

**AN INVESTIGATION INTO THE CAUSES OF PUPIL ABSENTEEISM FROM  
GRADE 7 COMPOSITE EXAMINATION IN ZAMBIA: A CASE STUDY OF  
SELECTED SCHOOLS OF MUMBWA DISTRICT**

By

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## **DECLARATION**

I, Eness Shooba, declare that this work is my original work achieved through personal reading and scientific research. This work has never been submitted to the University of Zambia or any other University for the award of a master of education degree in Educational Administration or for any other academic award. All sources of data used, and literature on related works previously done by others, used in the production of this dissertation have been dully acknowledged. If any omissions have been made, it is not by choice but by error.

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

**APPROVAL**

The University of Zambia approves this dissertation of **ENESS SHOوبا** as fulfilling part of the requirements for the award of the degree of Master of Educational in Education Administration.

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## Abstract

This study sought to compare pupil absenteeism from Grade 7 composite examination, establish the causes of pupils' absenteeism from Grade 7 composite examination, determine the roles that parents and schools need to play to curb pupil absenteeism from Grade 7 composite examination and recommend measures that can be put in place to curb pupil's absenteeism from Grade 7 composite examination. The research employed the survey design which was descriptive in nature. Both qualitative and quantitative approaches were employed. The sample included 62 Grade 7 teachers and 10 parents' Focus Groups, in selected schools of Mumbwa District. Purposeful sampling procedure was employed to arrive at the respondents. The research revealed that, there was no difference with regard to pupil absenteeism from examinations from 2006-2009, as the differences noted were negligible. However, there was an upward trend in 2010 with girls in the lead.

The findings showed that, the major drivers of pupil absenteeism from Grade 7 composite examination were physical factors such as long distance to school and adverse climate, especially in the rainy season when roads became impassible due to floods, health factors such as illnesses and death in the family, and personal attitude like pupils not being interested in school due to peer pressure and laziness. Other causes of pupil absenteeism from Grade 7 composite examination were, home related factors like parents and guardians having a negative attitude towards school, house chores, parents' failure to provide food and other school requirements, herding cattle, parents relocating and children being withdrawn from school during the farming season. Furthermore, cultural and social factors such as early marriages, early pregnancies and initiation ceremonies and also teacher related factors like teacher's absenteeism from work and lack of commitment, teachers' failure to cover the syllabus adequately and failure to prepare the pupils for examinations were yet other causes of pupil absenteeism from examinations. Additionally, school climate and classroom environment were also found to be causes of pupil absenteeism during examinations especially poor sanitation, poor water supply, one candidate being entered at more than one centre, lack of classroom furniture and unavailability of teaching and learning material.

The roles that parents and schools need to play in curbing this absenteeism were that of guiding and counseling the pupils, providing recreation centers, forming pressure groups to sensitize parents on the importance of education and providing school requirements. It was further recommended that pupil absenteeism from examinations could be stopped if standard officers intensified external teacher

monitoring, if schools provided suitable environment for teaching and learning and government to build more schools within a radius of 4km.

## **Dedication**

For the love of my departed father, Enoch Shooba, who always encouraged me to work hard, and in memory of my brother Julius, and sister, Beatrice.

To my brother in-law, Mauriceson Sokwe who gave me the strength to forge ahead. To my loving husband, Joseph Mubanga ,mother, Phoebe Shooba who always prayed for me.

## **Acknowledgement**

I wish to express my profound gratitude to my Supervisor, Dr. A. Akakandelwa, for his commitments, guidance and support. Without his major involvement, this research would have not succeeded. My gratitude also goes to Dr. Alfred Kakanda and Mr. Henry Msango for support they rendered to me. Gratitude also goes to Mr. Joel Kanyika and Mrs. Twiza Musakanya from Examinations Council of Zambia for providing me with the examinations statistics from 2006-2010. I wish also to acknowledge the help that my friends, Florence Lubeya, Agness Mpande and Grace Ng'andu rendered to me during my stay at the University of Zambia.

Lastly, my gratitude goes to my husband Mr. Joseph Mubanga, my two daughters Marianne and Natasha, and all members of my family for the support they provided to me throughout my whole programme of study and for allowing me to leave home and attend to my studies.

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# CHAPTER ONE: INTRODUCTION

## 1.0 Background

The importance of education as well as examinations cannot be over emphasized. Besides training the work force for increasing complex tasks, education is important for personal and national development, health and governance. Therefore, the overall goal of education is to provide each pupil with a solid intellectual practical and moral foundation that will serve as a basis for a fulfilling life.

Therefore, it seeks to provide a comprehensive program of study and school activities that will promote the full and harmonious development of every pupil and give some preparation for adult working life. Education is the means whereby one generation transmits the wisdom, knowledge and experience which prepares the next generation for life. Furthermore, it aims at equipping learners with reading, writing and arithmetic knowledge and enhances survival skills in pupils there by helping them to become self reliant. Education improves one's way of life and open doors for higher avenues. Hence, Learners become connoisseurs in their own specialty as they are no longer illiterates, but literate, and it is this literacy which enhances the capacity to high production. Additionally, Education is an empowerment to high life expectance and gives greater understanding of world issues.

Rapid technological progress in a broad range of areas has made education a necessity for all citizens. For education to benefit society, it needs only to be relevant to the needs and aspirations of people, to be of a given level of quality, and to most people, education quality means, among other things, satisfactory learning achievements on the part of the pupils. The concern for quality demands that, these learning achievements be periodically assessed formatively or summatively.

Although most industrialized countries have a system for national assessment for some time, it was not until the 1990s that the capacity and interest for national assessment extended to other parts of the world. Article 4 of the Jomtien Conference on Education For All, states that the focus for basic education should be on actual learning acquisition and outcomes, rather than exclusively upon enrolment, continued participation in organized programmes and completion of certification requirements. Following the Jomtien Conference of 1990, many countries that attended agreed to make primary education accessible to all children and massively reduce illiteracy levels by the end of the decade (UNESCO, 2011). Delegates from this conference adopted a World declaration on

Education for All, with reaffirming the notion of education as a fundamental human right and countries intensified to address the basic learning needs. It is for this reason that, most developing countries have been making remarkable efforts to enroll every school age child in an effort to meet the Education for All(EFA) goals and Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) by 2015 (UNESCO, 2006). The number of school infrastructure has since doubled.

The Dakar Framework, as a follow up to Jomtien, a decade later, highlighted the importance of learning outcomes. One of the seven agreed goals was to improve by 2015;” all aspects of the quality of education so that recognized and measurable outcomes are achieved”. The focus of the Millennium Development Goal number 2 is to ensure that, by 2015, children everywhere, boys and girls alike will be able to complete a full course of primary schooling (UNESCO, 2002). But how does one know that the children are learning the intended curriculum, and that education reforms are leading to improved learning. The answer is,” public examinations”. This has led in the current decade (2010-2019), to considerable investment on the part of education ministries, in assessment in the form of public examinations. The public examinations focus more on grade 7, 9 and 12. This study however, is more concerned with Grade 7.

In Zambia, learning is monitored and measured through two forms of evaluation, namely internal and external. The Internal system refers to evaluation mechanism that determines the functioning of the curriculum, methods used and materials provided to promote expected learning and attitudinal outcomes as well as determining whether the learners have achieved the standard levels of performance in the specific subject areas. The external system refers to evaluation arrangements such as high stake examinations undertaken for selection and certification purposes. A further purpose for external evaluation, is to determine the effectiveness of the system in terms of preparing learners for the next stage in their education and equipping school leavers with adequate knowledge and skills that will enable them to earn a living (Ministry of Education ,1996). Public examinations in Zambia were first held in 1928, and are held at four levels, that is, at Grades 7, 9, 12 and tertiary level. These are meant to form the basis for job procurement and placement. It is for this reason that the researcher feels that, unless a pupil is subjected to an examination, he / she will find him / herself cut off from important economic, social and intellectual opportunities.

In the past candidates were meant to pay a certain amount of money towards examination fees. This made parents to complain to the government through the Minister of Education as the move, was disadvantaging many children from completing basic education. As an answer to this cry, in 2002, examination fees were removed at Grade 7, and this development meant free basic education from Grades 1-7, and this was in an attempt by the Zambian government to commit itself to achieving Universal Basic Education for all by 2015. Nowadays, this is made possible through the overwhelming support made towards the subsector that has seen provision of free Basic education, removal of examination fees and introduction of favorable policies aimed at getting more children, especially girls into school (Ministry of Education, 1996).

It is against this background that the researcher fails to understand as to why a lot of candidates who enter to sit for the examinations fail to test the water, despite the favorable policies that the government has put in place. Reports from the Examinations Council of Zambia shows that, there have been high levels of absenteeism from Grade 7 Composite examination countrywide in the past five years (2006 to 2010) and the statistics are revealed and indicated in the table below:

**Table 1: Absenteeism by gender country wide**

YEAR	Number Entered		Number Sat		Number Absent		Total Absent
	Boys	Girls	Boys	Girls	Boys	Girls	
2006	3,200	2,928	2,900	2,580	300	348	648
2007	3,620	3,100	3,318	2,780	302	392	694
2008	3,702	3,145	3,330	2,833	372	312	680
2009	3,750	3,201	3,450	3,101	300	100	400
2010	3,841	3,363	3,449	3,004	392	359	751

*Source: Research and Test Development Department (ECZ-2006-2010)*

It is worth noting that, the aim of every school, parent and stakeholder, in education, is to prepare pupils to attempt these examinations and in the process, measure their attainment as accurately as possible. But if these pupils fail to present themselves for examinations, despite government's initiatives, then it poses a threat to national development. Therefore, the causes of pupil absenteeism from Grade 7 Composite examination provoke the need for the study.

