portion of literature on the study is locally based while a small volume especially those on the factors that lead to low reading levels among school going children are sourced from SACMEQ countries. Above all, studies on the study area done by other researchers have been referred to in literature review.

2.1 Reading levels in African countries

There have been several studies which have been done to establish reading levels in African countries including Zambia. Among them are the following: Williams (1992, 1994); SACMEQ (1995-2010); National Reading Committee (1997); Serpell and Kanyika (1999); UNESCO, 2004; Masalila (2008).

According to UNESCO (2005) Global Monitoring Report, a substantial number of children between the age of 15 and 24 in Sub-Saharan countries have not mastered basic reading skills and, the majority of pupils at primary school level are failing to read and write at the expected levels - especially where school systems are weak in terms of available resources.

Countries in sub-Saharan Africa had a median literacy rate of 83 per cent, as compared to 95 per cent in the Arab States and North Africa, 97 per cent in Latin America and the Caribbean, 98 per cent in East Asia and the Pacific and nearly 100 per cent in the countries in transition (Word Education Forum- 2000).

In this study, the widespread statistics on pupil reading levels were illustrated with reference to research results provided by the SACMEQ II Project (1995-2010). This survey included several countries, amongst others Lesotho, Swaziland, Seychelles, South Africa, Tanzania, Malawi, Namibia, Mozambique, Kenya, Mauritius, Zambia and Zimbabwe. The research assessed the reading performance of pupils in several ways. One of these was to classify pupils as to whether they were (a) above or below a “minimum reading level” (that

is, just able to survive at the next level of schooling), and (b) above or below a “desirable reading level” (that is, likely to do well at the next level of schooling) (Nguyen, Wu and Gillis, 2005).

In Kenya, for example, research findings revealed that 1 out of 3 (35 per cent) children, from a nationally representative sample of primary school pupils in Grade 6, failed to achieve even a minimum level of literacy in English-measured as the capacity to recognize basic linguistic building blocks such as the alphabet and simple words. Similarly, research results on reading levels in Zimbabwe revealed that more than half (54 per cent) of Grade 6 pupils could not achieve the minimum level of reading in English as expected (http://www.sn.apc.org/fred/quest/eng-lit_read.htm).

For Uganda, a study conducted by the national examinations board found that the reading achievement percentage of Grade 6 pupils at each reading stage was as follows: pre-reading 7.2 per cent, emergent-reading 18.3 per cent, basic-reading 21.8 per cent, reading for meaning 21.5 per cent, interrogative reading 14.8 per cent, inferential reading 8.2 per cent, analytical reading 5.3 per cent and 2.9 per cent for critical reading. This indicates that 98 per cent of Standard 6 primary school pupils failed to achieve the needed mastery in English language to comfortably pursue further education (http://www.sn.apc.org/fred/quest/eng-lit_read.htm).

Namibia too, has a similar scenario. Research results from a survey conducted by SACMEQ 2004 clearly demonstrated that there are serious gaps in the reading competencies of learners in upper primary phases. It was found that from all educational regions included in the study, the majority of learners did not reach the minimum mastery in reading English. At the overall national level for example, only 16.9 percent of learners reached the minimum level of mastery in reading literacy and a meager 6.7 percent reached the desirable level (Wikan, 2007).

Botswana is in the second group of two countries with close to 50 percent of Grade 6 pupils reaching minimum reading level: Botswana (55.8 percent) and Mauritius (55.8 percent). The reading levels therefore are still not pleasing (Masalila, 2008). It is interesting

to note that both Namibia and Botswana adopted a similar language policy and literacy programme to that of Zambia.

The educational systems in Kenya and Uganda share several key features. In both countries promoting English Literacy and Reading is one of the three components of the Quality Enhancement Simulation Training (QUEST) program. This Component is aimed at supporting initiatives meant to encourage children in lower grades to master the level of English literacy needed to be able to learn effectively in upper grades of Primary school where English is the language of Instruction, and to be able to take and pass national examinations written in English. However, studies indicate that although Kenya and Uganda have programmes which promote English Literacy and Reading (the Quest), the majority of pupils at primary schools are failing to achieve even a minimum level of English literacy.

The above situation suggests that Kenya and Uganda have a similar situation with Zambia, except that the QUEST programme is aimed at supporting English Literacy while the PRP is programme is aimed at supporting both English and Zambian languages through the ROC. However, there is debate going on for the QUEST programme as to whether English or Mother Tongue language should be the Language of Instruction at primary schools ([http:// www. Questafrica.org/English Literacy.aspx](http://www.Questafrica.org/English Literacy.aspx)).

Just like in Kenya and in Uganda, studies have indicated that although Zambia has a very rich literacy programme (PRP) which promotes reading in English and Zambian languages, the reading levels are still not pleasing (Kanyika, 2003; MOE, 2001, 2006, and 2008; Matafwali, 2010 and SACMEQ, 1995, 1998).

In 1998, the SACMEQ study which involved Grade 6 Zambian pupils revealed that between 70.7 percent and 77.6 percent had not reached the minimum reading levels and between 96.7percent and 98.75 percent had not reached the desirable levels. This situation was attributed to the language policy Zambia was following. English was being used to teach initial literacy from Grade one (Kanyika and Nkamba, 1998).

Following the SACMEQ II project results, Masalila (2008) concluded that the SACMEQ countries can be placed into three broad performance groups in terms of the percentage of Grade 6 pupils that have reached the minimum mastery level in reading. The first group of five countries has more than 60 percent of Grade 6 pupils reaching minimum reading level: Seychelles (70.9 percent), Kenya (68.4 percent), Tanzania (67.9 percent), Swaziland (64.0 percent), and Mozambique (62.0 percent). The second group of two countries has close to 50 percent of Grade 6 pupils reaching minimum reading level: Botswana (55.8 percent) and Mauritius (55.8 percent). The third group of seven countries has less than 40 percent of Grade 6 pupils reaching minimum reading level: Zanzibar (37.0 percent), South Africa (36.7 percent), Uganda (35.4 percent), Zambia (20.8 percent), Namibia (18.0 percent), Lesotho (16.2 percent), and Malawi (8.6 percent) (see table 2 below).

Table 2. Percentages of Grade 6 pupils reaching minimum and desirable reading levels of mastery by SACMEQ countries (SACMEQ II)

Country	Pupils Reaching	Pupils Reaching
	Minimum Level of Mastery	Desirable Level of Mastery
	%	%
Seychelles	70.9	42.8
Kenya	68.4	23.3
Tanzania	67.9	27.1
Swaziland	64.0	11.7
Mozambique	62.0	7.8
Mauritius	55.8	29.5
Botswana	55.8	15.7
South Africa	36.7	19.1
Uganda	35.4	10.0
Zambia	20.8	5.0
Namibia	18.0	7.0
Lesotho	16.2	2.0
Malawi	8.6	0.3

Source: Masalila-2008

From the table presented above, Masalila (2008) concluded that the percentage of Grade 6 pupils reaching minimum reading level of mastery ranges from a low of 8.6 percent in Malawi to a high of 70.9 percent in Seychelles, while the percentage of Grade 6 pupils

reaching desirable reading level of mastery range from a low of 0.3 per cent in Malawi to a high of 42.8 percent in Seychelles. Zambia is rated number four from the bottom with 20.8 per cent pupils reaching minimum reading level of mastery and, 5.0 per cent pupils reaching a desirable reading level of mastery. This simply indicates that the reading levels in Zambia are unbearable, hence this study.

According to Masalila (Ibid), the above results confirmed that in Southern and Eastern African countries there was a substantial number of children who did not reach what expert educators describe as “a minimum level of reading competence”. In particular, for Botswana, the SACMEQ research results have indicated that only a little over one half (56 percent) of Grade 6 pupils have reached a minimum level of reading, and that less than one fifth (16 percent) of Grade 6 pupils have reached a desirable level of reading.

2.2 Reasons for low reading levels in SACMEQ countries

Studies by (Fafunwa, 1975; MOE, 1996, 2006; William 1998; EFA 2000 Assessment, Mohanlal 2001; Inyamu, 2005; Craig, 2006; and IFLA/FAIFE world Report 2009) have shown that there are many different causes for the differences in reading achievement levels.

In many SACMEQ countries, there is empirical evidence that the use of a foreign language impacts negatively on the pupils’ performance. In Zambia for example, Williams (1993) conducted a study on reading levels at Grade 6 level before the introduction of PRP. The findings revealed that between 70.7 percent and 77.6 percent had not reached the minimum reading levels and between 96.7 percent and 98.75 percent had not reached the desirable levels. This situation was attributed to the language policy Zambia was following. English, at the time, was being used to teach initial literacy from Grade 1.

In support of Williams results, the MOE (1996:39) states that “The fact that initial reading skills are taught in and through a language unfamiliar to the majority of children is believed to be a major contributing factor to the backwardness in reading shown by many Zambian children”. It was therefore, hypothesized that when the government developed the literacy programme (PRP) according to which initial literacy instruction should begin in a familiar

language before the introduction of English in Grade 2, the reading levels would improve because this would lay the foundation for fluent literacy and improve educational standards in all Grades throughout primary and secondary schools. It was also hypothesized that pupils will be able to transfer the literacy skills learnt in the local familiar language in Grade 1 (NBTL) into English in Grade 2 (SITE). The SITE literacy course is largely concerned about making the transition from Zambian language into English. However, this was thought to not be enough to ensure that all learners continue to improve their literacy skills in both languages, hence the introduction of ROC. To the contrary, this has not been the case. Pupils are still not reading to the expected standards, hence the study.

The study conducted by Matafwali among the Grade 2 pupils also revealed that there is a strong correlation between familiarity of language of initial literacy instructions and the progress in reading words. For instance, when pupils are familiar with the language of initial literacy instructions, they make more progress in reading (Matafwali, 2010).

Fufanwa (1975) also echoes this statement when he reported that foreign language use as a medium of instruction constitutes barriers to effective teaching and learning. The use of a foreign language as medium of instruction distorts the accumulated vocal and verbal facility, thought process and cognitive equilibrium and this accounted for a good proportion of primary school dropouts in Nigeria and in India (Mohalnlal, 2001) reported in Inyamu et al (2005).

In the case of English, Nguyen et al (2005) also revealed that in countries where English has been the language of instruction in school, it has been repeatedly found that speaking English at home influences pupil achievement (Kulpoo, 1998; Rothman, 2002; OECD, 2004). In Botswana, English was spoken least in the Central North region. People who did not speak English were more likely to be from a low socio-economic background (Rothman, 2002; Rothman and McMillan, 2003; OECD, 2004).

Similarly, in Kenya, pupils who always spoke English (the language of the test) outside school were estimated to achieve better in reading (19.59, 4.20) than pupils who never spoke English outside school. Clearly, it helped a great deal if the pupils spoke the

language of the school (English) at home especially in their reading performance. Thuku further reported that, schools should therefore encourage this but at the same time the schools should maintain pupils' interest in Swahili, the other national language (<http://www.sn.apc.org/fred/quest/eng-litread.htm>).

The same research in the areas of family risk factors that contribute to children's reading difficulties revealed that some children enter primary school without a strong background in literacy. Therefore, the children most at risk of developing reading problems are those who begin school with low language skills, less phonemic awareness and letter knowledge, and less familiarity with literacy tasks and underlying purposes. Research has consistently demonstrates that the more children know about language literacy skills before they begin formal schooling, the better equipped children are to succeed in reading (<http://www.ncrel.org/sdrs/areas/issues/content/ntareas/reading/li100.htm>). In support of this, Matafwali (2010) confirmed that oral language is described as a potential predictor of literacy outcome in Grades 1 and 2, even if the effect of alphabetic knowledge, cognitive process and background variables are taken into account. In this case therefore, teachers need to use developmentally appropriate literacy practice that acknowledges children's development, interests, and literacy knowledge. In addition, teachers need to ensure that the learners are exposed to a literacy-rich environment so that they can express their background knowledge by interacting with the classroom environment. Such environments and experiences have a profound effect on children's literacy development by providing opportunities and encouragement for children to become successful readers. For those learners without a strong background, special attention should be given to them so that they can also catch up with the other pupils. Teachers need to listen to them to determine their interests, language skills, and areas of need so that they can also become good readers.

Dean (1997) also states that the language of home affects the pupils' performance in reading. According to Dean (1997), the experiences children have been offered in the years before school are closely related to their use of language, and what they have gained from any experience, will depend to a considerable extent on the way their parents have used the opportunities available and how this impacts on school work.

UNESCO (2000) revealed that in 1995, the SACMEQ study was sponsored by the Institute of Educational Planning to measure the reading ability of Grade 6 Zambian pupils. After the findings, the results showed that the factors which might have contributed to low reading levels among the learners included the following: short instructional time, Poverty in the homes, low teacher morale, too many untrained teachers, inadequate supply of educational materials and the use of a foreign language; English, in the school instead of their home language.

“Education For All (EFA) is essentially a global effort to make a giant step forward in improving basic education, based on the understanding that education is a fundamental human right” NIF (2007:17). The Zambian government has maintained that the EFA goals and targets as agreed upon in 1990 at the World Education Conference in Jomtein, Thailand, as strategic in the provision of basic education that should continue to guide its national policy. In this vein, The Zambian government is committed to the Universal Declaration of Human Rights of 1948 which include article 26 which states that “everyone has the right to education, which shall be free, at least in the elementary and fundamental stages. The government therefore, shall facilitate equitable access to education at all levels. This has also contributed to over enrolment in schools which is generally associated to low reading levels among school going children in Zambia (NIF, 2007).

In 2005, Nguyen, Wu and Gillis (2005) conducted a study on the factors influencing pupil achievement in Botswana. Their main interest was on the research findings on the reading levels by SACMEQ countries. The findings presented in Keitheile and Mokubung’s (2005) report on Botswana was also of particular interest.

After the study in Botswana, it was concluded that factors such as the age, absenteeism, repetition, gender, the language of instruction, pupil-teacher ratio, socio-economic status and the regularity of meals are the most important factors that influence pupil achievement among both developed and developing countries. It has also been found that families in urban areas tend to have higher possession index than those in rural areas (Keeves, 1972; World Bank, 2004; Nguyen, 2001, 2002; World Education Forum - 2000).

For Zambia, the latest literature from the FDNP Mid-term Review has revealed that there has been a drop in pupil/teacher ratios and one would hope that this trend would improve learner achievement. The drop in the pupil-teacher ratios was attributed to the teacher recruitment and deployment exercise that had been done during the period under review (2006-2010). The targets for the year 2007 were to have 98% of qualified teachers for both grades 1 to 9 and 10 to 12. The actual numbers of teachers recruited were 84% and 96% of the teachers had appropriate qualifications to teach grades 1 to 9 and 10 to 12 respectively (FNDP Mid-term Review, 2009).

Gender and age are the most frequently reported pupil related factors contributing to the pupil achievement in reading. Nguyen also reported that among countries involved in SACMEQ I, findings on the relationship between gender and pupil achievement have varied across countries. Milner, Chimombo, Banda and Mchikoma (2001) also reported that in Malawi, boys did better than girls in reading, while Kulpoo (1998) found that in Mauritius, girls tended to perform slightly better than boys in reading. Similarly, in Botswana, girls outperformed boys in both maths and reading, while the UNESCO report (1994) pointed that there was no gender difference in reading in Zimbabwe (Murimba et al., 1994; Keitheile and Mokubung, 2005).

Repetition has also been found to be a serious problem among SACMEQ countries (Milner et al., 2001). The past research has confirmed that there is a consistent correlation between repetition and pupil achievement (World Bank, 2004; Tran, 1994). In Botswana, research revealed that the repetition rate was relatively high. Thirty one per cent of pupils were reported to have repeated class at least once. In addition, research findings have indicated that pupils from rural or remote areas and from families with low socio-economic status are more likely to repeat (World Bank, 2004).

In Botswana, (Kulpoo, 1998; Milner, Milner, Chimombo, Banda and Mchikoma 2001; Griffin 2000) have reported that the extent to which parents assisted their children with homework varied across regions. Gaborone, an urban region, had the highest percentage of pupils who received assistance from their parents. These researches suggest that there is

strong correlation between parents' education, study aids at home, and financial position of the family and the reading achievements of the children (reported in Nguyen et al., 2005).

Just like Zambia, Botswana has a literacy programme called Break-Through Programme (BTP) which is based on the transitional bilingual model. This means the use of the child's first language (L1) as the medium of instruction at the initial stages (Standards 1–2) of education followed by a switch to a second language (L2). This indicates that for Botswana, pupils learn initial literacy in their first language for two years which is not the case with Zambia which has a shorter transition period. After two years of initial instruction in Setswana, a switch is made to English as the medium of instruction. Thereafter, English becomes the medium of instruction and Setswana is taught as a subject. This implies that Setswana is taught as a subject and at the same time used as the medium of instruction in the lower classes in public or government primary schools. Therefore, L1 in this model is used only as an interim means to master the L2 (<http://sunsite.lcm.edu.pl/untpdc/incubator/Africa>).

Botswana's highly successful Break-Through Programme, patterned after a model originating in England, allows groups of children to assist each other to become literate through exploration of a kit provided, thus doing away with rote memorization. The national special education programme, another modern addition, helps to assess the problems of children with learning disabilities; parents are also given assistance by being shown how to help their children (<http://sunsite.lcm.edu.pl/untpdc/incubator/Africa>).

It is not clear as to whether Botswana's Break – Through literacy programme continues to promote literacy in both English and Setswana languages from standard 3 onwards, as it is the case with Zambia which has the ROC from Grade 3 to 7. What is clear is that after the two years of initial instruction in Setswana, a switch is made to English as the medium of instruction. However, even then, in terms of reading performance, Botswana is better than Zambia which has the literacy programme (ROC) throughout the middle basic level (see table 2).

Learning resources have also been reported to have an impact on learning achievement. In Kenya for example, the SACMEQ report revealed that pupils who had most learning resources such as pencils, pens, exercise books, notebooks, erasers and rulers were estimated to achieve better in reading (-8.29, 1.43) than pupils who had hardly any learning materials. Theisen et al (1983:3) agreed when he said that ‘students who do not have their own texts to study and take home do not do as well as those who have’.

This shows that it is important for pupils to have these basic learning materials for improved achievement in reading and mathematics as well as for academic progress in general. Under the Free Primary Education (FPE) program in Kenya, the government provides these learning materials to pupils, which is a major step towards solving this problem. Before the introduction of FPE program in 2003 in Kenya, provision of these learning materials was left to parents (<http://www.sn.apc.org/fred/quest/eng-lit-read.htm>).

Some researchers have also concluded that in the African continent, the reading habit of children is waning. The cause of this has been traced to some notable factors like non-availability of reading materials (books). As Chouldhurg (1990:87) put it “the reading habit is best formed at a young impressionable age in school, but once formed, it can last one’s life.” Young children acquire reading literacy through a variety of activities and experiences within different contexts. According to Sharma (1976), to know about the world and its environment, a child helps himself through reading books, newspapers, and other magazines.

For the ROC programme in Zambia, the MOE ensured that materials were of high quality and relevant to the environment in which children lived. The people involved in the production of the ROC materials ensured that the materials provided were classified according to the level of the children. Both Course Materials and Reading Resources were provided. With all these efforts, one would expect ROC to revolutionize the reading standards of Zambia. Contrary to this expectation, the latest studies (MOE, 2003 – 2008 and Matafwali, 2010) have revealed that the reading levels have remained low, hence the study.

On the same issue of learning resources, Dean (1997) states that in making materials, we need to remember that the materials produced must be motivating to the learners, and not so easy that there is no challenge. In addition, a rather different use of materials is to use them to provide work matched to individual needs if they are to make the maximum progress in learning. Above all, the teacher needs to select materials which will enable individuals and groups to learn the part of the curriculum appropriate for their age and ability. Speaking in Dar- es- Salaam at the 6th Pan African Reading For All conference, the chairperson of the organizing committee, Prof Mugyabuso Mulokozi said that the lack of reading practices among the people was a hindrance to acquiring the needed skills to face the challenges in many African countries. In a related situation, the president for Pan African Reading For All, Dr Patricia Edwards, said there were more than 800 million people worldwide who cannot read and write. She said 64 per cent among those are women and children. Dr Edwards further stated that there are many factors leading to that state of affairs but among them are unfriendly environments and lack of strategic and progressive plans towards illiteracy alleviation in the world in general (<http://twitter.com/home?status=reading: Low Literacy Rates Worry Top Scholars> <http://allafrica.com/c/-3Us6i>).

Contrary to this, for Zambia, a number of innovative programmes have been initiated towards illiteracy alleviation. In order to raise the reading standards in Zambia, the MOE convened a National Reading Forum which led to the development of the PRP, a comprehensive seven – year plan of action aimed at improving literacy levels among Zambia’s school going children. One of the early successes of the PRP was the production of NBTL, a course and method that helps children to learn to read fluently and write easily as well as accurately in their local language. The NBTL course is followed by a course called SITE, a literacy course which enables learners to read and write fluently and accurately in English in Grade 2. The SITE course is followed by the ROC, a single literacy handbook for Grades 3 to 7 designed to consolidate and support the reading skills acquired in Grades 1 and 2 in both Zambian language and English (MOE, 2002).

In addition, In-service Training of Teachers is also provided by a network of educational colleges and universities throughout Zambia, with professional workshops, conferences

and seminars regularly held in order to keep teachers informed of developments in educational programmes. The question of unfriendly environment and lack of strategic and progressive plans towards illiteracy alleviation in Zambia therefore, does not arise, hence, the reason to carry out this study. According to the IFLA/FAIFE World Report (2009), lack of appreciation of the value of information and libraries in society has also contributed to pupils' low achievement. The causes of this may be found in the teacher - centred curriculum that has existed in schools from the earliest times, where pupils regard the teacher as the only source of information, and learning is by rote. The general low level of literacy and the resulting failure to develop any form of reading culture may have exacerbated this.

For Zambia, the concept of the teacher – centred curriculum, of course, does not arise. In practice, the notional core curriculum and the localized part should be integrated, preferably in each lesson. It is up to the school itself to develop the localized curriculum as long as it is within the recommended procedures (MOE, 2001). For the ROC, child or learner centredness in literacy teaching is recommended. Child centredness means that teachers should take the pupils in class as their main focus in whatever they do with those children. In the planning, preparation and delivery of lessons and, the learner characteristics should be the determining factor and not the teacher interests. For example, the teacher should consider the level of the pupils, pupils' background, and pupils' needs, classroom roles of the learner; level of participation or involvement of learners in classroom activities, and the choice of the teaching and learning materials. The issue of the curriculum therefore, does not contribute to low reading levels among pupils learning under ROC, hence the reason to conduct this study.

2.3 Reading levels in Zambia before the introduction of ROC

In Zambia, a number of researches were conducted before the Primary Reading Programme was introduced. These studies confirmed that the reading levels among primary school pupils were very poor Sharma (1973); Williams (1992, 1994); SACMEQ (1995, 1998); National Reading Committee (1997); The Primary Reading Baseline Study (1999); The National Assessment Exercise (1999).

One of the early researches on the low reading levels in Zambia was conducted by Sharma (1974). Sharma conducted a study on the reading and mathematics skills of Grade 3 Zambian children. His findings revealed that the reading and mathematics skills of Grade 3 children were poorly developed. Most of the children were failing to make inferences and draw conclusions in the expository domains. They also lacked skills in the documentary prose, such as the ability to locate and solve simple tasks (Sharma, 1993, 1994).

Kelly (2000) also reported that another study on the low literacy levels in Zambia was conducted in the 1990s. After the study, it was observed that the literacy levels among pupils in the lower school grades were exceptionally poor.

In 1991 and 1992, research commissioned by the Overseas *Development Agency*, a project funded by ODA commissioned a researcher, Eddie Williams, to look at the reading levels in English in primary schools in both Zambia and Malawi. William's study was designed to find out whether pupils in Zambia had an edge over their Malawian counterparts in English proficiency, as a result of starting with English as a medium of instruction from grade 1 compared to Malawians who start in grade 5 and use Chichewa from grades 1 to 4. Williams tested pupils at grades 3, 4 and 6 in rural schools (three for each) and urban schools (two for each country). After the study, the results showed that reading proficiency was not only very poor among Zambian pupils, but also showed no clear advantage for them over their Malawian counterparts in English. In fact, the Malawian pupils had higher mean scores at all grades although these results were not statistically significant (Williams, 1998).

In line with this, Sampa (2005) reported that Williams' report reflected that there was inadequate comprehension in English among 85 per cent of Grade 3 pupils, 84 per cent of Grade 4 pupils and 74 per cent of Grade 6 pupils. He also reported poor reading in Chinyanja, the local language. The Malawian pupils at all levels outperformed the Zambians in local language proficiency. Following the results, the scholar recommended that it was better for children to start with local language in grade one to improve the literacy rates.

Williams (1998) findings were further supported by the Southern African Consortium for Monitoring Educational Quality (SACMEQ) survey in (1995) and (1998) which confirmed the low literacy rate in Southern African countries which included Zambia.

In 1995, the study conducted by SACMEQ was at Grade 6 of primary education in English. It revealed that 25 per cent of the children tested were able to read at minimum levels, and only 3 per cent were able to read at a desirable level.

In 1998, the SACMEQ study involved Grade 6 Zambian pupils also revealed that between 70.7 percent and 77.6 percent had not reached the minimum reading levels and between 96.7percent and 98.75 percent had not reached the desirable levels (Kanyika and Nkamba, 1998). This situation was also attributed to language policy Zambia was following. English was being used to teach initial literacy from Grade one.

For Zambia alone, a study on reading achievement at each level among Grade 6 pupils by SACMEQ revealed the following results (see table 3 on the next page).

Table 3. Percentage of Grade 6 Zambian pupils at each level:

Level 1	Pre Reading	19.9 %
Level 2	Emergent Reading	27.8 %
Level 3	Basic Reading	20.9 %
Level 4	Reading for Meaning	14.2 %
Level 5	Interpretive Reading	7.9 %
Level 6	Inferential Reading	5.6 %
Level 7	Analytical Reading	2.9 %
Level 8	Critical Reading	0.9 %

(Adapted from SACMEQ - 2000 report).

From the findings, there were observable differences in performance in levels 1, 2, 3, 4 as compared to levels 5, 6, 7 and 8. Pupils performed better in the first four levels than in the last four. This simply indicates that as children progress from learning – to- read to reading- to- learn, their reading needs change dramatically. Hence, there is need to carry out this study so that certain strategies for teaching reading can be reviewed.

In 1999, the National Assessment Survey conducted by the Examinations Council of Zambia at Grade 5 also revealed that 25 per cent were reading at a minimum level and only 3 per cent were reading at a desirable level. In the same year, The PRP Baseline Reading Study conducted in 1999 confirmed the findings of other investigations that levels of literacy among Zambian children from Grades 1 to 6 were exceptionally low in both local languages and English, but in two respects.