## **1.1 Statement of the problem**

In Zambia, over 8% of the pupils each year fail to present themselves during grade 7 composite examination despite the government's initiatives of introducing the re-entry policy and free basic education from Grades 1-7. This absenteeism has been a great concern countrywide despite appeal to traditional leaders and other stakeholders (Examinations Council of Zambia, 2009). The causes of this absenteeism have not been analyzed and if left unchecked, would likely have a negative impact on access, full participation and ultimately progression of children in basic education (Ministry of Education, 2009). It is for this reason that, this study investigated the causes of pupil absenteeism from Grade 7 composite examination in Zambia.

## **1.2 Purpose of the study**

The purpose of this study was to investigate the causes of pupil absenteeism from Grade 7 composite examination in Zambia in the last five years.

## **1.3 Research objectives**

The specific objectives of the study were;

1. To compare boys and girls absenteeism rate from Grade 7 composite examination.
2. To establish the causes of pupil absenteeism from Grade 7 composite examination.
3. To determine the roles that parents and schools can play in curbing pupil absenteeism from Grade 7 composite examination.
4. To recommend interventions to curb pupil absenteeism from Grade 7 composite examinations.

## **1.4 Research Questions**

1. Are there variations in absenteeism between boys and girls from Grade 7 composite examination?
2. What are the causes of pupil absenteeism from Grade 7 composite examinations?
3. What roles should parents and schools play to curb pupil absenteeism from Grade 7 composite examination?
4. What measures can the Ministry of Education, Science and Vocational Training and Early Education put in place to curb pupil absenteeism from Grade 7 composite examinations?

## **1.5 Significance of the study**

It is hoped that the study would be useful to various educational providers, all stakeholders in the education sector and co-operating partners and the Ministry of Education at large, in curbing pupil absenteeism from Grade 7 composite examination. The findings would be used to formulate a new policy on pupil absenteeism from examinations in schools.

## **1.6 Limitations**

There were a lot of challenges when it came to collection of data, as most of the grade 7 teachers at the time, were on holiday. This was soon after the Grade 7 pupils had finished writing their composite examination. Furthermore, parents did not turn out in good numbers as most of them were busy in their fields planting.

## **1.7 Delimitations**

The research was only conducted in 10 selected schools in the district and this meant that, generalization of the findings to the other schools was not an ideal situation, since the school cultures and characteristics in these schools were different one from the other



## **CHAPTER TWO: LITERATURE REVIEW**

### **2.1 Overview**

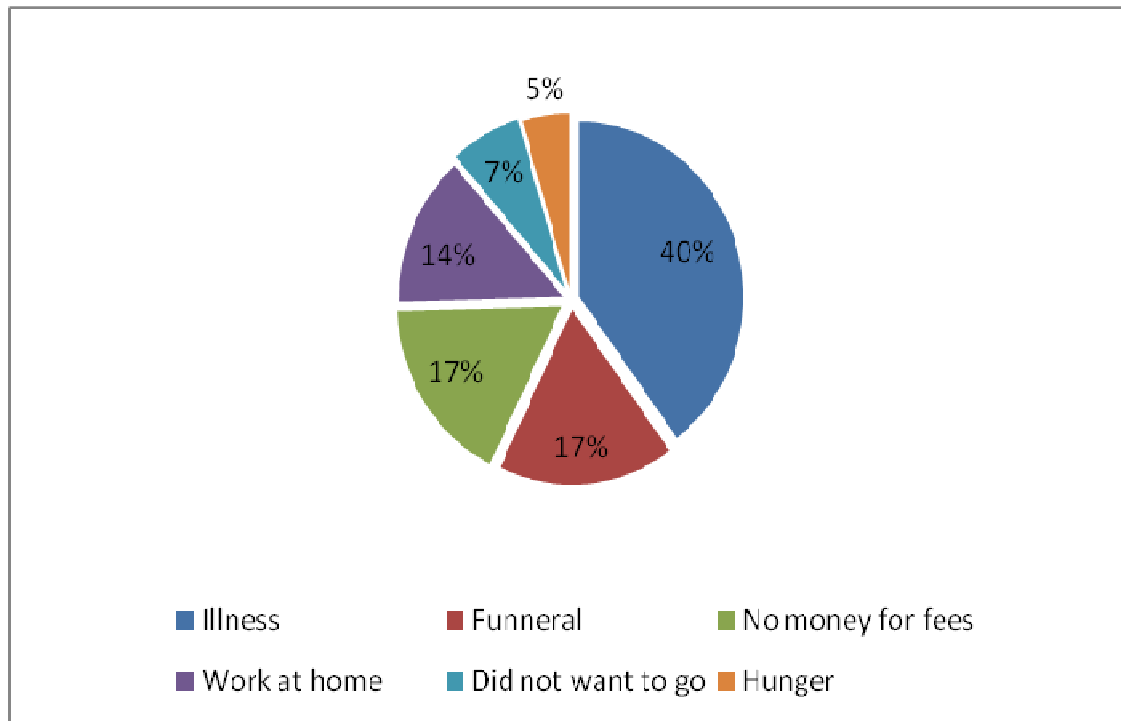
This chapter explores the important literature documented on the causes of pupil absenteeism from Grade 7 composite examination in Zambia. It reveals available statistics from primary and secondary sources on absenteeism in various countries worldwide. It also presents variations in absenteeism between the two genders (boys and girls). Furthermore, the chapter seeks to bring out the causes of pupil absenteeism during Grade 7 composite examination and the roles of parents and schools in curbing this absenteeism. Lastly, it dwells on the measures to be taken to curb pupil absenteeism from examinations, especially at Grade 7 level in Zambia.

### **2.2 Statistics on absenteeism during examinations**

The problem of pupil absenteeism during Grade 7 composite examinations is not unique to developing countries in Africa, South America and Europe. As we join thousands of Zambian parents in celebrating the near 100 percent pass rate of our pupils who sat for Grade seven examinations, our attention is drawn to the 39,702 pupils who missed the examination last year (Mwaanga, 2012). Out of the 302,890 pupils who wrote the examinations, 284,121 were selected to Grade eight; 148,730 were boys and 135,391 were girls. But the fate of those who did not test the waters at Grade seven level is what is most worrying. It is hard to figure out just how such a large number of pupils could miss the examinations after registering for them. All players – parents, teachers and the Ministry of Education need to seriously look into the issue of absenteeism and come up with more practical ways of curbing the trend (Mwaanga, 2012).

We place little blame on the pupils because at Grade seven level, or to be precise between 11 and 14 years old, there is little that a child can decide independently outside the influence and consent of parents. Why would a pupil register for the examinations if they know they will not sit for them, and why would they miss the examinations if they know they successfully registered for them? This calls for a serious audit of the situation (Mwaanga, 2012). Pupil absenteeism from examinations disturbs the dynamic teaching-learning environment and adversely affects the overall well-being of class and progression of learners. In quality terms, absenteeism is a waste of educational resources, time and human potential (Segal, 2008). With regard to pupil absenteeism during examinations, In the United States of America, the research conducted by the United States of America census bureau current population survey, reviews that, in 2007, absenteeism rate among pupils during examinations were

21% in Grade 7 (Ali, 2012). The major causes of this absenteeism according to the report were sickness, family problems, truancy and bad company. However, the most cited reason for absenteeism from examinations was illness with 6% of pupils missing each year (CSO, 2003). Other reasons for absenteeism were summarized as shown in the figure below:



**Figure 1: Causes of absenteeism in USA**

In Britain, Sharma( 2005) underscores that the report given on pupil absenteeism during examinations at one of the schools, revealed that, the number of pupils entered was 300 and those who sat for examinations were 258 while those absent were 42(6.2%). In addition, a study conducted by the organization for Economic Corporation and Development in 2001, indicated that, over 9% of Grade 7 pupils fail to present themselves during the final examinations due to unknown reasons (O.E.C.D, 2001).The causes of this, was cited as illness

Absenteeism from summative assessment in Britain has been viewed as a priority in terms of ensuring that academic standards are not compromised and that the individual needs of the scholars are met. In all instances, the outcomes would be establishing consistent fair decision that best suits

the needs of all parties (Ludwig,Bassi,1999).In Asia, 5 % increase was recorded in 2008 Grade 7 examination absenteeism as captured by the national media. This entails that from the actual number of pupils who entered for examinations in the year 2008, and the usual number that failed to test the waters, increased by 5% and this was recorded in that very year (Kafui,2005).The causes of this absenteeism was found to be mainly illness and truancy.

Several factors in Africa were generally identified as causes of pupil absenteeism during examinations and that, each year, between 8% and 10% of the pupils miss the examinations. The causes of this were mostly teacher related factors. Ageman (1993) reported that, a teacher who did not have both the academic and professional teacher qualifications would undoubtedly have a negative influence on the teaching and learning of his/her subject. Hence he/she forces pupils to lose interest in learning and eventually drop out of school. Research revealed that where the teacher failed to teach effectively, even preparations of pupils for examinations became inadequate and this made pupils miss examinations as they felt unprepared for them. Recent studies conducted in Kampala by the Ministry of Education revealed that, at Luwero, one of the districts in Uganda, the number of pupils absent from Grade 7 examinations had risen. This scenario was found to be worse in government aided schools compared to the private ones. Furthermore, research showed that, the schools with high absenteeism rate included Luwube SDA, Luwero boys, Bombo Islamic and KibengoUmen (Ali, 2012).