The study goes further to show that the low levels of pupil literacy occur in all grades. It quantifies these low literacy levels by showing that in general terms the literacy levels of pupils in school are at least two years behind. For example, Children were reading at levels two grade levels below their own grade in English and three levels below their own level in Zambian language (Tambulukani, 2002; Sampa, 2003)

Following these research findings, the Zambian Ministry of Education (MOE) realized the importance of using local language as a medium for teaching initial literacy in the first grades and this found its way into the National Policy Document, 'Educating our Future' which states, "...all pupils will be given an opportunity to learn initial basic skills of reading and writing in a local language" MOE (1996:39). These recommendations also paved the way for the introduction of the Primary Reading Programme (PRP), with the mission to improve literacy levels among Zambian school children. Under PRP, there is NBTL, SITE and ROC (MOE, 2000; 2001; and 2002).

2.4 Reading levels in Zambia after the introduction of ROC

The MOE, (2001, 2006, and 2008); Kanyika, (2003); Sampa, (2003); and Matafwali, (2010) have provided some information on the reading levels among Zambian children under NBTL, SITE and ROC.

The MOE - 2006 National Assessment Survey for example, revealed that by province since the 1999 survey, the trends in mean performance indicate a constant and sustained performance between 1999 and 2006 performance in reading in English while improvements in mean were also recorded in all Zambian languages. The mean performance in English reading at Grade 5 level indicated that reading levels between 1999 and 2006 were relatively the same with 33.2 percent in 1999, 33.4 percent in 2001, 33.9 percent in 2003 and 34.5 percent in 2006. In Zambian language, the mean performance was 37.79 percent in 2006 compared to 35.53 percent in 2003 (MOE, 2006) refer to table 1 on page 4.

The MOE (2008) also reported that generally by province, the mean performance at Grade 5 level in reading in English was 35.3 percent, and 39.4 percent in Zambian languages with minimal improvements. This showed stagnation in pupils' performance when compared to the 2006 survey results which had 34.5 percent in English and 37.79 percent in Zambian languages (see table 4).

Table 4. Pupils mean performance by Province in 2008

Province	English			Zambian Language		
	Mean	N	SD	Mean	N	SD
Northern	37.5	810	17.1	48.2	848	22.01
Luapula	35.4	568	16.1	44.5	599	20.37
Southern	32.7	846	17.3	35.0	862	17.24
Eastern	34.2	694	15.7	34.7	699	11.25
Copperbelt*	36.8	956	17.9	-	-	-
N/Western*	38.2	576	18.2	-	-	-
Central	31.3	723	14.2	39.2	718	18.2
Western	35.8	589	17.9	42.8	612	20.54
Lusaka	35.9	805	19.6	31.2	781	9.272
National	35.3	6567	17.4	39.4	5119	16.98

*No Z/L test
MOE, 2008

These results therefore, imply that on the overall, reading achievement levels are still low in the country across all provinces. The mean performance is below the criterion percentage mark of **40.0** percent for minimum level of performance set for the nation in Zambian language and English. This simply indicates that the reading needs of pupils negatively change dramatically as they progress through NBTL course to SITE and eventually into ROC.

Matafwali also conducted a study on the role of oral language in the acquisition of early literacy skills in Zambian language and English among Grades 1 and 2. In her study, Matafwali revealed that despite massive investment in a rich literacy programmes in

Zambia, the reading levels of majority of Zambian children are regrettably still low especially in Lusaka Province (Matafwali, 2010). Matafwali further revealed that 50 percent of Grade 1 and 2 children involved in the study scored zero or only one word on the reading subtest, that is, Zambian language and English.

However, Matafwali's study was based on the Grades 1 and 2 (NBTL and SITE) and not on the Grades 3 to 7 (ROC). Therefore, it was not possible for her to determine how the successfully pupils were progressing through SITE into ROC. This is because reading levels were not formally assessed in ROC classrooms since she spent most of the time in Grades 1 and 2 classrooms, judging the role of oral language in the acquisition of early literacy skills in Zambian language and English. For this reason, it was also not possible for her to generalize the results to Grades 3 to 7. However, anecdotal evidence, and researches from other researchers have confirmed the low reading levels among Zambian children at the middle basic level.

2.4.1 The ROC programme

ROC is the third course under PRP. According to the MOE (2001, 2002, 2003), the ROC is a single literacy handbook for Grades 3 to 7 designed to consolidate and support the reading skills acquired in Grade 1 and 2 in both English and Zambian languages. The ideal situation is that, ROC builds on SITE and SITE builds on NBTL. This suggests that if pupils do not break through to literacy in their mother tongue in NBTL in the given one year, they have nothing to transfer to SITE and therefore nothing to build on under ROC for them to read on.

ROC programme therefore, is expected to teach pupils everything they should ever need to know about reading and writing in both Zambian language and English upon completion of middle Basic level. The aim of this reading course therefore, is to ensure that whatever level of literacy skills pupils possess when they start Grade 3, they will have developed these skills and become fluent readers and writers in both English and their Zambian languages by Grade 7 (MOE, 2001).

2.4.2 The ROC classroom

According to the MOE (2002), a typical ROC classroom is organized into four pace groups. Desks should be arranged so that the class can be divided into, and work as, four separate groups. Teachers should make sure that the learners' chairs or benches are positioned in such a way that all learners can face the front. The class should have:

i. **The desks and benches** - these should be allocated to each of the four pace groups

ii. **The Teaching Station** - this is established for teaching planned lessons in groups, and should be situated close to the board at the front of the class. There should be a mat or some improvised sitting material for learners to sit on, a teacher's chair and a table for keeping resources.

iii. **The class library** - a reading corner that contains any appropriate story books and other materials such as newspapers, magazines and stories written by learners and parents for learners to read. Learners should be reading from the class library during the lessons as an activity, or at their own free time.

vi. **Talking walls** - should be a resource that the teacher and learners use regularly. It contains educative and interactive materials such as maps, calendars, stories written by the learners, drawings and other art work by learners. Book reviews, news and community events, and if possible, actual objects such as items from the environment should be included to stimulate learner develop reading culture.

2.4.3 The ROC methodology

The ROC will follow the same methodology as the NBTL and SITE courses in that the teacher will continue to divide the class into four pace groups, and continue to see learners individually in their groups to ensure that they progress in reading (MOE, 2001).

This involves dividing the class in four pace groups and the teacher teaches only one group at a time. While the teacher attends to one group in the Teaching Station (TS), the other three groups are given activities at their level of performance, usually from the Read On

Course Activity Books (ROCABS) or Independent Learning Activities (ILA) from the Read On Literacy Hand Book pages 140 to 162. In some cases, the teacher created materials and activities are given. The TS lesson is appropriate to the level of the children and the activities come from pages 88 to 139 of the ROC literacy hand book. ROC therefore is Child centred – move child from known to unknown and there is Collaborative learning among children. The themes include cross cutting issues HIV/AIDS, SE, and Gender and life skills.

In order to equip the teachers with the sufficient subject matter knowledge about ROC literacy programme, the MOE in 2002, conducted the ROC training workshop for some selected basic school teachers throughout the country. The selected teachers were trained as National Trainers in PRP literacy programmes ideally to go and train the school Heads, Zone Insert Providers (ZIPs) and some class teachers at Province and District level. The Heads, ZIPs and teachers who were trained at province and District level further went on and trained fellow teachers in schools through school - based trainings (MOE, 2002). This is in line with what is outlined in the 2002 Read On literacy hand book that ‘Due to numbers of teachers involved, the Read On Course is being implemented mainly through school – based training of teachers’ (MOE, 2002 : 194).

2.4.4 The ROC literacy hour structure

Researches from a number of countries have shown that the amount of instructional time available for scholastic subjects is consistently related to how much children learn in school (Fordham, 1992). This therefore implies that, the more time teachers spend on teaching, the more learners will learn. In a ROC classroom, teachers face a lot of challenges because the two languages, English and Zambian language should be given equal attention so that they can complement each other (MOE 2000). This means that, in the first week, teachers will develop literacy skills in the Zambian language, and the following week in English.

To achieve this, there is a literacy hour allocated for Grades 3 and 4 every day as follows:

Starting Time (ST): 15 minutes

Teaching Station (TS1): 20 Minutes

(TS2): 20Minutes

Sharing Time (ST): 5minutes

The arrangement is that teachers teach in 4 groups and see one group at a time. The lesson starts in the Teaching Station (TS) with all the four groups, and the teacher gives activities to the groups he/she is not attending to in the TS on that day. After the teacher has taught the two groups in the TS, the lesson ends with sharing what has been learnt with all children. This makes the teaching of the courses very simple for teachers who handle more than one grade level. For Grades 3 and 4 lessons, the teacher will teach each group twice in the TS, and the fifth day, called day 5 is for revision and remedial work. Teachers therefore, are expected to alternate the two languages, Zambian language and English. For Grades 5 to 7, the teacher will teach each group once a week at the TS and the weakest group again for a half-hour in both Zambian language and English (see figures 1, 2, and 3) for weekly routines.

Figure 1. LITERACY HOUR WEEKLY ROUTINE FOR GRADES 3 AND 4

DAY 1		A	B			A	B	See D and C at the TS A and B work on ILA
Z/L	TS	*	C		TS	D	*	
DAY 2		*	B			A	*	See A and B at the TS C and D work on ILA
Z/L	TS	D	C		TS	D	C	
DAY 3		A	B			A	B	See D and C at the TS A and B work on ILA
E/L	TS	*	C		TS	D	*	
DAY 4		*	B			A	*	See A and B at the TS C and D work on ILA
E/L	TS	D	C		TS	D	C	
DAY 5		A	B			*	B	See your weakest two Groups at the TS
A/L	TS	*	C		TS	D	C	

*denote the groups that are in the TS while others are working on ILA (adapted from ROC teacher's guide p.78)

Figure 2. LITERACY HOUR WEEKLY ROUTINE FOR GRADES 5 TO 7

WEEK 1

DAY 1 (1 hour) Zambian language		A	*			A	B	See B and C at TS D and A work on ILA
	TS	D	C		TS	D	*	
DAY 2 (1 hour) Zambian language		A	B			*	B	See A and D at TS B and C work on ILA
	TS	*	C		TS	D	C	
DAY 3 (1/2- hour) Choose language		A	B			*	B	See your weakest two groups at TS
	TS	D	*		TS	D	C	

*denote the groups that are in the TS while others are working on ILA (adapted from ROC teacher's guide p.79)

Figure 3.

WEEK 2

DAY 1 (1 hour) English		*	B			A	*	See A and B at TS D and A work on ILA
	TS	D	C		TS	D	C	
DAY 2 (1 hour) English		A	B			A	B	See D and C at TS B and C work on ILA
	TS	*	C		TS	D	*	
DAY 3 (¹ /2- hour) Choose language		*	B			A	B	See your weakest two groups at TS
	TS	D	C		TS	D	*	

*denote the groups that are in the TS while others are working on ILA (adapted from ROC teacher’s guide p.79).

It is worth noting that the literacy courses introduced did not replace the learning of English and Zambian languages. They are additional subjects timetabled separately from English and Zambian languages (local languages).

2.4.5 The ROC Teaching and Learning materials

Learning does not take place in isolation. Schools, therefore, must ensure that all learners receive the learning materials they need in order to participate actively in and benefit from their education. This is because learning materials are key ingredients for learning. They organize the presentation of information, provide children with opportunities to use what they have learned, and in the case of tests and quizzes, learning materials help teachers assess the pupils’ learning (Fordham, 1992).

For the ROC programme, the materials that were produced were of high quality and for the provision of quality education through literacy that enables children to learn more effectively across the curriculum. This in turn would enable school leavers to benefit from the educational, social, economic and democratic opportunities and rights to which literacy helps to give access. The people involved in the production of materials ensured that materials were relevant to the environment in which children live (Dean, 1997). The ROC materials that the MOE provided were classified according to the following categories: **Course materials** and **reading resources** (MOE, 2002).

A. Course materials

The learning materials that are known to enhance pupil achievement significantly are course materials such as teachers' guides and text-books:

i. Teachers' Guide (TG) – Teachers' guides that are well integrated with text-books or other instructional materials can have a positive impact on pupil achievement. Effective guides therefore, include information both on what to teach and how to teach it, diagnostic tests, suggestions on classroom management practices and activities for classroom use. For the ROC, the TG provides guidelines to teachers on the ROC literacy methodology. There is only one literacy handbook for Grades 3 to 7. It contains the Teaching Station and Independent Group Activities for each level on the Rainbow Reading Ladder (RRL). These activities support reading and writing in both Zambian language and English, and have been graded according to the level of the RRL: Red, Yellow, Green, Orange and Blue (MOE, Ibid).

B. Work Books

i. Read On Course Activity Books (ROCABS) – Books such as these have the positive effect on pupils' achievement. These are pupils' books with activities for the teacher to give to children to do individually, in pairs or groups. The activities in the books are graded and given according to the level or pace of the child. The same ROCABS are used for Grades 3 to 7 pupils (MOE, 2002).

It is important to note that from Grades 3 to 7, it is more of guided and free writing about the children's own experiences. Once the reading and writing skills have been achieved in both Zambian languages and English then: Children will learn better in other subjects which will help them understand their environment by reading more books and writing about situations they see in their communities. This will enable most of the children to pass the Grade 7 examinations and there will be a need to create more places in Grades 8 to 9, eventually 10 to 12. This will lead to a literate nation in which people will read more books than before, not only functionally, but also for enjoyment. In support of this, Guthrie and

Anderson (1999) state that less successful reading experiences produce a lessened interest in voluntary reading, while successful reading experiences encourage a person to read.

Another essential instrument which helps the teachers assess learners in a ROC classroom is the RRL. The RRL lists stages learners go through as they learn to read and develop their reading skills. The instrument has five levels through which the learners progress to the next level. Different learners will go through the stages at different times, since some learners learn quicker than others, but they will all pass through every stage in the same order. The five levels are: red level, yellow level, green level, orange level and blue level which is the highest (MOE, 2002).

C. Reading resources

Successful literacy teaching requires many reading materials, so that learners can practice and consolidate their reading skills (MOE, 2002). Below is a list of reading resources that the MOE provided in schools upon introducing the ROC programme:

i. **The Rainbow Reading Library** - This form the main source of reading materials for the ROC classrooms.

It contains a series of the Rainbow readers which support the literacy courses for Grades 3 to 7. The literacy courses for reading were either adapted from English into Zambian languages or written as new stories by Zambian writers. However, these readers were supplied to all schools from 2003 and are graded from the simple to most difficult (Sampa, 2005).

ii. **HIV/AIDS supplementary readers**- According to the MOE (2002), these books were supplied in schools by UNICEF specifically to explore the issues surrounding HIV/AIDS through stories for pupils.

iii. **UNICEF supplementary readers**- These are storybooks distributed in schools for Grades 2 to 4 together with the workbooks.

Apart from these reading materials, teachers were advised to use whatever English and Zambian language course books used in the language lessons. They should look for

creative and demanding activities that could make pupils improve on the two languages. Textbooks for other subjects, dictionaries and the GRZ books that were supplied in the mid 1990s were also being used as resource for reading.

With all this good arrangement for ROC literacy hour weekly routine, methodology and the quality materials provided by the MOE, one would expect Zambia to improve in literacy levels. On the contrary, this has not been the case. The reading levels are still below the criterion percentage mark of **40.0** per cent for minimum level of performance set for the nation in Zambian language and English (MOE, 2006, 2008 and Kanyika, 2003). The study therefore wished to find out the causes for the persistent low reading levels.

However, previous National Assessment Surveys on learning achievement by the MOE (2006, 2008), at the middle basic level have associated the low achievement to pupil home background characteristics, and they claim that there is a very strong relationship between pupil home background characteristics and learning achievement in general. The studies therefore, just pose some speculations about the relationship between learning achievement among the school going children and the home background characteristics, but have not provided enough empirical evidence about the factors that lead to low reading levels in reading in both Chinyanja and English languages among Grade 5 pupils learning under ROC. The researcher therefore, did not find specific literature on the factors that lead to low reading levels in both Chinyanja and English languages among Grade 5 pupils learning under ROC.

In the researcher's view, there seems to be a gap on the factors that lead to low reading levels in both Chinyanja and English languages among Grade 5 pupils learning under ROC in selected schools of Lusaka District because there is no empirical evidence. The study therefore attempted to fill in the knowledge gap that existed at the time this study was conducted.

For all SACMEQ countries, Zambia inclusive, the low reading performance is associated with absenteeism, repetition, gender, pupil-teacher ratio, family socio-economic status, language of initial literacy and home language, limited choice and number of books available for pupils to read.

The next chapter describes the research methodology used in the study to answer the research questions which the study posed earlier.

CHAPTER THREE: RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

3.0 Introduction

Chapter 3 presents the research methodology. The following are the components covered in this chapter: the research design, research sites, target population, sample size, sampling procedures, and data collection procedures, research instruments, data analysis, and limitation.

3.1 Research Design

According to Kombo (2006), a case study seeks to describe a unit in detail, in context and holistically. This study therefore, was a case study because it gave in-depth information about factors that lead to low reading levels in both Chinyanja and English languages in the selected Basic schools in Lusaka District. The study predominantly used qualitative research methodology which involved getting opinions, views and feelings of parents, teachers, pupils and school managers about the factors that led to low reading levels through interviews and focus group discussions. It also involved lesson observation in selected ROC classrooms. The researcher used multiple sources of evidence to increase the validity and reliability of the findings.

3.2 Research Sites

This study was conducted in four Basic schools in Lusaka District of Zambia. Two schools came from densely populated areas and two from sparsely populated areas where it was assumed that the teachers were actively teaching using more English than Chinyanja language. These two areas were decided upon to get the representation from two communities extremes-advantaged and disadvantaged. All schools were government schools because ROC is only offered in government schools.

3.3 Target Population

According to McMillan (2001:169), “a population is a group of elements or causes, whether individuals, objects or events, that conform to specific criteria and to which we intend to generalize the results of research.” In this study therefore, all pupils in grade 5 and all teachers teaching ROC to Grade 5 pupils in the schools of Lusaka District constituted the population for the study.

School managers from all schools and parents of Grade 5 pupils in schools were also picked from the cross section, that is, from the upper, middle and lower classes.

3.4 Sample Size

Four primary schools teaching ROC were purposively selected to constitute the sample size of this study based on the assumption that all basic schools in Lusaka District are teaching ROC (<http://www.Documents/prp-final-site/prp2/prp-implementation.htm>.)

During the limited period available for the designated field work, limited samples of respondents from schools A, B, C and D were interviewed. Sixteen teachers were involved. Of these teachers, six (6) were from school A, five (5) from school B, two (2) from school C and three (3) from school D bringing the total to sixteen. All the four (4) managers at the selected schools and eight (8) parents from different areas who had their children in the four selected schools were also sampled. A total of forty (40) Grade 5 pupils were included in the sample. Ten (10) pupils were selected from each school. The total number of respondents therefore, was sixty eight (68). The distribution of all the respondents by gender in each school is tabulated in table 5.

Table 5. Distribution of Respondents in the Sample by gender

Basic Schools	Managers		Teachers		Pupils		Parents		Total
	Male	Female	Male	Female	Male	Female	Male	Female	
A	0	1	2	4	5	5	2	0	19
B	1	0	1	4	5	5	1	1	18
C	1	0	0	2	5	5	0	2	15
D	1	0	1	2	5	5	1	1	16
Total	3	1	4	12	20	20	4	4	68

Source: Field data (2011)

Table 5 shows that 54.4 per cent female respondents participated in the study while 45.6 male respondents participated in the study. There is a minimal difference between female respondents and male respondents.

3.5 Sampling Procedures

The researcher used purposive sampling to decide on the District. According to Kombo and Tromp (2006), purposive sampling is used when a specific characteristic is to be studied in-depth. In purposive sampling, researchers handpick the cases to be included in the sample on the basis of their judgment of their typicality or possession of a particular characteristic being sought. That is, they build up a sample that is satisfactory to their specific needs (Cohen, 1980).

Lusaka District was purposively chosen as the site for the study because it is officially defined as a Chinyanja speaking area according to Serpell in Kashoki, (1978). Purposive sampling was also used to select all 16 teachers who were teaching grade 5. Simple random sampling was used to come up with the 4 schools, 40 pupils and 8 parents. Four (4) managers of the four selected schools were purposively sampled based on the fact that the four schools were already identified and also based on convenience as where the managers were working and therefore, easy access to their schools.

The ten (10) pupils from each school were randomly sampled from Grade 5 classes and the sample included five females and five males. The lottery technique was used to select the ten (10) pupils from each school. All the names of Grade 5 pupils at each school were written on pieces of papers and put in the box which was vigorously shaken before the picking exercise. Two teachers from each school were asked to pick five (5) papers each from the box, one at a time to come up with forty (40) names of pupils for the sample.

3.6 Research Instruments

In order to get views from respondents, the researcher used three instruments: interview guide for parents, teachers and managers in selected schools, focus group discussions guide for Grade 5 pupils, and the lesson observation checklist for the observation of ROC lessons.

Focus Group Discussion Guide

Focus Group Discussion Guide (FGDG) were used to collect and clarify the views of Grade 5 pupils on the ROC, and challenges they encountered when reading Chinyanja and

English languages. This is because FGD can save time and money compared to individual interviews and, helps to bring out respondents immediate reactions and ideas (www.evalues.bcu.ac.uk/tutorial/problem). Four FGD were held and facilitated by the researcher at four different schools. 10 pupils from each school participated in the group discussion. Each FGD lasted for an average of 20minutes. A common recorder was used for conducting focus group discussions. The FGDs were recorded and later transcribed as verbatim transcript.

Observation Checklist

The observation checklist was used to collect data on how the Grade 5 teachers were teaching ROC in order to confirm what they claimed in the interviews.

The researcher physically went into the classrooms to observe the ROC lessons. An observation checklist was used to gauge various teaching aspects such as; time allocated to teach each language, content coverage, use of the library and availability of teaching and learning materials. According to Kombo and Tromp (2006), during structured observations, the focus is on a small number of specific behavioral patterns, and only those appearing on pre-determined observation checklist are recorded.

Documents review also supplied data on how much time was allocated to the two languages at planning stage. The study therefore, used multiple sources of inquiry to address the issue efficiently.

3.7 Data Collection Procedures

Field data was collected within the maximum of two months, that is, February and March 2011.

3.7.1 Primary data

Interviews

Primary data was obtained through having in-depth interviews with the parents, teachers and school managers to get detailed information. The researcher also conducted focus group discussions with Grade 5 pupils on the factors that led to low reading levels in order

to collect more data from as a triangulation strategy. The researcher prepared questions in advance (see interview guide in appendices) to guide and keep the interview in focus. The researcher recorded all the responses from the respondents. Where the explanations were not clear, the researcher asked additional questions for clarification.

Observations

The researcher physically went into the classrooms to observe the ROC lessons in order to gauge various teaching aspects such as; time allocated to teach each language, content coverage, use of the library and availability of teaching and learning materials. Documents review also supplied data on how much time was allocated to the two languages at planning stage. The study therefore, used multiple sources of inquiry to address the issue efficiently.

3.7.2 Secondary data

The bulk of secondary data was obtained from UNZA. The study further made use of publications and information available on the internet in different formal organization in Zambia which included the SACMEQ reports, and MOE. The ideal was to collect information from as many resources as possible, and then be able to counter check the information so as to further validate the findings.

3.8 Data analysis

Qualitative data analysis

The study utilized qualitative data analysis method. Data collected from the interviews and focus groups was analyzed through thematic approach. Raw data which was similar or related in some way was put under one theme in readiness for analysis and discussion. This was done by arranging the collected data according to the themes in relation to the research questions. Categories and themes of data were identified and analyzed in order to establish trends and propositions for easy interpretation. Interpretation and analysis was used to establish emerging themes and conclusions.

3.9 Limitations

The respondents may not have given accurate information in the area of following the daily routines and the use of the proper methods to teach ROC. In order to mitigate this limitation, the researcher employed lesson observation and documents review strategies in order to come up with correct data. However, some participants refused to be observed due to some reasons best known to them. Above all, the findings of this study will be confined to this study- limitation of lack of generalizability.

Nevertheless, the aim was therefore not to attempt to generalize the findings to the general population because the study was done in one particular area of the country, that is, Lusaka Urban District and only in four schools. Nevertheless, the findings could form a basis for further research in the area of the ROC programme.

3.10 Ethical considerations

In order to obtain the needed data from the participants, introductory letters from the University of Zambia (UNZA) and the District Education Boards Secretary (DEBS) were presented to the school managers in sampled schools. The researcher was later taken around the Grade 5 classrooms to meet the Grade 5 teachers and pupils. After a short briefing with the manager and the teachers on the purpose of the visit, the researcher was given permission to carry out the research work. After the necessary permission was sought and granted, data were collected in all schools during January and February of 2011. Permission was also sought to take pictures of pupils from their parents through the school managers.

Summary

In this chapter, the nature of the study necessitated the use of a case study and qualitative design as the approach to evaluate the factors that lead to low reading levels in Zambian basic schools after the introduction of ROC. The chapter has also discussed the instruments which were used to collect and analyze data. It was also indicated that data was analyzed thematically by virtue of grouping related data under one or similar themes. The next chapter therefore presents the findings of the research.

CHAPTER FOUR: PRESENTATION OF FINDINGS

4.0 Introduction

This chapter presents the findings of the study. The data presented were obtained through in-depth interviews, focus group discussions, lesson observations and documents review. This study brought out a number of issues from participants which were related to the research questions. Nevertheless, thematic approach has been used in reporting the findings

4.1 Factors that led to low reading levels in both Chinyanja and English languages among Grade 5 pupils learning under ROC.

According to the findings of the study, all the respondents indicated that there were several reasons that led to low reading levels among the pupils learning under ROC. Amongst which were: over enrolment, pupil/teacher ratio resulting in no remediation, inadequate teaching and learning materials and the library facilities, school location, teacher and pupil attitudes towards reading, absenteeism, parent and teacher/pupil transfers, teachers and pupils language background, home environment, language of instruction, lack of internal and external monitoring, lack of the reading culture in most homes, and lack of teacher training in ROC methodology.

4.1.1 School managers' views

On the question of the factors that led to low reading levels in Chinyanja and English languages among Grade 5 pupils learning under ROC, one school manager at school B said:

“The issue of Education For All (EFA) attainment has resulted into over enrolment which is a challenge for us school managers because demand for school places is just too high. Due to over enrolment in schools, there is high pupil-teacher ratio which is negatively affecting the pupils’ reading performance because it is difficult to conduct remedial lessons with weaker pupils. Over enrolment and high pupil/teacher ratio therefore, are the major complaints from our teachers.”