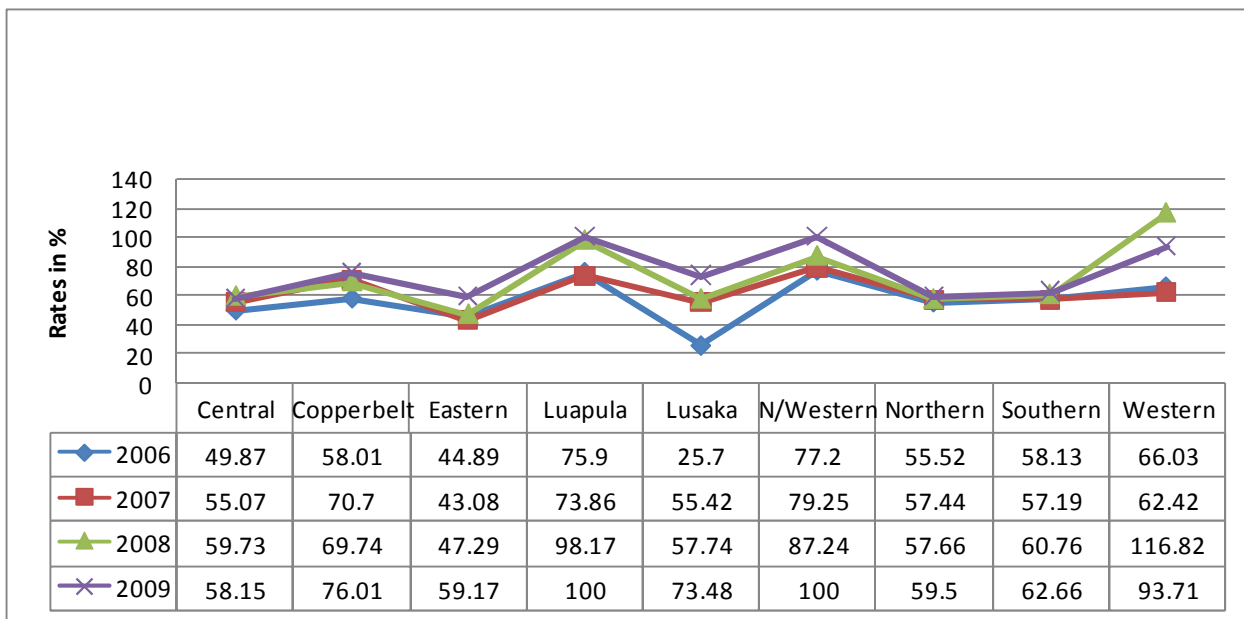
In South Africa, the report given in January 2007 revealed that, of the 69,561 candidates who sat for the examinations in Grade 7 in the Eastern Cape, 29,292 or 40% failed, while 59.3% were absent (Sebengo,Maaga and Legotlo,2002).For the past three years, a great proportion of Grade 7 learners had performed badly in the national examinations in terms of attendance. For example in the North - Western Province, the absent rate in 1998, 1999 and 2000 were 54.0%, 52.1% and 58.2% Respectively (Riekert, 2000).

In Kenya, Lesotho, Malawi and Uganda, free primary education was viewed as a step toward achieving Universal Basic Education. However, this effort was being hindered by a lot of dropouts, because over 10% of the pupils, who entered to sit for Grade 7 examinations each year, failed to attend. The reasons for this failure were that, parents asked their children to get in domestic work during examinations. This worsened during the rice harvesting season when rice ripened as children went to take up other tasks and ended up leaving school for good(COS,2010). Also according to the

research, the drivers of pupil absenteeism during examinations were revealed as; lack of school fees, sickness, family problems, withholding by parents, community influence and distance to school (Ali, 2012).

The parents say, the children are the only manpower they have, owing to the importance of the rice fields, they have a point. But the issue is how we reconcile the necessity to keep the children in school to write the examinations and protecting the rice fields at the same time (Nakanyike, Kasente, Balihuta, 2003). According to the report obtained on Friday 2<sup>nd</sup> October 2009, in Rwanda, parents seemed not to understand the importance of sending their children to school. As a result, this was frustrating the efforts of the government to uplift the standards of good schools and, even the bright student dropped out of school and missed examinations and during this period, over 10% of the pupils were absent from these examinations.

In Zambia absenteeism from examinations was a big challenge facing pupils' overall progression rate and completion of the basic school programme. In the recent past, there had been rising levels in absenteeism which eventually could impact negatively on the future of the children and the nation at large. This further remained high predominantly in rural provinces where children were faced with a number of challenges (Examination Council of Zambia, 2009). Pupils' absenteeism during examinations was high of which it has impacted negatively on the progression of learners as in the diagram below.



**Figure 2: progression rate by province**

**Source: Examinations Council of Zambia (2006-2009) Annual Reports**

In 2009, a total of 219,581 candidates were selected to proceed to grade 8 compared to 307,191 that sat for the Grade 7 composite examinations. Generally in the previous 5 years, the progression rate for girls had been higher than that of boys, with the national progression rate being 71.8 percent in 2009(Examination Council of Zambia, 2009)

Luapula and North Western Provinces recorded 100% progression rate while the Western Province recorded 120% as presented in figure 2. At national level, the country recorded 77.01 and 66.82 percent progression rates for girls and boys respectively. For instance, in 2009, a total of 307,191 pupils sat for Grade 7 examinations. Out of these, 71.01 percent were selected to grade 8, while 87,610 pupils were pushed out of the system through absenteeism. Despite the increase in the progression rates into Grade 8, the system still had a number of school going children who were left out just before they could complete the first seven years of basic education as a result of failing to test the waters of an examination. This implies that absenteeism from Grade 7 composite examination in

Zambia, had recorded an upward trend in the background of Free Basic Education. This absenteeism has doubled from a total of 4.1% in 2004 to 9.7% in 2009(Examinations Council of Zambia, 2009).

Furthermore, the advent of free basic education and abolishment of examination fees at Grade 7, occurrences of absenteeism remained to a large extent alarming. A total of 367,191 candidates were entered for the 2009 Grade 7 composite examination and 340, 379 were able to present themselves for actual examinations, representing, 90.25% turn up for examination . This implies that, 26,812 were absent from examination (Examinations Council of Zambia, 2009). In December 2009, the then Permanent Secretary for the Ministry of Education, Dr Mulungushi delivered a speech during the publication of the Grade 7 national results and that, “Of the 258,102 pupils who entered for Grade 7 Examinations, over 2, 000 were absent”. This simply entails that, examination absenteeism is still a challenge in the country (Examinations Council of Zambia, 2009).

Education Management Information System (2009-2010) report reveals that, in Mumbwa District every year, a lot of children tend to drop out of school for reasons not well known. Many candidates are registered to sit for examination but by the time these examinations are being written, most of them would have dropped out and missed the examinations. This situation has been worry some more especially for educators and educationists and many other concerned stakeholders. In 2007, one school in the district recorded 40 cases of pupils absent from Grade 7 composite examinations, giving a total percentage of 60 (Examinations Council of Zambia, 2007).

An analysis of recent Grade 7 results shows that the absenteeism rate in the district is rising steadily and the causes for this case are not well known. This trend was summarized as shown in the table below:

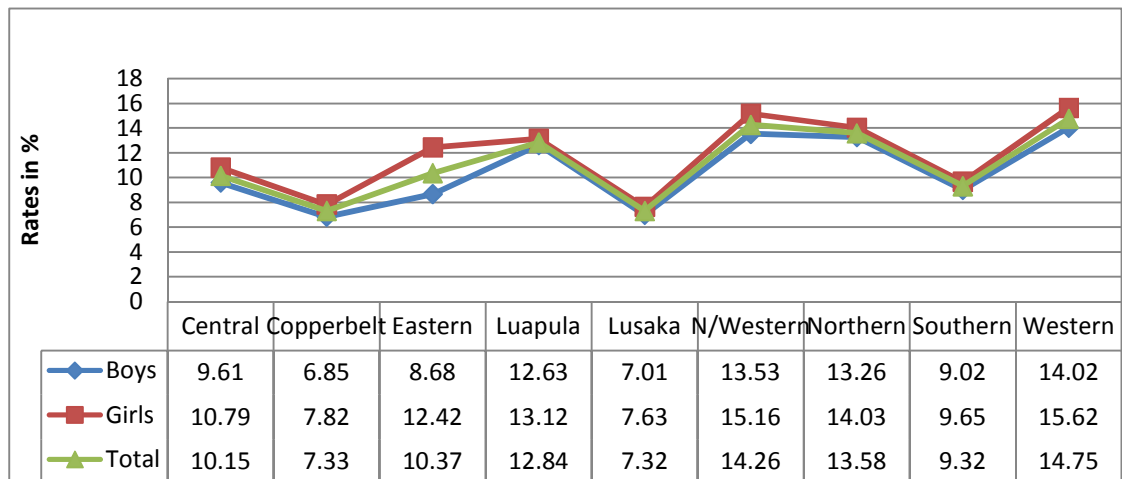
**Table 2: absenteeism in Mumbwa district**

YEAR	NUMBER ENTERED		NUMBER SAT		NUMBER ABSENT		TOTAL ABSENT
	BOYS	GIRLS	BOYS	GIRLS	BOYS	GIRLS	
2006	30662	3243	30364	2921	298	322	620
2007	3588	3039	3275	2693	313	346	659
2008	3674	3231	3350	2835	324	396	720
2009	3917	3396	3521	2984	396	412	808
2010	3841	3363	3841	2968	392	395	751

*Source: Research and Test Development Department (ECZ, 2006-2010)*

### 2.3 Variation in pupil absenteeism during Grade 7 composite examination

Absenteeism during Grade 7 composite examination has shown an upward trend in the background of free basic education and this has known no gender, both boys and girls are affected. The national statistics gotten from all the provinces in the country in 2010 for instance shows the differences in absenteeism by boys and girls in percentage as illustrated in the figure shown below:



**Figure 3: Absenteeism by gender**

*Source: Research and Test Development Department (ECZ, 2010)*

Zambia has always wanted to give equal opportunities to boys and girls with regard to education, and examinations in particular. This is why enrolments at the beginning of Grade one is equal, but as the children progress and up to the time they are required to write an examination, many would have dropped out of school. For every 100 pupils who begin grade one, 70, complete primary education (Ministry of Education, 1996). The progression rate is the cry of the government. All boys and girls registered to sit for examinations the Grade 7 level are expected to attend and complete the primary education.

It is worth mentioning here that, the national goal of accelerated development cannot be attained without special attention to the needs of women and girls, and as such, all policies include gender specific considerations (Ministry of Education, 1996).

#### **2.4 Causes of pupil absenteeism from Grade 7 composite examination**

The Annual School Census for the period between 2001 and 2006 indicated a significant growth of 7% in pupil enrolment. In the past, enrolment was increasing lower than 2% every year. This meant that, the completion rate at Grade 7 in terms of attendance during examinations, was supposed to increase too (Ministry of Education, 2008).

Non-Governmental Organizations have come up with programmes such as school health nutrition and deworming. This, just like the government's intentions are to increase pupils' attendance, retention and reduce on dropout rates. Despite improvements in overall enrolment, there were still alarming dropout rates in Grade 7 (Ministry of Education, 2003). In trying to empower its citizens, the Government of Zambia came up with a lot of initiatives and suitable policies. In February 2002, the then President of the Republic of Zambia Levy Patrick Mwanawasa (State Council), announced the Free Basic Education policy from Grades 1 – 7. This according to the Ministry of Education (2003) was followed up by a circular to all schools and education offices explaining what Free Basic Education entailed. This also saw the abolishment of user fees and the introduction of no uniform policy. These measures were likely to bring about substantial increase in enrolment and reduce on dropout rates among the learners, but this had not been the case as absenteeism from examinations had taken root.



In 2008, Professor Lungwangwa as Minister of Education disclosed that a total of 30,852 candidates were absent from examinations that year as compared to 26, 469 in 2007 (Ali, 2012). This entailed that from 2006 to 2010 the absenteeism rate has been increasing as revealed by the Examinations Council of Zambia statistics. It is worth mentioning here that, all people are entitled to national development by participating in many national developmental projects. This ,they can do if they pass through examinations and are assessed accordingly as per reports revealed by Examination Council of Zambia during Grade 7 national assessment programme as illustrated in figure 3. However, both girls and boys show a unique trend when it came to absenteeism.

A review of the literature revealed that there were several factors, both internal and external that contributed to pupils' absenteeism from Grade 7 composite examinations. One of these factors was poverty. Most of the pupils dropped out of school due to hunger as many could not afford a meal before going to school. Since Zambian education was regarded as a basic human right and was vital for the development of the nation, then, it was supposed to empower its people, enable them to be proactive and control their lives and to broaden economic and social opportunities (Ministry of Education, 1992).

The government had initiated programmes such as group feeding through school health nutrition, to encourage pupils and teachers' attendance. The manifestation of poverty is further seen when it comes to completion rates, learning achievements, pupils and teachers' attendance. The Ministry of Education (2003) addresses the key manifestation in the education system in terms of improving completion rates, learning and nutrition and overall quality. The government's intention of putting up such measures such as free basic education from Grades 1-7, group feeding through School Health Nutrition program, and universal basic education were well known as that of encouraging pupil's attendance in school. The Ministry of Education (2003) states that "despite improvement in over enrolment, there are alarming dropout rates in Grade 7". The rates are attributed to early marriages, early pregnancies as well as demand of girls assisting with household chores. As for boys, parents force them to leave school to assist them in farming, herding cattle, collecting caterpillars and fishing. This is evident from Examinations Council of Zambia report of 2010(Examinations Council of Zambia, 2010).

Pupil's absenteeism from Grade 7 composite examinations is a growing concern despite appeals to traditional leaders, gatekeepers and other stakeholders in education .A report gotten from the District

Office under planning department in Mumbwa District and information captured during education management information system revealed that, in 2010, 200 Grade 7 pupils were reported to have missed examinations due to early marriages and pregnancies (Education Management Information System, 2010).

The Ministry of Education in trying to encourage quality education came up with the re – entry policy in 1995, where girls who went for maternity leave, were allowed to come back to school and continue with their education (MOE, 1995) Not only that, the government of Zambia also came up with the initiative of 30% enrolment or admission places reserved for girl – children and 70% to be competed by both genders in every institution of learning. Also scrapping off, of the cut of point at Grade 7 level was yet another attempt by the government to increase on the completion rates of the pupils. Programme for the advancement of girl-child education (PAGE) was yet another programme that the government had put in place to try and encourage the vulnerable girl child to be in school, thereby increasing the completion rate. In this vein completion of primary education was given high priority (Ministry of education, 1977). The Zambian Government is committed to the Millennium Development Goals (MDG) and Education For All (EFA) objectives. The Ministry of Education is supportive of Free Basic Education that has resulted in massive increase in pupil enrolment.

Culture is yet another contributing factor to pupil absenteeism from examinations. Universities have seen it as their function to maintain the cultural heritage of Zambia and foster what has been known throughout the ages as a liberal education (Osborne, 1968). Certain ethnic groups take their children for initiation ceremonies such as Mkanda and Chisungu for a period of six month. A report gotten from some head teachers in Mumbwa district revealed that over 10 pupils missed examinations in 2010 because they were in seclusion for a long period of time (Emis, 2010).

## **2.5 Roles of parents and schools in curbing pupil absenteeism from Grade 7 composite examination**

The first responsibility for the education of children lies with parents and after that, with the wider community in which the family lives. The United Nations declaration of education as a human right, gives protection to the parents' right to choose the type of education their children will receive (MOE, 1996). Research results have also proved that there is close correlation between the meaning of education to parents and students' learning achievements. That is, if education is regarded as a value

in the family, there is a big possibility that children will have high learning achievements (Balster-Lionto, 1992).

Socio-economic conditions are significant for early achievement in reading. Children from families with better socio-economic status tend to do better when it comes to attempting examinations, compared to their peers from poor socio-economic status.

Several authors (Denton et al, 2001) emphasize that parents' level of education, social economic position of the family and cultural heritage play an important role in learning achievement. These researchers revealed that there is a strong correlation between parent education study aid at home, financial position of the family and children's attendance during examinations. The actions by parents at the pre-school are of great importance in students' progression rate. A number of researchers worldwide have proved that a child's attendance at pre-school positively influences his /her progression rate. An International literacy study published in 1994, conducted in 33 countries, worldwide, revealed that students whose home language differs from language of instruction have difficulties in attempting examinations as they find interpretation of language hard. So, parents have a role of guiding and counseling their children in the use of the right language (Denton et al, 2001).

## **2.6. Measures to be taken to curb pupil absenteeism from Grade 7 composite examination**

Ali (2012) notes that students who absent themselves from summative assessments are not likely to graduate from primary school. A school child who has not written examinations, face a difficult and uncertain future. In order to solve the problem of pupil attendance during Grade 7 composite examinations, much needs to be done by all stake holders and this is left in the hands of all. These cases should be revisited and the loose bolts tightened to ensure our children do not suffer the fate of dropping out of school at a tender age. At a time when we are fighting as a country to meet the universal primary education for all children of school-going age, it is not right to take lightly the absence of pupils from an examination. Such children should not be forgotten after the results are published. There should be a follow-up to redress their predicament.

It is a fact that the pass rate for the 2011 examinations represents a major improvement of 93.80 percent as compared to 87.99 percent recorded in 2010. But that should not blind us to the grave prospect of having 39,702 pupils dropping out at Grade seven announced, or be left to become part of

the levels. Parents with children who have not made it through should find a way of ‘pushing’ such learners to the next level. It is their responsibility as parents, and the surest way of guaranteeing a brighter future for the children. Otherwise we risk ending up with a future leadership that does not know how to read and write, which effectively means it cannot lead (Mwaanga, 2012). The measures that can be taken to curb pupil absenteeism from Grade 7 composite examination are the same as the roles that parents and schools need to play in order to curb the trend and all the literature is related. For instance, guiding and counseling the pupils could be taken also as a measure for curbing pupil absenteeism during examinations

### **Summary**

The benefits of having statistical data on pupil absenteeism from Grade 7 composite examination are massive. These include having knowledge on the causes of pupil absenteeism from examinations and knowing the gender which is mostly affected when it comes to the stated absenteeism. Additionally, there is increased awareness of the responsibilities of all stakeholders in Education system in curbing pupil absenteeism from examinations. Absenteeism from examinations Global wide has highlighted interest according to the literature.

## **CHAPTER THREE: METHODOLOGY**

### **3.1 Overview**

This chapter looked at the way information on the research topic was collected and how this data was integrated in the various situations of the research area. The research methodologies used were both qualitative and quantitative. In the Chapter, descriptions of techniques used to collect and interpret data were presented. These included, research design, study population, sampling procedure, sample size; research instruments, data collection, data analysis and data interpretation. The instruments were tested in a pilot study that was conducted on people with similar characteristics of the intended study sample. The purpose of conducting the pilot study was to find out if the questions in the questionnaire would meet the objectives of the study. The instruments were revised after the pilot exercise. Further; this chapter looked at the participants involved in the research.

### **3.2 Research design**

This research employed the survey design which was descriptive in nature. It focused its attention on finding out the causes of pupil absenteeism from Grade 7 composite examination. The survey design was used, as it was found to be the most suitable way of addressing the research questions, because of the type of data which was required from a known population. To obtain the results of this study, both quantitative and qualitative research methodologies were employed.

Quantitative research methodology is a method of collecting facts and studies the relationship of one set of facts to another. It is also known as deductive method and it is scientific as it can be tested and proved and enables a researcher form a generalized conclusion.

Qualitative research design is a method of collecting facts to understand the phenomena. It is interpretive and seeks insights rather than statistical analysis. Semi structured interviews are an example of such a technique.