Another school manager at school A, blaming over enrollment on the concept of Millennium Development Goals (MDGs), was quick to mention that:

“The issue of MDGs attainment by 2015 has spoiled the whole system. There are too many pupils in classes and therefore, teachers find it difficult to attend to individual pupils in 1 hour. For example, there are six (6) Grade 5 classes at my school and, in each class there are about 90 to 100 pupils. With this scenario, it is difficult for the teachers to handle the classes properly without enough teaching and learning materials.”

Commenting on the issue of teaching and learning materials, one prominent feature which came out from the school managers was the issue of inadequacy of teaching and learning materials in schools. One school manager for example, said:

“Since 2003 when the ROC was introduced in schools, teaching and learning materials have never been replaced. This poses a danger to the future of the programme because since the donors pulled out of the programme, there are signs of the programme becoming unsustainable since the MOE has never supplied any new materials to schools.”

Commenting on the reading culture, all school managers complained that the pupils’ reading progress is at times hindered at home because of lack of the reading practices or habits at homes. One school manager for example, echoed:

“Most of the homes where these pupils come from lack the reading culture. As a result, some of the pupils attending school are not encouraged to read because they come from the environments where people do not appreciate the importance of school. I therefore, blame the parents for not inculcating the reading practices into their children.”

Similarly, another school manager who seemed to agree with the views expressed above had this to say:

“Pupils who fail to read English and Chinyanja languages come from poor households and, they are most likely to face reading difficulties than those who come from the high class because they are not exposed to a variety of reading materials.”

4.1.2 Teachers' views.

On the issue of teaching and learning materials, some teachers complained that it was difficult to teach a class of 90 pupils without adequate teaching and learning materials. One Grade 5 teacher for example, said:

“We are six at this school and none of us has the ROC TG to use when planning for lessons. All the teachers who were trained to teach ROC in 2003 got transferred and, they all went away with the ROC TGs leaving the school with nothing. This has made our work difficult and it has affected the pupils' reading performance”

Similarly, another teacher from school B said that he has never used any ROC TG from the time he was transferred to that school; instead, he just used anything he thought could help him get information for use in the planning of the lessons such as any language course books.

Another striking factor which came out from all the teachers was about the TG_S and the ROCABS. Teachers strongly condemned the use of the same TG_S and ROCABS from Grade 3 to 7. All the teachers from the four schools said that this was boring and cumbersome, and that it contributed to pupils' low performance in reading.

One teacher from school C further said:

“The worst thing about literacy materials is that the Chinyanja which is used in these books is difficult for both teachers and pupils to understand. This is because most of the words in these books are in Chichewa and not in Chinyanja.”

At school 'D', teachers said that pupils were reading English better compared to Chinyanja because the school had enough readers in English compared to Chinyanja. However, teachers further explained that even if they had more Chinyanja readers, pupils would still choose to read readers written in English. This implied that pupils had negative attitude towards Chinyanja language.

Responses from the teachers about pupils' different backgrounds indicated that some of the pupils were failing to read fluently in Chinyanja because of the different languages that they were exposed to at their homes. One teacher said:

“Some pupils do not speak Chinyanja at home because their parents are not Nyanja speakers. As a result, children are forced to speak and read the language spoken by their parents at home and, when they go out of the home they speak Chinyanja and English languages with friends. This brings confusion on the part of the child.”

Another teacher from school B said that she was Tonga by tribe, and therefore, she was not familiar with Chinyanja and, most of the times she depended on the children when explaining certain words in Chinyanja. The teacher further said that because of her not being competent in Chinyanja, she preferred to teach literacy in English language than in Chinyanja for it was easier for her.

Absenteeism was also mentioned by teachers as one of the factors that affected the pupils reading performance. Most of the teachers interviewed indicated that pupils who were frequently absent from school lacked reading skills compared to those who were never absent. In addition, most of the pupils who were failing to read and write properly are those who did not breakthrough in NBTL and SITE. One teacher who associated absenteeism to the school location said:

“Pupils in schools which are located in densely populated areas tend to be the most affected when it comes to absenteeism and this is one of the causes for low reading levels because they are constantly missing lessons.”

The ROC methodology is one of the PRP methodologies used by teachers to teach literacy in Chinyanja and English languages at the middle basic level. After the interviews with teachers, it was discovered that some teachers who handled Grade 5 classes were not conversant with the ROC methodologies. One teacher said:

“I have never attended any training in ROC since I started work, instead, I just depend on the little knowledge that I acquired from my fellow teachers who were also trained through school – based trainings.”

The teacher further complained about lack of internal and external monitoring. She said that from the time she was posted to that school in 2008, she has never been observed by either internal or external monitors. She further explained that monitoring, be it internal or external is good because it encourages proper planning and adoption of improved teaching practices. The teacher therefore said that being one of the teachers handling the special literacy programme (ROC), which is designed to improve the reading levels of pupils in the country, she needed to be observed at least once in a while so that she could improve her teaching practices. She further said that lack of monitoring leads to some teachers relaxing in their teaching and this affects the pupils' reading performance.

4.1.3 Pupils' views

The views gathered through Focus Group Discussion with Pupils indicated that transfers were the major contributing factors to low reading levels among Grade 5 pupils learning under ROC especially in Chinyanja. For example, one pupil said:

“I do not know how to read Chinyanja because I am Bemba by tribe and I started Grade 1 in Solwezi where I was being taught how to read in Kikaonde but, when I reached Grade 3, my father got transferred to Mongu and I had no choice but to start learning how to read in Silozi and English languages. When I was about to enter Grade 5 my father was again transferred to Lusaka and the teacher was teaching in Chinyanja and English languages.”

This indicated that some pupils did not start school from Lusaka District and this affected their reading performances especially in Chinyanja. On the same question, another pupil from school A said:

“I do not know how to read Chinyanja because my mother is Lunda and, she does not want me to read Chinyanja books at home, instead she forces me to read English and Lunda story books. However, when I am at school and in the company of my friends, I use English and Chinyanja.”

On the contrary, one pupil from school C said that he learnt how to read Chinyanja and English languages because her parents encouraged him to read both Chinyanja and English stories at home. However, the problem was that there were fewer story books written in Chinyanja language at home than in English.

4.1.4 Parents' views

The views gathered through interviews with parents indicated that pupils were failing to read in English because the teachers taught them in Chinyanja language. Some parents totally condemned the teaching of Chinyanja in schools. One parent for example, said:

“There is no need for teachers to teach the pupils in Chinyanja because they already learnt that from home and in Grade 1, and ‘moreover it will not take them anywhere’. Therefore, all that the pupils need is to learn in English language. Spending time learning in Chinyanja reduces the time available for learning an official or national language which is a requirement for any job.”

On the same issue, another parent contradicted the views expressed above and pointed out that some parents have the negative attitude towards the use of the local languages and that the problem was not with children. This has affected the reading performance of the pupils in Chinyanja because some children are not encouraged to read local language books at home.

Commenting on the issue of teaching in Chinyanja language, another parent explained:

“During my time, we were learning how to read and write in a local language during the first Grades, and we were able to read and write as early as in Grade 1. Therefore, I see no reason why the teachers should not teach our children in Chinyanja language. The only problem here which has contributed to poor performance in reading is the lack of the reading culture in both the parents and their children.”

However, the parent blamed the government for not providing enough library facilities for school going children to use in order to improve on their reading practices.

Technology was also mentioned by some parents as one of the hindrance to the reading culture in school going children. One parent said:

“Technology has contributed to low reading levels among our children in terms of internet connectivity which is available both on computer and mobile phones. Instead of reading books, our children spend most of their time communicating with friends on face book. If they are not on internet, they are watching Television. How do you expect them to read?”

The parent further said that TV and internet are not bad. However, some parents do not control the way their children use these facilities. Others have even put these facilities in their children’s bedrooms in the name of being liberal thereby cutting further time on reading practice.

4.2 Teachers’ views about the time allocated in practice to the teaching of ROC in both languages.

Table 6. Teachers’ views about the time allocated to the teaching of ROC.

	Teachers views about time allocated to	
	ROC	
Basic Schools	Adequate	Inadequate
A	0	6
B	0	5
C	1	1
D	1	2
Total	2	14

Source Field data (2011)

The table shows that the majority of teacher respondents said that the time allocated to the teaching of ROC was inadequate. Out of the sixteen respondents who were interviewed in the four schools, only two respondents said that the two and half- hours allocated in practice to the teaching of ROC in both Chinyanja and English languages was adequate. Fourteen respondents said that time was not adequate and they cited some challenges such as; the large numbers of pupils in classes, limited teaching and learning materials, and the learning pace of the pupils who did not breakthrough in NBTL and SITE as the reason for inadequate time.

On the contrary, one teacher from school D said that the time was adequate but, the only problem was that most of the teachers lacked the knowledge about ROC. As a result they wasted a lot of time teaching literacy at the expense of other subjects. It was also noted that teachers tended to spend more time that is allocated on one component of the literacy hour, namely, Starting Time, Teaching Station, and Sharing Time.

She further stated that the only way the pupils can learn how to read and write is when the teachers try to manage the time properly because each component has its own contribution to literacy development. However, if this was the case, one would expect the pupils' reading levels in English and Chinyanja languages to rise because more time was being spent on teaching literacy. But this was not the case since the reading levels are still low.

4.3 Teachers position in following of ROC daily routines

All the sixteen respondents were quick to mention that they were following the ROC daily routines. However, interviews were followed by classroom observation in order to confirm what was earlier said by the same teachers. Only two teachers per school were observed due to limited time bringing the total number to eight (8).

All the teachers observed followed the weekly daily routines for ROC, that is, **starting time, teaching station 1 and 2, and sharing time**. However, out of the eight teachers observed, only two teachers from school D managed to finish the lessons within the specified time. The other six (6) went beyond the time allocated to the teaching of ROC.

Above all, the lesson content in both Chinyanja and English languages in six (6) lessons in schools A, B and C did not match the learners' ability. Teachers attributed this to the lack of the teaching and learning materials such as the ROC TG_s, ROCABS and the library books to use when planning.

Out of the eight (8) classrooms visited, only two classrooms at school 'D' showed evidence of established class libraries with some reading materials. Even then, there were no permanent shelves and, English books were fewer than the Chinyanja books. In trying to find out why there were few books in English language, respondents highlighted that teachers carry the English books to their homes to be used by their children. Figures 4 and 5 below show pictures of the class library at school D.

Figure 4: School D class Library



Figure 5.



Source: field data

The two pictures of classroom libraries at school D show that there are enough story books for pupils to read in order to improve their reading skills. Therefore, the researcher did not see any reason why reading should be a problem at this school unless there were other reasons, hence this study.

The researcher also reviewed some documents such as, the weekly focus, lesson plans and class registers. Documents review is a good activity because it provides the chance to countercheck the information given by respondents. After the review of the documents, results showed that most of the teachers were not planning the lessons according to the ROC methodology. The failure to plan the lessons by teachers was attributed to the lack of teaching and learning materials. However, only one teacher at school D exhibited the knowledge about the planning of the ROC lesson.

4.4 Materials used to teach and learn ROC.

On the question as to what type of the ROC teaching and learning materials available in schools, all the teachers interviewed mentioned all the materials as follows: The ROC TG_S, ROCABS, Word Bank, Rainbow Readers, Supplementary Readers, Dictionaries and Language

Course Books. Table 7 shows the distribution of the availability of the ROC teaching and learning materials found in schools.

Table7. Availability of teaching and learning materials per school

MATERIALS	SCHOOLS			
	A	B	C	D
ROC TG_s	1	0	2	2
ROCABS	45	36	56	59
R.READERS	61	54	73	84
WORD BANKS	0	0	0	0
S. READERS	17	19	30	26
DICTIONARIES	4	2	4	8
L. C. BOOKS	2	4	3	3

Source: Field data

The findings in table 7 show that none of the Grade 5 teachers at school B had the ROC TG. The situation was unbelievable and this forced the researcher to leave the only ROC TG she had with the school. School A has six Grade 5 teachers and, had only one ROC TG. Schools C and D had two ROC TG_s each. Out of the forty ROCABS (6 titles each) which were supplied in 2003 in all schools, school A had forty five while school B had thirty six. School C had fifty six while school D had fifty nine. For the Rainbow Readers, school A had sixty one, school B had fifty four, school C had seventy five and school D had eighty four.

The findings also revealed that school A had only seventeen Supplementary Readers while school B had nineteen, and school C had thirty while school D had twenty six. The study also revealed that schools A and B had four and two Dictionaries respectively, while schools C and D had four

and eight Dictionaries respectively. About the Language Course Books, school A had two, school B had four, school C had three and school D also had three.

The findings also showed that all schools did not have word banks in the classrooms. The word bank is made out of meal sacks and has 26 pockets (one for each letter of the alphabet) used to store flash cards for Zambian language and English language respectively. Teachers attributed the lack of word banks in classrooms to the lack of teacher training in ROC methodology. All the teachers said that they did not know how to make the word banks. The teachers further said that they did not even know how to use them.

CHAPTER FIVE: DISCUSSION OF FINDINGS

5.0 Introduction

This chapter presents the discussion of the key findings based on the factors that led to low reading level in Chinyanja and English languages among Grade 5 pupils learning under ROC. The findings will be discussed in the sequence they have been presented in chapter four.

5.1 Factors that led to low reading levels in both Chinyanja and English languages among Grade 5 pupils learning under ROC.