### **3.3 Sample population and Sample size**

The target population was all basic schools in Mumbwa district. Since the study was focusing on causes of pupil absenteeism from Grade 7 composite examination, only 10 schools were selected. Purposeful sampling was used to arrive at the sample. The sample consisted both males and females in the ratio 1:1. Mumbwa being a semblance urban district, schools were categorized as urban, rural

and remote rural. The sample size was, 62 teachers drawn from 10 selected schools, and 10 parents Focus Group Discussion.

### **3.5 Research instruments and Data collection**

The study used the following research instruments to collect the data: questionnaires, interview guides and documentary review. Questionnaires were self administered and were given to Grade 7 teachers All these were based on all study objectives. The interview guides were used during the Focus Group Discussions with the parents in the 10 selected schools of the district, while documentary review was used to review the vital documents such as examination attendance registers, the computerized mark sheets and result analysis for each school in the study sample.

### **3.7 Data analysis and interpretation**

Data collected through the questionnaire were analyzed using Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS), thereby generating frequencies and percentages. This information was from the quantitative data. Content analysis of qualitative data was subjected to lording of themes categorization and re-categorization of themes until the most significant themes emerged.

Interpretation of data was based on the data which were collected and analyzed. The data were put into groups according to strata of respondents and a conclusion drawn to determine the causes of pupils' absenteeism from Grade 7 composite examinations and the measures that could be put in place to curb the trend.

### **3.9 Ethical issues**

The researcher was responsible for the ethical standards attached to the study. An introductory letter from the Head of Department at the University of Zambia to DEBS' Office was provided. The DEBS in turn gave the researcher an introductory letter to schools captured in the study sample. While in schools, no names of respondents were revealed in this study, and all respondents were assured that, the information they provided was purely for academic use and would be confidential. The respondents with an informed consent at hand exercised their rights to be part of the investigation or not. The respondents purposefully selected in this regard accepted to participate in this study.

## **CHAPTER FOUR: PRESENTATION OF FINDINGS**

### **4.1 Overview**

This chapter presents the findings of this study. The findings were presented and interpreted in relation to the research objectives as follows:

1. to determine whether there were variations between boys and girls in terms of pupil absenteeism from Grade 7 composite examination
2. to establish the causes of pupil absenteeism from Grade 7 composite examination
3. to establish the roles of parents and schools in curbing pupil absenteeism from Grade 7 composite examination
4. to determine measures to be taken to curb pupil absenteeism from Grade 7 composite examination.

This chapter has further been divided into distinct parts so as to allow clarity in presentation, in relation to research questions. All the five categories reflect the views of respondents about the causes of pupil absenteeism from Grade 7 composite examination.

### **4.2 Findings from Grade 7 teachers**

This section presents the findings from Grade 7 teachers as they were the key informants in the research. The researcher employed purposeful sampling to arrive at the study sample and a self administered questionnaire was employed. In order to collect data from the respondents, 62 questionnaires were distributed, but the researcher collected back 60. This yielded a response rate of 96.8%.

#### **4.2.1 Characteristics of Grade 7 teachers**

In terms of gender, the proportion was in favour of males at 53.3% while for females it was at 46.8%. Generally, the average age of teacher respondents was 33 years old with the majority in the age range of 23 to 33 years old and the percentage for this age range was 60%. The research teaching workforce in this sample was youthful and energetic.

In terms of professional qualifications the,70%(42) of the respondents had undergone at least 2 years of pre-service teacher training under the Zambian Teacher Education Course ( ZATEC), 26.7%(16)

obtained either a Primary teachers` diploma or a secondary teachers` diploma .while only 1.7%(1) did a pre – school teachers` course. One respondent had a university degree. Additionally, the researcher wanted to find out, how long the respondents had been teaching Grade 7 classes. The findings revealed that, 20 of the respondents had been working for at least 1 year, 8 had been working for 2 years and 3 had been working for 3 years. Furthermore, 9 of the respondents reported that, they had been teaching for 4 years and above. In terms of invigilating examinations, 83.3 %( 50) had an experience in invigilating Grade 7 composite examination, whilst 13.3 %( 80) had none.

In terms of teachers receiving support from the school administration, 96.7 %( 58) of the respondents reported receiving adequate support, mainly in form of stationery and teaching and learning materials. While only 1.7 %( 1) respondent was of the view that, the support that the school administration was providing to the teachers was not adequate. The respondent attributed this inadequate support mainly to lack of financial resources from the government.

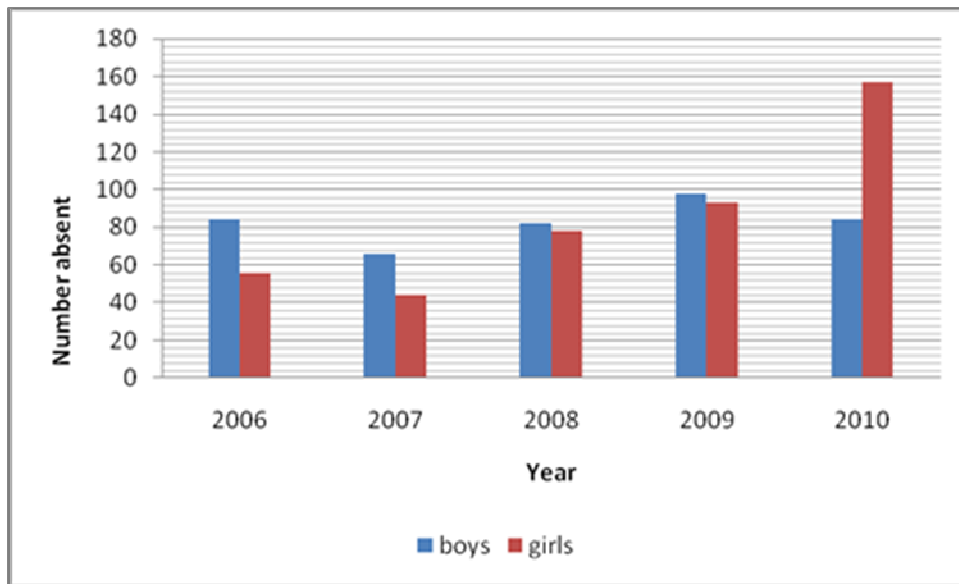
#### **4.3 Pupil absenteeism from Grade 7 composite examination in surveyed schools**

The study targeted 10 basic schools which were sampled out of 94 schools in Mumbwa district, namely Nalusanga, Kalilwe, Bulungu, Nampundwe, Lutondo, Chiwena, Nalusanga, Kamilambo, Chipa and Kaindu. The schools included 2 urban, 3 rural and 5 remote rural schools. Out of the 10, Kalilwe and Bulungu were urban; Nampundwe, Nalusanga and Chiwena were rural, whilst Lutondo, Kamilambo, Chipa, Nalubanda and Kaindu were remote rural schools. In the same schools, some vital documents, were checked and scrutinized to check the trend of pupil absenteeism from 2006-2010. The documents viewed were: examination registers, the Grade 7 result analysis and examinations reports from the schools, district and Examinations Council of Zambia, for the past five years.

During the period under review, 2006-2010, the number of pupils absent was 842. That is, 414 were boys and 428 were girls. It was observed that, on average, 82 boys and 85 girls were absent each year. The standard deviation for boys` was 11.362, while for girls was 44.207. An independent samples T-test was conducted to test a null hypothesis that there is no difference between boys and girls with regard to their rate of absenteeism from Grade 7 composite examination. The results obtained were:  $t = - 0.137$ ;  $df = 8$ ;  $p > 0.05$ . Therefore, the null hypothesis was accepted that there was no difference



between boys and girls with regard to their rate of absenteeism from Grade 7 composite examination. The findings were summarized and presented as shown in the figure below:



*Figure 4: Pupils Absenteeism in Selected Schools.*

#### **4.4 Variations between boys and girls in terms of pupil absenteeism from Grade 7 composite examination**

The absenteeism in terms of gender was reported in both rural and urban schools by all the respondents. The trend was viewed as being not good, by 60% of the respondents, while 38.3%, were of the opinion that, it was good. Overall, the report revealed that pupil absenteeism during examinations was decreasing and that accounted for 51.7% of the respondents. On the other hand 46.7% were of the opinion that it had increased. The decrease was attributed to the guidance and counseling activities that had been happening to both parents and pupils, and also the presence of the World Bicycle Relief in their schools which saw a lot of children owning bicycles and made their mobility to and from schools easy. Furthermore, the re-entry policy also helped to reduce pupil absenteeism during examinations.

Although some respondents reported that there was a decrease in absenteeism, others felt that, it was on the increase as earlier alluded to and that the increase was as a result of early marriages, early pregnancies, long distance to school, and lack of support from parents and guardians. When asked as

to which gender was mostly affected with regard to pupil absenteeism from Grade 7 composite examination, 38(63.3%) of the respondents argued that more boys were affected, while 18(30%) were of the opinion that girls were the most affected.

When asked as to whether pupil absenteeism from Grade 7 composite examination was justifiable, 30(50%) of the respondents felt that, absenteeism by the pupils could not be justifiable, while 28 (46.7%) were of the view that it was justifiable. The respondents, who felt that absenteeism was not justifiable, supported their views by giving examples of situations where it was inevitable for a pupil to miss examinations such as, when a girl had an advanced pregnancy or when there was bereavement in the family. Furthermore, it was argued that, some of the children were absent from examinations because they attached little or no value to education. Hence, participation in examinations became of little importance to them

On the other hand, those who were of the view that absenteeism from Grade 7 composite examination was not justifiable supported their views with the following arguments: that the government was providing free education from Grades 1- 7, education was a fundamental human right and therefore, no child should be denied the opportunity to study. The researcher further wanted to know if the location of the school had an influence on pupil absenteeism during examination. Thirty-nine (65%) agreed that, it had a negative impact, while 30 %( 18) felt that location had no influence at all.

#### **4.5 Causes of pupil absenteeism from Grade 7 composite examination**

The findings show that, causes of pupil absenteeism from Grade 7 composite examination were diverse. The survey revealed that early marriages were a major contributing factor to pupil absenteeism from Grade 7 composite examination, while others argued that, early pregnancies and high illiteracy levels among both parents and pupils caused pupil absenteeism during examinations. The research further revealed that, other causes of pupil absenteeism from examinations were: poverty, parents relocating to other places in search of green pasture and land for cultivation, and truancy by the pupils. Other causes of pupil absenteeism from Grade 7 composite examination were: child labor, death by the bread winner in the family, peer pressure, examination phobia, poor sanitation, dilapidated infrastructure, rainfall and floods, farming, herding cattle, long distance to school, child headed families, illness, traditional ceremonies such as chisungu for girls and Mkanda for boys and omission of the pupils from the final examination register. These causes were however,

classified as cultural factors such as early marriages, pregnancies herding cattle and initiation ceremonies, home related factors like child labour, poverty high illiteracy levels and parents re-locating, school related factors such as poor sanitation, dilapidated infrastructure, health factors which include illness and death, physical factors such as rains, floods climate and long distance to school, personal factors like peer pressure, truancy and examination phobia and teacher related factors which include teacher absenteeism from class, not finishing the syllabus and teachers' failure to prepare the pupils adequately for the examination, and other factors like omission of candidates from the examination register and government not recognizing Grade 7 certificate. The causes were summarized as shown in the pie chart shown below

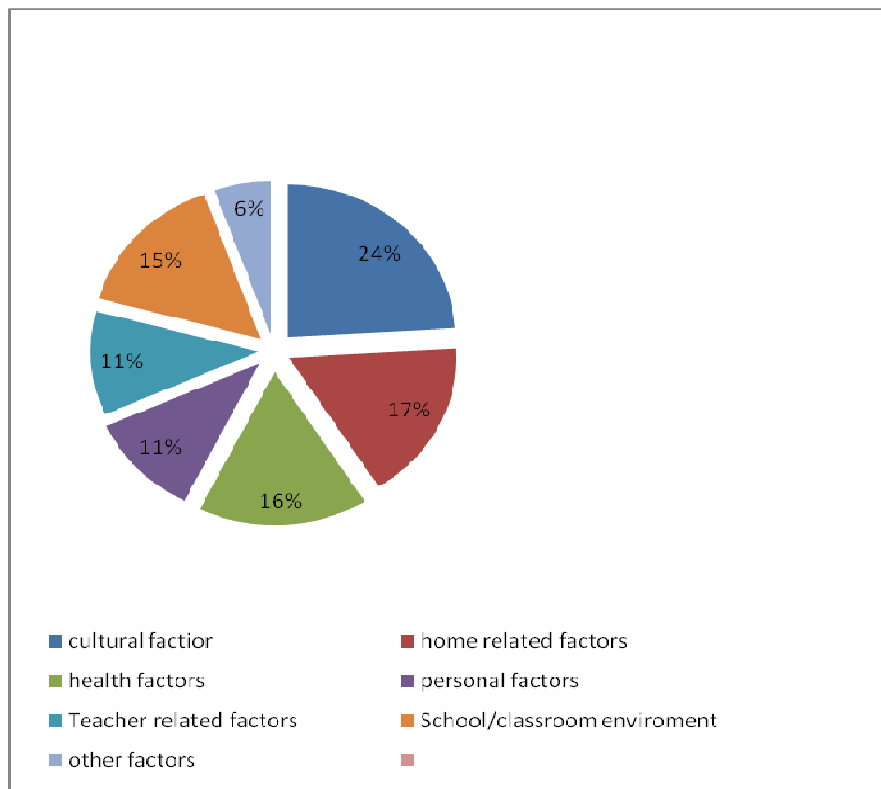


Figure 5: causes of pupil absenteeism

#### **4.6 Roles of parents and schools in curbing pupil absenteeism from Grade 7 composite examination**

When asked as to whether it was possible to stop pupil absenteeism from examinations, 86.6% of the respondents felt that it was possible, while 13.3% argued that it was not possible. The respondents outlined the roles that both parents and schools needed to play in curbing pupil absenteeism from examinations and these were the roles of parents and the roles of the school.

##### **4.6.1 Roles of parents in curbing pupil absenteeism from Grade 7 composite examination**

Most respondents were of the view that parents should play a major role in curbing pupil absenteeism from examinations. Overall, the research revealed that, these roles include providing food to their children, avoiding giving their school children lot of household chores, and guiding and counseling their children on matters related to examinations, and discouraging early marriages among the pupils (their children). Furthermore, parents should ensure that school requirements to their children such as books, pens, pencils and transport to school especially in faraway places are readily available. Furthermore, parents should have a positive attitude towards education and talk to their children on the importance of education. Parents should avoid conducting traditional ceremonies during school days.

##### **4.6.2 Roles of schools in curbing pupil absenteeism from Grade 7 composite examination**

From the findings, all the respondents were of the view that, school administration and the teachers had a very important role in stopping absenteeism during Grade 7 composite examination.

Respondents were of the view that schools should provide enabling environment for writing examinations, sensitize the pupils on such bad vices as drug abuse, and also come up with role models to provide motivational talks to pupils such as nurses, doctors, teachers and other influential people found in the society like chiefs, headmen and civic leaders. Furthermore, schools should make follow ups on the affected children and establish the causes.

#### **4.7 Measures to be taken to curb pupil absenteeism from Grade 7 composite examination**

To meet the ongoing and steady foreseeable growth in the number of pupils absent from Grade 7 composite examination, the teachers felt that sting measures needed to be put in place to curb the situation. From the research findings, 19.8 % (41) of the respondents felt that re-enforcing sex education would help curb the situation, 14.5 % (30) argued that, intensive revision on the terms work

would help the pupils to attempt the examinations. Further findings showed that, 13.5 % (28) of the respondents felt that, for absenteeism from examinations to stop, there was supposed to be parental support and guidance, 9.7% (20) were of the view that, discouraging peer pressure would help, 19(9.2 %) were of the opinion that, discouraging early marriages could stop the trend. Additionally, 7.7 % (16) of the respondents were of the view that, pupil absenteeism would only stop by punishing responsible parents, while 3.9% (8) of the respondents reported that, pupils absent from examinations could only be stopped through the sensitization of the girl-child on the importance of education. Furthermore, 3.9 % (8) felt that, absenteeism could be curbed by introducing recreation centers for the pupils to leisure and keep their minds busy and actively thinking of positive things in life.

The findings further showed that, less than 5% of the respondents were of the view that, pupils' absenteeism from Grade 7 composite examination could come to a stop, if parents provided all the necessary school requirements ,and if the government through the Examinations Council of Zambia made the Grade 7 certificate be recognized by all the employing institutions in the country .Others felt that, monitoring pupils' records of attendance during the course of the term would help, and sensitizing parents so that they are made aware of the importance of education and in the process reduce household chores to pupils especially those in examination classes. Furthermore, pupils need role models, more especially girls, to encourage them on matters related to examinations and giving them motivational talks on the importance of education. The research further revealed that, absenteeism could be stopped by giving bicycles to pupils living more than 5km away from school and this would be done in partnership with world bicycle relief programme and Government to provide bursaries to the vulnerable pupils according to the children's needs, more schools to be built in rural areas and, school health nutrition program to be held once or twice a week.

#### **4.8 Findings from the focus group discussions**

This section presents the findings from the parents and guardians of the Grade 7 pupils. These were purposefully sampled and included in the Focus Group Discussion. The questions were interpreted in the local language to enable every parent participate fully without feeling out of place. For instance, in Kaindu, the language used was Kikaonde while the rest of the 9 schools, it was Chitonga. The discussion was done in a free atmosphere and all parents participated fully.

#### **4.8.1 Characteristics of parents**

The average age of parents was 47 years for both males and females'. The study targeted a total of 10 parents sampled from each of the selected schools in the district. The 10 parents were purposefully sampled and included in the Focus Group Discussion. The gender proportion was equal at 50%. In terms of occupation, most of the respondents were farmers (self employed), and a few from urban schools were in formal employment. In terms of attendance, the numbers of participants in the Focus Group Discussion varied depending on the locality. A maximum number of 7 and minimum number of 5 from each group turned up. On average, 7 participants took part in each Focus Group Discussion.

Research has shown that equipping parents with skills and knowledge on the importance of education is related to improved pupil attendance with regard to examinations. When the parents were asked as to whether cases of pupil absenteeism during Grade 7 composite examination existed in their communities, 75% of the respondents accepted and indicated that, it was the order of the day, while 25% showed ignorance about it, alluding to the fact that they were not aware that absenteeism was real since they were not affected.

#### **4.9 Causes of pupil absenteeism from Grade 7 composite examination**

In terms of causes of pupil absenteeism, the respondents in the focus group discussion had diverse views. The study indicated that generally pupil absenteeism during examinations was on the increase despite the initiatives that the government has put in place to re-dress the issue of school drop outs. The findings revealed that, there were other factors such as unpreparedness of the pupils. This was as a result of drunken teachers who eventually make their children lose interest in school and at the time the examination is being under taken, the pupil is not ready. Some parents' were of the view that exclusion of boys and girls for "Chisungu" and "Mkanda" ceremonies during the examination period had a negative bearing on pupil attendance during examination.