The following discussion is on the findings from the school managers, teachers, pupils and parents. The researcher used thematic approach to integrate the discussion of findings from the various sources into one coherent whole.

According to the findings of the study, the majority of respondents from the four groups (see table 5) indicated that there were several reasons that lead to low reading levels in Chinyanja and English languages among pupils learning under ROC, amongst which were: over enrolment, teacher-pupil ratio, inadequate teaching and learning materials and the library facilities, absenteeism, parents transfers, teacher and pupil transfers, school location, teachers and pupils attitudes towards reading Chinyanja, teachers and pupils language background, home environment, language of instruction, lack of external monitoring, lack of the reading culture in most homes, and lack of teacher trainings in ROC.

The above findings seem to suggest that all the respondents were aware of the low reading levels among the pupils and the factors that lead to low reading levels as they were able to mention some of them. In order to be focused in the discussion, the findings have been grouped into variables thought to influence Grade 5 pupils' reading achievement in Chinyanja and English languages into **family, pupil, teacher** and **school** related factors.

5.1.1 Family Related Factors

The findings of this study have revealed that the parents' transfers, home language and literacy environment, school location and lack of the reading culture in most homes are the

most frequently reported family related factors contributing to the low reading levels in both Chinyanja and English languages among Grade 5 pupils learning under ROC.

(a) Regular parents' transfers

The findings of the study show that regular parents' transfers have an effect on the pupils' reading performance. Some views expressed by pupils through the Focus Group Discussions (FGDs) showed that most of the pupils did not start school from Lusaka. The most notable thing was that out of the 40 pupils who were involved in the discussion, only 11 claimed to have started Grade 1 from Lusaka District while 29 of them were found to have started Grade 1 from other towns where community language was different and, later they were transferred to Lusaka where the local language is Chinyanja. Pupils' transfers therefore, were associated to the low reading achievement in Chinyanja as compared to English language.

While it may be agreed with the respondents' view that regular parent transfers affect the reading performance of pupils in Chinyanja as compared to English language, it can also be argued that if regular parent transfers affected the pupils' reading achievements in Chinyanja negatively compared to English language, then the pupils' reading levels would have been higher in English as compared to Chinyanja. However, this has not been the case following the expressions given in the MOE (2006) report which states that generally by province, there was a minimal improvement in reading levels in local languages as compared to English (See table 1).

Therefore, the researcher tends to differ with the arguments raised above by respondents because it is assumed that once the children breakthrough in any Zambian language at Grade 1, they can read any Zambian language they may be exposed to at the higher Grade although they may not understand it. However, the problem of parents' transfers goes beyond the parents' powers because transfers are inevitable as long as someone remains in formal employment. This problem also calls for the need to make parents aware of the negative effect transfers have on their children's reading achievement so that they can put some interventions in place to help the children out.

(b) Teachers and pupils language background

The research in the area of family risk factors that contribute to children's reading difficulties have demonstrated that the more children know about language literacy before they begin formal schooling, the better equipped children are to succeed in reading (<http://www.ncrel.org/sdrs/areas/issues/content/ntareas/reading/li100.htm>). This suggested that a strong literacy background and the languages spoken at home influence the pupils reading performance.

A similar view was expressed in interviews with teachers and the FGDs with pupils. The findings revealed that most of the pupils and teachers were not conversant with Chinyanja because they were exposed to different types of languages due to different language backgrounds.

The two points given above have established that the family is the starting point of the child's education as it lays the foundation for the child's successes in reading. However, these points apply more to NBTL and not to ROC because by the time the children enter Grade 3 they should have already broken through to basic literacy. However, we can assume that if the teachers and pupils are exposed to different language backgrounds at home, then they should exhibit some measure of competence in different languages including Chinyanja because they are all transparent language with a similar sound system.

(c) Parents attitudes towards Chinyanja

The findings revealed that out of the eight parents who were interviewed, six of them preferred their children to be taught in English language to Chinyanja, while only two preferred both. This implied that despite the teaching of Chinyanja being emphasized in schools, some of the parents have negative attitudes towards it.

This further suggests that parents felt that acquiring English language was more prestigious than acquiring Chinyanja because this would make their children find descent jobs. Some parents therefore, thought that English was the most ideal language to use both in schools and homes.

This attitude affected the reading performance of the pupils in Chinyanja because some children were not encouraged to read Chinyanja language books at home. Such findings tend to suggest that English is the best language for pupils to learn at school and not Chinyanja language. This was contrary to what is outlined in the MOE (2002) ROC hand book that the two languages, Chinyanja and English should be given equal attention in schools and at home because they complement each other.

A similar view was expressed in interviews by some parents who believed that acquiring English will permit their children to enter into higher-paid forms of employment and increases opportunities and access to tertiary education. Parents believed that when people are in good employment, generally they have a higher socio-economic status and enjoy better health and employment prospects. The findings have therefore, shown that many parents send their children to schools mainly for economic gains and status in society. Because of this, there was increased demand from some parents for their children to continue learning in English language rather than in Chinyanja. This expression also means that there is negative attitude towards NBTL because of its use of the local Zambian language. By extension, it also means that the Chinyanja component in the ROC programmes suffers from the same negative attitude. This view is contrary to the established theory by many researches which state that, in fact, initial literacy in the first language like Chinyanja would support quicker and more effective development of reading skills in the second language like English. The misconception on the part of those respondents who opposed the use of Chinyanja could be due to lack of knowledge on it.

On the other hand, two parents supported the use of Chinyanja language both at school and at home. When asked whether their children were able to read English and Chinyanja languages, they both claimed that they were reading. It is possible that the two parents who claimed that their children were able to read the two languages could have said so due to a positive home attitude and environment for reading.

(d) Poor reading culture and home environment

Reading culture and home environment factors were also associated with pupils reading achievement in Chinyanja and English languages among Grade 5 pupils learning under

ROC. While some efforts in improving reading standards among school going children are being observed by the MOE and schools officials, there is little monitoring or none at all by the parents or guardians.

As the data testifies, pupils' reading progress is at times hindered at home because of lack of reading practices. Parents and guardians in homes were not fully involved in supporting or encouraging their children to read. These views are in agreement with Professor Mulokozi's views (6th Pan African Reading For All) that the lack of reading practices among the people was a hindrance to acquiring the needed skills to face the challenges in many African countries.

These views were in agreement with Lungwangwa's (2007) arguments at the official opening of the stakeholders' workshop to discuss the reading culture in Zambia at Zamcom Educational Trust, where he pointed out that most of our people read very little. The only time some make an attempt to read is only when they have an examination to write or their job requires them to read certain materials ([http// www. moe. gov.zm /inde. php#content](http://www.moe.gov.zm/inde.php#content)).

Technology was also mentioned by some parents as one of the hindrance to the reading culture in school going children. Some parents felt that TV and Internet contributes to low reading levels among the pupils.

Technology literacy skills are not bad since they open up opportunities for active participation in the emerging "knowledge societies". In knowledge societies, with new technologies and the growth of the internet as a public network, the work of modern businesses, governments, health systems and institutions is made possible because of the capacity to generate written information and communicate it quickly to others, no matter where they are in the world. For example, there are programmes known as Face book and Skype on the internet through which people can get to communicate with friends they have not seen in a long time once they subscribe to the programmes. Therefore, access to technology and other electronic equipment such as TV, computers and video games is not bad because it is joyous and makes life easier especially in terms of communication. However, some children are abusing these facilities. Instead of spending time on internet

browsing on educational web sites, some children spend most of their time communicating with friends on face book and playing computer games. If they are not on internet, they are watching Television (TV) and usually this would take time off reading or other school related tasks.

The findings seem to suggest that children have so much to do with internet and TV because these facilities have proved to be more interesting to them than reading books which sometimes may contain difficult language. The researcher therefore agrees with the respondents views that some parents do not control the way their children use their TV and internet facilities. Instead, they tend to encourage them by putting these facilities in their bedrooms in the name of being liberal.

The general picture coming from these findings is that most of the homes lacked a reading culture. Therefore, most of the pupils attending school were not encouraged to read because they came from the environments where people did not appreciate the importance of reading. In addition, access to new technology and other electronic equipment such as TV, computers and video games have contributed to pupils' low reading performance in schools.

One conclusion we can draw from these findings is that the parents or guardians are not helping the teachers to inculcate the reading practices into their children. However, even if we seem to put the blame on the parents and guardians, there may be need to acknowledge that some parents or guardians collaborate with teachers by reinforcing literacy programmes at home such as the ROC. This was shown by the few parents who said that they were helping their children to read at home and they were discouraging them to use internet. The implication of the lack of the reading practices in homes is that the children are not exposed to many reading materials and, they lack practice and enthusiasm about reading.

(e) Family status and school location.

The findings of the study have shown that some pupils failed to read English and Chinyanja because of the location of the school they came from. Such views suggest that pupils who came from poor households are most likely to face reading difficulties than those who came from the high income households.

These findings support the World Bank (2004) report which states that pupils from rural or remote areas and from families with low socio-economic status are more likely to repeat school years or grades because they cannot read.

One would agree with the respondents who argued that pupils from poor households face more difficulties in reading as compared to those from the high class. This is because after the interviews with the parents, it seemed that pupils from schools A and B which were located in densely populated areas belonged to poor households and, these were the most disadvantaged because their parents were not fully involved in supporting them. What came out clearly in the findings is that some parents of these children spend most of their time on the streets selling tomatoes and vegetables and hence, they have no time to assist their children to read because they always get back home late.

The conclusion from these findings is that, the majority of respondents from the four groups (see table 5) seem to agree that there is a relationship between family related factors and the reading levels of Grade 5 pupils learning under ROC. This is in agreement with some researches which suggest that there is strong correlation between parents' education, study aids at home, and financial position of the family and the reading achievements of the children (Kulpoo, 1998; Milner, Milner, Chimombo, Banda and Mchikoma 2001; Griffin 2000 reported in Nguyen et al., 2005).

5.1.2 Pupil Related Factors

(a) Absenteeism

Keithelle and Mokubung's (2005) findings on Botswana corroborate with the findings in this research which revealed that absenteeism is one of the most frequently reported pupil related factors contributing to the pupils' low achievement in reading.

The findings of this study have further shown that pupils who were regular absentees come from schools which are located in densely populated areas.

The views expressed above agree with the conclusion drawn from this research that pupils who were regular absentees come from schools which are located in densely populated areas, and, obviously, they received fewer hours of instruction and therefore were highly likely to achieve at a lower level in reading in Chinyanja and English as compared to their counterparts.

The implication of being absent from school is that the affected pupils tend to miss lessons and their performance is negatively affected.

(b) Pupil transfers

Pupil transfers also seem to have an impact on the pupils' reading achievement. The views gathered through Focus Group Discussion with pupils seem to suggest that there is a relationship between transfers and pupils' achievement in reading especially in Chinyanja language. The majority of respondents from schools C and D which are located in sparsely populated areas claimed that they could not read Chinyanja properly because they came on transfer and, that they were not learning Chinyanja where they came from.

The situation described above seems to suggest that pupil transfers vary in the way they impact on pupil achievement across schools. The assumption is that pupils in schools which are located in sparsely populated areas were more subjected to transfers than the pupils in the schools which are located in densely populated areas.

However, it is not known as to whether the pupil's reading achievement in Chinyanja in schools located in densely populated areas is high as compared to that of the pupils from sparsely populated areas, due to the fact that the pupils in schools located in densely populated areas were less subjected to transfers. There are also doubts whether pupils in the sparsely populated areas are good readers of English as compared to Chinyanja since the transfers are only associated to reading Chinyanja language. Therefore, these are two areas that need further research because they are beyond the scope of this study.

In conclusion, it can be argued that pupil transfers issue may not be a justifiable factor for ROC because, ROC begins in Grade 3 to 7 and by the time pupils are in Grade 3, they should have already broken through to literacy in Chinyanja and English languages where ever they were. Therefore, these are some of the issues that need consideration whenever we are talking about the factors that affect pupils' reading achievement under ROC.

(c) Pupils attitudes towards Chinyanja and reading Chinyanja

In a ROC classroom, teachers face a lot of challenges because the two languages, English and Zambian language should be given equal attention so that they can complement each other (MOE 2000). When asked about the language the pupils enjoyed learning literacy in, the majority of respondents said that they preferred learning literacy in English to Chinyanja. What comes out in the findings is that some pupils have a negative attitude towards Chinyanja language such that even when they have fewer Chinyanja readers at home, they still chose to read the readers written in English and their parents do not even mind. This situation seems to suggest that as long as the parents do not encourage their children to read and speak Chinyanja at home, many children would not develop the positive attitude towards Chinyanja. Nevertheless, the blame cannot be centred on parents alone but on teachers too because some teachers also have negative attitudes towards Chinyanja.

The implication of having the negative attitude towards Chinyanja is that pupils may never learn to read Chinyanja unless they develop a positive attitude. On the other hand, this will frustrate the whole aim of the ROC programme which is designed to consolidate and support the reading skills acquired in Grades 1 and 2 in both Zambian language and English.

In conclusion, we would say that the findings have highlighted a number of pupil related factors that contribute to low reading levels, amongst which are: Absenteeism, pupil transfers and pupils' negative attitude towards reading in Chinyanja.

5.1.3 Teacher Related Factors

(a) Lack of teacher training (pre and in-service) in ROC

The quality of teaching plays a critical role in pupil's reading achievement. When teachers lack sufficient subject matter knowledge to teach pupils adequately in one particular subject area, pupils are disadvantaged (EFA, 1992).