#### **4.10 Roles of parents and schools in curbing pupil absenteeism from Grade 7 composite examination**

All the respondents in the 10 focus group discussions indicated that both parents and schools had a role to play in curbing pupil absenteeism from examination and the roles were categorized as shown below:

#### **4.10.1 Roles of parents in curbing pupil absenteeism from Grade 7 composite examination**

Parents being the rightful custodians of the pupils were among the least performing group. It is important to mention that the number of years spent with a school going child did not have any association with improved pupil attendance during examinations. The study revealed that, the parents had a vital role to play in stopping the trend of pupil absenteeism during examinations. When asked as to what roles they needed to play, some of the parents were of the view that, forming educational committees in their communities to sensitize each other on the importance of education, could help prevent pupil absenteeism from examinations since the parent who are providers of school necessities would be enlightened on what education was capable of doing to an individual. Other parents felt that absenteeism from examination could stop if only parents stopped marrying off their children at an early stage. Furthermore, other respondents stated that, the trend could stop if cruel parents such as step mothers stopped abusing their step children by denying them food and beating them up unnecessarily. In concluding the discussions, almost all the respondents were of the opinion that pupil absenteeism during examinations could only stop if parents took time to sit down with their children and counselled and guided them on what was expected of them in life and when time for examinations approached.

#### **4.10.2 Roles of schools in curbing pupil absenteeism from Grade 7 composite examination**

Most respondents reported that, the school was a second home for the pupils and that, these pupils spent most of their time there. In terms of roles performed by schools, some of the respondents were of the view that, schools needed to report the pupils who failed to show up for an examinations to the Parent Teachers Association chairpersons who could in turn inform the affected parents and a follow up done immediately. This meant that the parent teachers association (PTA) needed to work hand in hand with the school. Other parents suggested that schools should prepare the children adequately for the examinations by covering the syllabuses fully. Furthermore, they observed that teachers should stop the provision of private tuitions where they got extra money for themselves to better their lives because this caused truancy on the part of the teacher and attendance to lessons became inconsistent. Parents also pointed out that teachers should show a high standard of conduct and avoid abusing female pupils.

#### **4.11 Measures that parents can be put in place to curb pupil absenteeism from Grade 7 composite examination**

In addition to what the teachers reported, other measures that parents can put in place to stop pupil absenteeism from examinations were: forming pressure groups to closely monitor and visit the parents to educate them on the importance of education and also train psycho-socio councillors in the villages to help educate other parents on the dangers of marrying off their school going children.

#### **4.12 Measures that school can be put in place to curb pupil absenteeism from Grade 7 composite examination**

In terms of measures that schools can put in place to stop pupil absenteeism, the research revealed that, apart from what the teachers and parents had reported, the respondents felt that, the school can be making follow ups a few weeks before examinations to all households where parents seem to show negligence and not to know the importance of examinations and also checking on the attendance registers for the term to ascertain the pupils who are in the tendency of absenting themselves. Additionally, the Ministry of Education to re-introduce the school fees as this will motivate the parents to develop a keen interest in the education of their children,” since it is evident that there is no value attached to education if no penny is spent, as the adage goes, where your treasures are, that is where your mind will be”.

#### **4.13 Summary**

The research findings demonstrated that, there was a negligible difference between boys and girls with regard to their rate of absenteeism from Grade 7 composite examination. The increase was from 140 in 2006 to 196 in 2010. In terms of causes of pupil absenteeism from Grade 7 composite examination, the research findings revealed that both teachers and parents had similar observations. The respondents cited the drivers of pupil absenteeism during examinations as: cultural and social factors like early marriages, early pregnancies and initiation ceremonies, Home related factors such as herding cattle, high illiteracy levels among parents and pupils, poverty, parents re-locating to other places in search of green pasture and land for cultivation child labour and household chores, Health related factors such as illness and death of the bread winner in the family, Personal attitudes like truancy by the pupils, peer pressure and laziness, physical factors such as long distance to school, rainfall and floods, Teacher related factors like teacher absenteeism and not preparing pupils adequately for examinations, School and classroom environment such as poor sanitation, dilapidated



infrastructure and lack of classroom furniture and other factors like omission of a candidate from the examination register and non recognition of Grade 7 certificate by most of the employing institutions..

In terms of roles that parents and schools needed to play to curb pupil absenteeism from Grade 7 composite examination, findings from the research were similar for both teachers and parents. The respondents reported that, some of the roles that parents and schools needed to play were: guiding and counseling the pupils, providing school requirements, providing role models such as doctors, nurses, accountants and many more ,to give motivational talks to the pupils and also providing conducive environment for teaching and learning.

Finally, with regard to measures that teachers, parents and schools can put in place to curb pupil absenteeism from Grade 7 composite examination, the respondents reported that, this absenteeism could only stop if all stakeholders took part in stopping marrying off children at an early age, sensitizing both parents and pupils on the importance of education through the formation of pressure groups in the villages, and practicing traditional ceremonies such as chisungu and Mkanda during the holidays or completely discarding the practice. Also teachers and community members stopping abusing the children by defiling them and stopping denying them food and beating them unnecessarily, more especially the step- parents.

## **CHAPTER FIVE: DISCUSSION OF FINDINGS**

### **5.1 Overview**

This study revealed a number of causes of pupil absenteeism from Grade 7 Composite examination, the roles that parents and schools needed to play in order to curb pupil absenteeism and also measures that could be put in place to stop the trend. It is in this view that, this chapter discusses some of the major causes of pupil absenteeism from examination, their implications, and the roles that parents and schools need to play to stop the trend and measures that could be put in place to curb the situation.

### **5.2 Variations In absenteeism between boys and girls from Grade 7 composite examination**

The analysis on the registration and Grade 7 examination statistics revealed that there were variations between the number of boys and girls who were registered for the composite examination from 2006 - 2010 and those absent in the same years. The absenteeism was slightly lower than the number registered. This implies that, a total of 414 boys and 428 girls dropped out of school before they could sit for examinations at Grade 7. This signifies the proportion of pupils who left the system without completing the primary Grade.

The findings indicate that there was no difference between boys and girls with regard to their levels of absenteeism from examinations. These findings seem to suggest that both genders had similar numbers of candidates entered to sit for examinations and almost the similar number missed the examinations at the end of the year.

This implies that, the small difference noticed was as a result of the research being conducted within a short period of time. If the period was extended to 10 or 20 years, a very big margin was going to be observed, with a lot of girls being affected as is evident from year 2010.

### **5.3 Causes of pupil absenteeism from Grade 7 composite examination**

Absenteeism from examinations is the challenge facing pupils' overall progression and completion of the basic school programme, it has been observed despite the introduction of free basic education. This study, therefore, identified a number of causes of pupils absenteeism from Grade 7 composite examination and these drivers are categorized as: physical factors, health factors, personal attitude, teacher related reasons, school and classroom environment, home related factors and cultural and social factors.

#### **5.3.1 Physical factors**

The research findings reviewed that one of the drivers of pupil absenteeism from examinations was long distance to school. Most of the schools in Mumbwa District are over 10km apart and this has made pupils to cover long distances to school on foot and those who are not strong enough stop on the way. The most affected, from the findings, are girls who are usually abused on the way. The few that find themselves in the weekly boarding houses have fallen prey of the defilement (rape) by the teachers or villagers. This implies that the many pupils, who register to sit for grade 7 composite examination at the beginning of the year, end up missing the examinations at the end of the year because of dropping out due to long distance to school as girls mostly feel unsure even in the hands of the teachers or their neighbours and the villagers. Additionally, the research findings showed that, climate was another factor that causes pupils to be absent from examinations. During the rainy season, some roads become impassible due to floods and crossing rivers also becomes impossible as the rivers are flooded.

#### **5.3.2 Health factors**

From the research findings, the most commonly cited factor that causes pupils' absenteeism from Grade 7 composite examinations was illness. More pupils miss examinations due to this reason, perhaps access to quality health promoting conditions is difficult.

The findings identified the fact that female pupils are more likely than male pupils to miss examinations due to the reason in question more especially during menstruation. A girl during her menses especially if it begins at school and she spoils her uniform may stop school, be it during examinations as she feels embarrassed by the whole scenario.

Furthermore, the findings revealed that pupils fail to test the waters at Grade 7 level because of loss of the bread winner in the family or the pupil him/herself. At times pupils miss examinations because they were attending funerals or busy with activities associated with funerals. Additionally, with the advent of HIV/AIDS, many families are child headed. Therefore, the children end up dropping out of school or fail to sit for examinations because the eldest child of the family is unable to provide all the school necessities to the other siblings or they are told to stay home to take care of the sick especially the girls or it may be that the bread winner in the family has passed on.

### **5.3.3 Personal attitudes**

The finds revealed that the other cause of pupil absenteeism from examination is the pupils themselves, pupils are not interested in school work. Many are truants throughout the year. The general school attendance is naturally poor. This truancy which culminates from the beginning of the year, results into pupils not writing examinations. Peer pressure was another factor that was cited as causing pupil absenteeism from examinations. Other pupils miss examinations because of the influence from friends. They are forced to drop out of school and join their friends in bad practices such as smoking, drinking beer and taking drugs and prostitution. For some pupils, absenteeism from Grade 7 composite examination as revealed from the findings is caused by laziness and failure to concentrate in school.

### **5.3.4 School and classroom environment**

Research findings showed that pupils miss examinations because of poor sanitation and bad water supply in places of learning. Some schools have very poor sanitation and are not girl friendly environments. For instance, when a girl is having her menses it is difficult to go and change her sanitary towels. Also water supply in some institutions of learning is very bad. The findings revealed that, some get water from the dams and rivers which make the water unsafe to drink. This means that those children who cannot withstand such sorry sites end up stopping school even when they were registered to sit for an examination.

Some pupils fail to complete their primary education due to lack of classroom furniture. Where children are made to sit on stones and logs and write leaning on their laps, tend to shun and stay away from school and in turn even miss the examination. Some classrooms are old and dilapidated, so much that pupils feel unsafe to learn and write an examination in such a place. The structures

themselves just make the children feel defeated and refuse to write the examinations. The research findings further revealed that, where teaching and learning materials were not available, teachers failed to prepare their learners adequately for the examination.