Views expressed above seem to agree with the findings in this study that lack of teacher training (pre and in-service) in ROC resulted in the low reading levels among the pupils learning under ROC.

The findings seem to suggest that most of the teachers of ROC have not attended any ROC training; instead they just depended on the knowledge from their fellow teachers who had an idea about ROC. This suggests that teachers failed to follow the ROC routines to teach literacy because they lacked sufficient knowledge and experience about ROC due to lack of training.

While the researcher may agree with the views expressed above that lack of teacher training in ROC resulted in pupils' low reading levels, it is important to note that the ROC TG is a unique book in that it contains the lesson procedures that explain exactly what the teachers and learners should be doing for the entire hour-long lesson. The argument here is that teachers can easily read and apply these procedures in class even without undergoing any ROC training. This situation therefore seems to suggest that teachers' negative attitudes towards the ROC might have influenced pupil's reading achievement.

The findings further suggest that lack of the pedagogical proficiency in ROC for some teachers and lack of teachers' proficiency in Chinyanja might have resulted in the low reading levels among the Grade 5 pupils.

Such findings go further to conclude that some schools no longer conducted school – based training and Teachers' – Groups meetings under SPRINT (School Programme of In-service for the Term) which is intended to up-date the teachers with the new procedures. This was in sharp contrast to what is outlined in the 2002 Read On literacy hand book that 'Due to

numbers of teachers involved at the middle basic level, the ROC is being implemented mainly through school – based training and Teachers’-Group meetings (MOE, 2002 : 194).

The implication of not conducting school – based trainings is that teachers are not up-dated with the new procedures and hence, some tend to lack pedagogical proficiency and this ends up affecting the pupils’ reading performance in both English and Chinyanja languages.

In conclusion, the relationship between pupil reading achievement and teacher characteristics such as training in ROC methodology and experience seems to suggest that teachers’ subject knowledge and qualifications influence pupil’s reading achievement.

5.1.4 School Related Factors

School conditions such as lack of the ROC materials, lack of classroom libraries and reading resources, the use of the same TG_s and ROCABS from Grade 3 to 7, over enrolment making group work difficult, high pupil/teacher ratio, lack of supervision of ROC teachers by relevant authorities (both at school level or DEBS offices) contributed to low reading levels among Grade 5 pupils learning under ROC.

(a) Lack of the ROC materials

EFA (1992) advises that learning resources are key ingredients for learning. Learning materials that are known to enhance pupil achievement significantly are text books and teachers’ guides.

On the same issue of learning resources, Dean (1997) states that in designing and producing teaching and learning materials; we need to remember that the materials produced must be motivating to the learners and, not so easy that there is no challenge.

Findings from other studies in Kenya have also revealed that pupils who had most learning resources such as pencils, pens, exercise books, notebooks, erasers and rulers were estimated to achieve better in reading (-8.29, 1.43) than pupils who had hardly any learning materials (http://www.sn.apc.org/fred/quest/eng-lit_read.htm).

UNESCO - 2004 has also revealed that a substantial number of children between the age of 15 and 24 in Sub-Saharan countries have not mastered basic reading skills and, the majority of pupils at primary schools are failing to read and write at the expected levels - especially where school systems are weak in terms of available school resources.

The views stated in the paragraphs above seem to suggest that teaching and learning materials play a vital role in the improvement of education. However, findings from interviews and lesson observation in this study show that all schools did not have enough ROC teaching and learning materials as expected (see table 7).

The findings seem to suggest that due to lack of teaching and learning materials in some schools, there was a mismatch between the learner's ability and the lesson content in both Chinyanja and English languages. This is contrary to Dean (1997) who states that if children are to learn well the tasks they are asked to undertake and those they choose for themselves must match their learning needs, being difficult enough to challenge but within their capacity.

The findings also suggest that some teachers failed to plan suitable learning activities for the pupils because they did not have enough text books and other instructional materials to use.

While the researcher may agree with the views above, it can still be argued that non-availability of resources in schools cannot be used as an excuse for teachers' failure to teach ROC. Schools will always have some materials, and if they are inadequate, teachers can either obtain or generate them from the local community through improvisation. This can happen if teachers are motivated enough to teach the curriculum. Therefore, rather than putting the blame on the MOE for not constantly supplying teaching and learning materials in schools, teachers too, should be creative enough so that they can be able to obtain the teaching and learning resources from the surrounding environment such as posters, magazines, newspapers, and pamphlets from other disciplines. The researcher therefore tends to differ with the teachers' view that the MOE is obliged to provide all the teaching and learning materials for them to use when planning the lessons. Instead, teachers should

make sure that they use materials obtained from many sources as this will expose pupils to a range of reading materials.

Analyzing this data according to schools, the findings have shown that schools that are located in densely populated areas reported severe shortage of teaching and learning materials as compared to those which are located in sparsely populated areas. It was not very clear as to whether the schools in densely populated areas received fewer teaching and learning materials as opposed to their counterparts. However, during the time the teachers were being trained in ROC, the people involved in the production and supplying of materials ensured that materials were adequate and relevant to the environment in which children lived. The ROC materials that were provided were classified according to the following categories: Course materials and reading resources (see table 7) (MOE, 2002).

On the other hand, the distribution of teaching and learning materials to schools depended on the size of the school (MOE, 2002). The findings therefore hypothesized that the shortage of teaching and learning materials in schools located in densely populated areas was due to theft and vandalism.

(b) Lack of classroom libraries and reading resources

On the question of reading materials, the findings have shown that some schools in Lusaka District never established class libraries except school D (see figures 4 and 5). This was in sharp contrast to the Ministry of Education's PRP expectations outlined in the 2002 ROC hand book which states that, all ROC classrooms should have class libraries.

The findings suggest that the absence of libraries in ROC classrooms impacted negatively on the pupils' reading achievement because they were not exposed to a range of reading materials. This is in agreement with Sharma (1976) who states that to know about the world and its environment, a child helps himself through reading books, newspapers, and other magazines.

The implication of not having libraries in classrooms is that pupils are not exposed to a range of reading materials and opportunities to practice reading and this may affect their

reading performances. Chouldhurg (1990:87) states that “the reading habit is best formed at a young impressionable age in school, but once formed, it can last one’s life. Young children acquire reading skills through a variety of activities and experiences within different contexts.”

In addition, if pupils are denied an opportunity to read a variety of books, they may lose the enthusiasm to read. This assumption is supported by Guthrie and Anderson (1999) who state that less successful reading experiences produce a lessened interest in voluntary reading, while successful reading experiences encourage a person to read. However, there were doubts as to whether pupils at school D which has established classroom libraries were performing well in reading or not. This is because the presence of libraries in classrooms is just a part of the desired situation and does not entail ROC doing fine and pupils’ performing better in reading. This is another area which requires further research as it is beyond the scope of this study.

(c) Over enrolment

The findings have shown that over enrolment was another factor which contributed to low reading levels among the pupils learning under ROC. According to the respondents’ views the findings seem to suggest that over enrolment contributed to high pupil/teacher ratio which in turn denied the pupils’ chance for remediation and collaborative practice.

The findings further suggest that due to over enrolment in some schools, it was not possible for teachers to teach reading effectively in ROC classes which were overcrowded with limited resources. Some respondents associated the issues of over enrolment to MDG_s. This seems to suggest that there is ignorance on the part of some respondents about the concept of MDG_s. Some respondents seem not to know the exact meaning of MDGs. The argument here is that there is no direct link between the MDG_s and the size of the class. The concept of MDGs is one of the frameworks within which the policy environment that guides education in Zambia has been developed. The Zambian government is committed to the Universal Declaration of Human Rights of 1948 which include article 26 which states that “everyone has the right to education, which shall be free, at least in the elementary and

fundamental stages, and which shall be directed to the full development of the human personality and to the strengthening of respect for human rights and fundamental freedoms” (NIF, 2007: 20).

However, some respondents said that over enrolment is as a result of the attainment of the EFA goals. This situation suggests that the rapid growth in enrollment is primarily attributed to the Zambian policy of free education at Grades 1 to 7.

The conclusion drawn from these findings is that access to schooling and equity issues seem to be more urgent concerns of our educational policy at the expense of quality. The argument here is that sending children to school is good but if the government has just committed itself to strive to achieve EFA in terms of increased enrollments through the provision of additional educational facilities or schools and the expansion of the existing ones only as it is stated in NIF, 2007, and not to think about what kind of education children will receive, then it is irrelevant.

(d) Pupil/Teacher ratio

For Zambia, the latest literature from the FDNP Mid-term Review has revealed that there has been a drop in pupil/teacher ratios. The drop in the pupil-teacher ratios was attributed to the teacher recruitment and deployment exercise that had been done during the period under review (2006-2010). The targets for the year 2007 were to have 98% of qualified teachers for both grades 1 to 9 and 10 to 12. The actual numbers of teachers recruited were 84% and 96% of the teachers needed and these had appropriate qualifications to teach grades 1 to 9 and 10 to 12 respectively (FNNDP Mid-term Review, 2009).

Views expressed in the above statement seem to suggest that the pupil/teacher ratios have been reduced and this signified smaller classes, which should enable teachers to pay more attention to individual pupils and thus contributing to improving their reading performance.

While the researcher may agree with the views expressed above, it is important to note that the views expressed by respondents tend to differ with the literature from the National Policy which has shown the strides that the MOE has been making in reducing the

pupil/teacher ratios. This is because the majority of respondents agreed that due to over enrolment in schools; there was a problem of high pupil/teacher ratio which contributed to low reading levels among pupils.

The views expressed by respondents seem to agree with the general picture which can be drawn from the findings of this research that high pupil/teacher ratio signified big classes and, pupils therefore had fewer contact hours with teachers because schools had double and triple shifts of classes and even, quadruple sessions which consequently led to shortened teaching-learning hours. It is important to note, however, that while the MOE is striving to reduce the pupil/teacher ratios, the findings of this study show that the pupil/teacher ratios in schools are still high.

(e) Lack of supervision of ROC teachers by relevant authorities

The findings of the study have shown that lack of supervision and monitoring of ROC teachers by relevant authorities have negatively affected the pupils' reading performances. The general picture drawn from the findings of this research is that the level of both internal and external monitoring taking place in schools seems to be unsatisfactory: it appeared to be unplanned, irregular and ad hoc. Furthermore, there were no written schedules; no Ministry records of visits made in schools and infrequent attempts to monitor the teachers for the past two years by monitors who themselves have had no training in ROC.

The findings of the study further suggest that the ROC programme was slowly dying a natural death because there was reduction in monitoring by relevant authorities (both at school level or DEBS offices). This seems to affect the reading levels of Grade 5 pupils as it adversely affects teacher motivation and encourages teachers' absenteeism. The MOE therefore, should make sure that effective and frequent monitoring is conducted in schools to ensure education quality. This is in agreement with the views expressed by Fordman (1992) that supervision of teachers is critical for any programme designed to improve the quality of education. The two critical determiners of effective teaching therefore, are supervision and support.

While the researcher may agree with the views stated above and, those expressed by respondents, there is also need to realize that supervision and monitoring may not have an impact on ROC. The argument here is that supervision by the people in authority (both at school level or DEBS offices) may not have an impact on ROC because it is not everyone who is in inspectorate offices who is trained in ROC. Moreover, some people in the inspectorate offices may not have even heard about ROC.

Therefore, concluding that monitoring systems are needed to improve the reading standards among school going children may not be the main factor because the teachers are the key players in improving educational standards and not the monitors. Moreover, Chinyanja and English languages are not only covered under ROC. There is also a Zambia Basic Education Course (ZBEC) for Chinyanja and English language that support the learning of literacy in the two languages respectively (MOE, 2001). Only if well trained in literacy and in supervision will teacher supervisors become a critical factor.

5.2 Teachers' views about the time allocated to the teaching of ROC in Chinyanja and English languages.

In a ROC classroom, the two languages, Chinyanja and English should be given equal attention so that they can complement each other (MOE 2000). This implies that the time allocated in practice to the teaching of the two languages should be equal and, well followed.

The expression above seems to suggest that as long as the teachers are not following the time allocated to the teaching of Chinyanja and English languages as stipulated in the ROC handbook (see figures 1, 2, and 3), one of the two languages will be disadvantaged. In addition, other subjects will suffer.

The situation described above seems to agree with respondents views that teachers were failing to follow or keep the time allocated to the teaching of ROC because the two and half- hours allocated in to the teaching of ROC in both Chinyanja and English languages is inadequate and, it has resulted into spending more time teaching literacy at the expense of other subjects.

However, the researcher tends to differ with the respondents views that due to inadequate time allocated for teaching ROC, more time was spent on the teaching of literacy in Chinyanja and English languages (ROC) at the expense of other subjects. The argument here is that if teachers were spending more hours on teaching literacy (ROC), then it should benefit ROC because pupils will be able to receive more instructional hours in both English and Chinyanja languages. As a result, they will be able to read fluently in both languages (Chinyanja and English) but this is not the case.

On the question of giving the two languages equal attention, views from respondents revealed that the two languages (Chinyanja and English) did not receive equal attention. English received more attention as compared to Chinyanja. Teachers found it easier to teach literacy in English and so, they taught in it more often. As a result, more attention was given to the teaching of literacy in English language than in Chinyanja language.

However, even though more attention was given to the teaching of literacy in English language than in Chinyanja language, the reading achievement in English do not reflect this advantage. The argument here is that if English received more attention than Chinyanja, pupils were expected to read better in English than in Chinyanja because they had more instructional hours in English language as compared to Chinyanja. Moreover, this is contrary to what has been noted in other studies conducted by the MOE (2006, 2008) that at the overall national level, there was a minimal improvement in reading levels in local languages than in English. This indicates that pupils read better in Chinyanja than in English.

The conclusion therefore, which does not seem to agree with views by many respondents is that the two and half- hours allocated in practice to the teaching of ROC in both Chinyanja and English languages is adequate. This is because in addition to the teaching of literacy through the medium of Chinyanja and English languages in Grades 3 to 7, there is also a ZBEC language and reading programme for both Chinyanja and English language that support the learning of literacy in the two languages. Therefore, the literacy courses introduced did not replace the learning of English and Zambian languages. Nevertheless, the study revealed that the ZBEC language and reading programme for both Chinyanja and

English language that support the learning of literacy in the two languages were abandoned by some teachers.

5.3 Teachers position in following of ROC daily routines

On the question of whether the teachers followed the daily routine for ROC or not, the findings from lesson observations and interviews showed that all the respondents followed the weekly daily routines for ROC, that is, **Starting Time, Teaching Station 1 and 2, and Sharing Time.**

While all the respondents seem to follow the daily routines for ROC, the majority of them argued that it was not easy for them to follow the ROC routines to teach literacy because they lacked sufficient knowledge and experience about ROC (due to lack of training) and, this negatively affected pupils' reading performance in both Chinyanja and English languages.

While the researcher may seem to agree with the views above, the situation seems to suggest that teachers' negative attitudes towards the ROC might have influenced pupil's reading achievement. This goes back to what is discussed under teacher related factors which suggests that there is no interaction among the teachers about the teaching procedures of the new MOE literacy courses (NBTL, SITE and ROC).

The implication of the lack of sufficient knowledge and experience about ROC is that the education offered lacks quality and is irrelevant to pupil's needs and of the society. This is in agreement with Fordham (1992) who states that when teachers lack sufficient subject matter knowledge to teach pupils adequately in a particular subject area, the standard and quality of education is irrelevant.

The conclusion therefore, which is not in agreement with views by many respondents is that generally, most of the Grade 5 teachers seem to lack sufficient knowledge and experience about the ROC methodology because of the lack of interest and negative attitude towards ROC.

CHAPTER SIX: CONCLUSION, RECOMMENDATIONS AND SUGGESTIONS

6.0 Introduction

This chapter highlights the conclusions, recommendations and suggestions derived from the findings of this study. The study on the factors that led to low reading levels in Chinyanja and English languages among Grade 5 pupils learning under ROC was done in four different school milieus.

6.1 Conclusion

Several scholars have carried out research on the reading levels in Zambia before and after the introduction of PRP and results has shown that the reading levels are still low (MOE, 2008).

The present review establishes clearly that the factors that seemed to have the greatest impact on the low reading levels among Grade 5 pupils learning under ROC are family, pupil, teacher and school related. These are as outlined below:

1. Family Related Factors

- a. Regular parents' transfers
- b. Teachers and pupils language background
- c. Parents attitudes towards Chinyanja
- d. Poor Reading culture and home environment
- e. Family status and school location
- f. Technology and other electronic equipments such as TV, radio, computer and video games

2. Pupil Related Factors

- a. Absenteeism
- b. Pupil transfers
- c. Pupils negative attitudes towards Chinyanja and reading Chinyanja

- d. Pupils spending too much time on internet or watching Television and not on reading and other school work.

3. Teacher Related Factors

- a. Lack of teacher training (pre and in-service) in ROC
- b. Teachers negative attitudes towards the ROC.
- c. Lack of Teachers' oral proficiency in Chinyanja
- d. The study showed that the ZBEC language and reading programmes for both Chinyanja and English language that should support the learning of literacy in the two languages were abandoned by some teachers.
- e. The study showed that the majority of teachers failed to follow the ROC routines to teach literacy because they lacked pedagogical proficiency and experience about ROC (due to lack of training).
- f. The two languages (Chinyanja and English) did not receive equal attention. English received more time compared to Chinyanja. Teachers found it easier to teach literacy in English so they taught in it more often.

4. School Related Factors

- a. Lack of the ROC materials
- b. Lack of class libraries and readers
- c. The use of the same TG_s and ROCABS from Grade 3 to 7
- d. Over enrolment making group work difficult
- e. High pupil/teacher ratio, therefore no remediation
- f. Lack of supervision of ROC teachers by relevant authorities (both at school level or DEBS offices)
- g. The study also showed that some schools no longer conducted school – based training and Teachers' – Groups meetings under SPRINT (School Programme of

In-service for the Term) which is intended to up-date the teachers with the new procedures

Despite the above disparities, the findings are useful as they confirm findings which are reported in other international and national studies on the factors that lead to low reading levels in SACMEQ countries (Nguyen and Calvito, 2003; World Bank, 2004). Thus, they might be of interest to teachers, teacher educators, school managers and future researchers in Zambia.

6.2 Recommendations

A number of recommendations have come out of this study and the following are some of them:

1. The ROC Teaching and Learning Materials and Resources.

- a. As expensive as it may be, the Government of the Republic of Zambia through the MOE should develop and provide teaching and learning materials and resources such as course books and reading materials to all schools for teachers to use when planning lessons.
- b. On the other hand, rather than putting the blame on the MOE for not constantly supplying teaching and learning materials in schools, teachers can either obtain or generate the teaching and learning materials from the community based on the principle of improvisation. They should be creative enough so that they can obtain the teaching and learning resources from the surrounding environment such as posters, magazines, newspapers and pamphlets from other disciplines.
- c. Teaching and learning materials need content which should help the learners function better across the curriculum. It is therefore ideal that the providers of ROC Programme should develop books whose contents should be challenging but interesting to children. This should see the book developers develop more books related to grades instead of using one book for all the five grades of 3 to 7.

2. Policy issues

The government has a duty to promote the highest standards of Education and learning for all. This entails giving attention to the curriculum and other Educational matters.

- a. The Curriculum should be evidence based research. There should be evidence enough that the programmes being incorporated in the curriculum has worked well somewhere else to avoid certain factors that have undermined the reading standards and quality of Education in Zambia.
- b. Further analysis of the language, duration of programme, cost, and effectiveness of such programmes would need to be undertaken by the educational policy makers and planners to determine the cost effective strategies for improving pupils' reading achievement levels in both the short and long term future.
- c. Whilst the latest literature from the FDNP Mid-term Review has revealed that the MOE has been striving to reduce the pupil/teacher ratio through teacher recruitment and deployment exercise that had been done during the period under review (2006-2010), more recruitment programmes are needed to increase the supply of teachers so that pupil–teacher ratio should be reduced, especially for large schools in densely populated areas.

3. Management, support and supervision

- a. The quality of teaching plays a critical role in children's achievement. When teachers lack sufficient knowledge about the course, pupils bear the consequences. To improve the quality of teaching, The MOE with support of other stakeholders (e. g Room to Read) should take up the challenge and develop training programmes for both school managers and teachers to facilitate effective implementation of ROC.
- b. The MOE should also assess the effectiveness of the Zambia Teacher Education Course (ZATEC) and the capacity of teacher training colleges to deliver quality training about the ROC approach. Providers of such professional development programmes need to be made accountable for the outcomes achieved by participants.

- c. The level of both internal and external monitoring taking place in schools was viewed unsatisfactory. It is therefore necessary to improve the frequency, nature and scope of future monitoring strategies. In this regard, it was felt, that to make such initiative effective, the MOE and school managers should develop a monitoring and evaluation framework for proper documentation of best practices and periodically disseminate this information at district level to achieve better accountability.
- d. Teachers are also advised to start or continue monitoring each other and, provide additional follow-up school- based trainings.

4. Classroom practice

- a. Measures such as Action Research should be introduced or encouraged among ROC teachers to improve the quality of education being offered at that level. This would encourage teachers to become more reflective in their teaching
- b. Further reflection and review of the routines, timing, classroom culture, methods and pupils practice opportunities should be undertaken by teachers to determine effective strategies for improving pupils' reading achievement levels.

5. Schools should disseminate appropriate information to parents on how to improve the reading environment at home.

- a. Parental involvement is a key strategy for ensuring a good home environment to support the learning of young children. School managers must ensure that they develop a culture of inviting parents, guardians and other members of the community to schools and, show them how they can improve the reading environment at home. For example, parents must know that providing reading materials such as magazines and news papers, as well as assembling a home library create a good reading culture. This will motivate and excite the children, and they will eventually improve on their reading culture or practices. Parents need to know that even if they are not educated they can still support reading in their children by just discussing what children read or asking children to read to them.

- b. Parents should be advised to monitor the use of internet or Television by their children at home so that time on reading or school work is maximised.

6. School Managers should encourage ROC School-Based Trainings and Teachers'- Groups Meetings

- a. Provision of school-based training is essential and, it improves the teaching quality. Teachers should be meeting regularly in their Teachers' Groups Meetings in order to implement the course effectively.
- b. School managers are also advised to encourage teachers to start or continue conducting school – based training and peer monitoring as a way of providing professional support to one another.

6.3 Suggestion for Further Studies

1. The first area recommendation for further research is that there is need to conduct a study to evaluate the kinds of ROC teaching and learning materials provided for Grade 5 pupils in order to bring them in line with the reading performances that are expected of them in schools.
2. Future research needs to be undertaken to examine the relationship between the *type* and *quality* of ROC teaching and learning materials and resources and pupil academic achievement to assist with identifying appropriate intervention strategies.
3. The third area identified for further research is that there is need to conduct a comparative study on pupils' reading achievement in schools located in sparsely populated areas and those located in densely populated areas.

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APPENDICES

Appendix 1: Interview Guide with Grade 5 teachers

1. What do you understand by the term literacy?
2. Are you aware about the PRP literacy courses in schools?
3. What do you know about the ROC literacy course?
4. Are you teaching this course or not?
5. What is the weekly routine for ROC course?
6. Are you following this routine or not?
7. Is the idea of alternating the two languages on weekly basis good or not?
8. How do you find teaching literacy using local language?
9. How do you find teaching literacy using English language?
10. How do the learners respond to each of these two languages?
11. What impact does this course have on the reading achievement of learners?
12. Are the children able to read and write in both Chinyanja and English with less difficulty? If not, what could be the reasons for not reading and writing?
13. Do you have libraries and enough library books for both Zambian language and English in your classrooms?
14. What are the areas of strengths about ROC course?
15. What are the areas of weakness about ROC course?
16. Do you have adequate and relevant materials to teach ROC?
17. What challenges do you face as teachers in delivering the lessons where the materials are concerned?
18. How often do you assess your learners?
19. How often do you have both internal and external monitoring?
20. Is your school manager supportive? In which ways is he or she supportive?

THANK YOU

Appendix 2: Interview Guide with School Managers

1. What do you understand by the term literacy?
2. How much do you know about PRP and ROC?
3. Do you have enough teachers at your school who are trained in ROC?
4. Are your teachers of Grade 5 pupils teaching literacy using ROC methodology?
5. Are the children able to read and write in both Chinyanja and English without difficulty? If not, what do you think could be the reasons for not reading and writing?
6. Is your office supporting the ROC teachers?
7. What type of support do you give to the ROC teachers?
8. What challenges do you face as a manager where supporting ROC is concerned?
9. What monitoring styles do you use in monitoring your teachers?
10. How many times do you receive external monitors for PRP courses from DEBS, PEO and HQ?
11. What suggestions do you have for improving the performance of ROC?

Thank you very much for your participation and please you are free to ask any question about what we have discussed.

Appendix 3: Focus group discussions guide with Grade 5 pupils

1. Which Zambian language do you know and use best at home?
2. Do you enjoy reading? What do you read?
3. How do you find learning literacy using Chinyanja?
4. How do you find learning literacy using English language?
5. Which of the two languages do you enjoy learning literacy in?
6. Do you have libraries and enough story books for both Zambian language and English in your classrooms?
7. How often do you read the story books in Chinyanja and English?
8. How do you find the readers in Chinyanja and English? Are they easy or difficult?
9. Are there enough books for you to read under ROC? In which language?
10. Are you able to read and write? If not, what do you think could be the reasons for failing to read and write?
11. What difficulties do you face as learners in learning how to read?
12. What do you think should be done to help you learn to read better and faster?

THANK YOU VERY MUCH

Appendix 4: Observation Checklist

The following observation checklist was used to help in recording the observations made by the researcher in a Grade 5 classroom.

ACTIVITY AREA	EXPECTED OUTCOMES	REMARKS		
		Good	Satisfactory	Unsatisfactory
Weekly routine	Zambian language and English Alternating on weekly basis)			
Time allocated	Literacy hour twice a week and half-hour each week for revision well followed			
Daily routine	Time allocated well followed: starting time 15min, teaching corner lesson 20min each, and sharing time 5min.			
Lesson procedure	Lesson content in both Zambian language and English matches the learners needs			
Management	Good class control			
Gender awareness	Girls and boys equally involved in class activities			
Pace groups working on ILA	Work set for groups sufficiently Challenging in both languages			

Support to individual Learners	Weaker groups are regularly supported on day 5			
Class library	Adequate reading materials in both Languages			
Reading culture	Learners visit the class library and pick the books when they finish their work without being told			
Teachers/learners attitudes	Positive attitudes in both Zambian language and English language			
Teacher-pupil relationship	Good rapport with pupils			
Assessment	Learners regularly assessed			
Language used by teachers in class	Teachers to use appropriate language according to the programme			
Language of Learners in class	Learners to use appropriate language according to the lesson			