### **5.3.5 Cultural factors**

The most cited cause of pupil absenteeism from Grade 7 composite examination was early marriages. This affected both boys and girls. Both sexes were getting married at an early age due to poverty and ignorance by parents, the research findings revealed. However, the research findings further revealed that some of the early marriages were due to religious beliefs.

Furthermore, the findings showed that, early pregnancies were yet another cause of pupil absenteeism from examinations. It was revealed that, most of the girls were affected as they were made to drop out of school when they were pregnant due to shyness and fear to be laughed at by the mates. Though most of these pregnancies were caused by the pupils themselves, however, some are as a result of abuse or defilement from the teachers, guardians or other members of the community.

Additionally, initiation ceremonies like Chisungu and Mkanda also caused pupils to miss examinations as revealed by the findings. Some ethnic groups kept their children in seclusion for a long period of time when they came of age, teaching them how to behave as grownups and also how to behave as future husbands and wives. This implies that, the causes of early marriages and early pregnancies increase as these little adults called mooyes ( a girl who becomes of age and is kept in seclusion for a period of time being taught how to behave as a future house wife and mother), when they were out of seclusion, they regarded themselves as adults. Hence, begin to practice what they were taught while in seclusion.

### **5.3.6 Home Related Factors**

The research findings revealed that pupil absenteeism from examinations was caused by parents/guardians' negative attitude towards school. Some parents did not value education as they saw nothing profitable in educating a child. Hence, they sent their children to patronize bars and taverns or sent them to be call boys at bus stations to raise some income for the family. Further findings showed that, household chores, too, cause pupils to miss examinations. Most pupils were made to care for the sick relatives, care for the children, cook or clean or fetch water and firewood. In the process of doing so, the pupil was ever tired and ended up dropping out of school.

Some parents failed to provide the needed school requirements such as uniforms and stationery to their children due to poverty, and in the process the child dropped out of school or missed the examinations. The findings also revealed that some pupils lack the appropriate clothing or were too worn or soiled to attend school and sit for an examination. The research further showed that, on the overall, pupils missed examinations because the parents failed to provide food or to try and bring food at school. Hunger was cited as causing pupils to miss examinations, reflecting droughts and food shortages the district experienced the subsequent years.

The research findings further revealed that some pupils were withdrawn from school even during examinations to help their guardians with farming during the farming season and herding cattle. The boys were more affected in this case, because Ilas and Salas of Mumbwa district were pastoralists and measure wealth in terms of how many cattle one had, and it was for this reason that their children were made to stop school and sent to till the land and herd cattle. The findings also showed that parents were ever relocating in search of greener pastures and land for cultivation. This means that in the process of moving from one place to another, pupils were forced to miss examinations as the parents fail to send them back to write examinations at the places where they had been registered from.

### **5.3.7 Teacher Related Factors**

The research findings revealed that teacher absenteeism and lack of commitment cause pupils to miss examinations. The teachers do not prepare the pupils adequately for the examination by completing the syllabuses. It is for this reason that teachers end up involving themselves into malpractices to make the children pass. However, this disadvantages the children because once they are caught; they are made to stop writing the examinations. There are reports of pupils who were denied entry into the examination rooms after being caught with unauthorized materials, supplied to them by unknown people during last year's examinations.

Teachers have a tendency of staying away from school more especially during strikes and other commitments leaving pupils unattended to. Because of this absenteeism, the teachers demoralize the learners and in turn, the pupils lose interest in school and end up dropping out.

### **5.3.8 Other Cross Cutting Issues**

Research has also revealed that, with the coming of Electronic Candidate Registration System (ECRS), many children are omitted from the examination register and this frustrates the pupils and in the process, they decide to stay home because, even after the school has made corrections on the provisional registers, the mistakes remain unchanged by the Examinations Council of Zambia (ECZ). So children affected feel safer to stay home than trouble themselves on things that would not help them due to complication attached to writing under protest. The other reason cited as a causal factor in pupil absenteeism from Grade 7 composite examination was the non-recognition of the Grade 7 certificate in Zambia today by many employing institutions. The implication here is that absenteeism from Grade 7 composite examinations is a challenge facing pupils' overall progression and completion of the basic school programme and this would negatively impact on the future of the children and the development of the nation at large.

## **5.4 Roles of Parents and Schools in Curbing Pupils Absenteeism from Grade 7 Composite Examination**

Having involved the parents and teachers in the study, the research revealed that there are some roles that both parents and schools needed to play in order to curb pupil absenteeism from Grade 7 composite examinations. Hence, this part of the study, discusses the roles that parents and schools need to play in stopping absenteeism from examinations and some of these roles are:

### **5.4.1 Parental responsibility in curbing pupil absenteeism from Grade 7 composite examination**

The findings showed that, parents needed to provide school requirements but failed to do so for their children. Despite the Free Basic Education policy from Grades 1 – 7, parents have an obligation to buy books, pens and food for their schools going children. These enable the child to feel as part of the larger community and concentrate on school activities. This in entails that, when a child has all school necessities, participation during examinations becomes very good.

Furthermore, parents need to guide and counsel their children. It was discovered that most of the parents did not spend time with their own children and learn of problems they encountered at school. Parents should see to it that, they take time off to sit with their children and talk to them on matters related to education there by guiding and counseling them in the way they are supposed to go.

In view of these facts, parents and schools need to do more than guiding and counseling the pupils and also providing conducive environment for teaching and learning. Parents need to stop the business of patronizing bars and taverns and spend time at home with their children. Furthermore, the findings revealed that parents had a duty to provide for the family and not send their children into the streets to sell some merchandize such as oranges, rape and other vegetables to an extent that, the child remains with no time to attend to his/her school work and as an examination approaches, the pupil is not prepared and shun it.

#### **5.4.2 School responsibility in curbing pupil absenteeism from Grade 7 composite examination**

The findings revealed that schools need to provide a conducive environment for teaching and learning. The schools are supposed to buy desks; chalk and other teaching and learning materials to enable the pupils learn the required materials and when an examination is due the pupil is found ready. In schools where infrastructure is dilapidated, the school administration in partnership with the community should build new classrooms. In situations where staffing is low; the schools through the District Education Board Secretary's (DEBS) office need to provide enough qualified teachers to teach and prepare the children for the examination adequately. Additionally, the school has a role of motivating children.

#### **5.5 Measure to be taken to Stop Pupil absenteeism from Grade 7 Composite Examination**

From the research findings, it was observed that, parents, schools and all stakeholders in education needed to make a firm decision to stop absenteeism from examinations among the learners. It is worth noting that some of the roles that parents and schools need to play to curb pupil absenteeism can at the same time be taken as measures that can be put in place to curb this pupil absenteeism. For instance, guiding and counseling the pupils, providing teaching and learning materials and building more schools to mention but a few. It is for this reason that, in this section reference is made to caption 5.4.



## **CHAPTER SIX: CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS**

### **6.0 Overview**

This chapter presents critical policy issues that need to be addressed with the specific objectives of stopping pupil absenteeism from Grade 7 composite examination. It outlines and summarizes the research findings as reflected in the research. Additionally, the chapter gives the recommendations for the policy makers to reflect and act on. Finally, it suggests topics for further study.

### **6.1 Conclusion**

Drawing from the above discussions it can therefore be concluded that this research has demonstrated that, the numbers of pupils absent from an examination each year has shown an upward trend in the background of free basic education. Though more boys than girls were absent in the first four years, the girls have taken an upward movement in 2010.

From the findings the major drivers of pupil absenteeism from Grade 7 composite examinations were physical factors such as long distance to school and climate especially in the rainy season where roads become impassible due , health factors such as illnesses and death in the family and personal attitude like pupils not being interested in school, peer pressure and laziness, home related factors like parents and guardians having a negative attitude towards school, house chores, parents' failure to provide food and other school requirements, and children being withdrawn from school during the farming season. Furthermore, the other causes include the cultural and social factors such as early marriages, early pregnancies and initiation ceremonies and also teacher related factors like teacher's absenteeism from work and lack of commitment, teachers' failure to cover the syllabus adequately and failure to prepare the pupils for examinations.

The research also revealed that parents had a role to play in curbing pupil absenteeism during examinations such as guidance and counseling their children and providing school requirements.

What is needed is to build on this undoubtedly successful fight and come up with measures that can help curb this pupil absenteeism during examinations. What Zambia wants to achieve by 2015 is not just universal education, but universal quality education where substantial real learning which is measured by assessment of learning achievement through examinations takes place.

Taking note of the views brought forward in this research and critically important taking resolute action in response to it, should enable the Ministry of Education, and all other stake holders to move forward in this direction. This is not a research that should be shelved, but one that should be called upon regularly to provide evidence and guidance for the improvement of completion rates among Pupils. The research should galvanize every stakeholder towards this. The problems and difficulties highlighted in this dissertation do not present limits that cannot be crossed, but new challenges to be faced, new opportunities to be welcomed, new pathways to be opened up as Zambia progresses towards Vision 2030.

## **5.7. Recommendations**

Basing on the above discussions, the following recommendations were made:

- Parents should form pressure groups to sensitize each other on the importance of education.
- Parents should practice traditional ceremonies like Mkanda and Chisungu during the holidays.
- Schools should provide recreation centers for pupils
- .School Based Continuous Professional Development should be scaled down to zones to enable all teachers participates and in turn acquires new techniques of teaching.
- Ministry of education should build schools within a radius of 4km.
- Standard officers should intensify external monitoring in schools.

- The government should prosecute parents who marry off their children at an early age. That is, pupil absenteeism from examinations without a proper reason should be regarded as a criminal offence and culprits should be prosecuted and if found guilty, be imprisoned.
- The government should make Grade 7 certificate be recognized by all employing institutions in the country.
- Ministry of Education should scale down continuous assessment to all grades and be considered for certification in situations where a candidate fails to attempt the composite examination due to genuine reasons.

### **Suggestions for further study**

Areas of possible future research was suggested. This includes:

- To carry out a comparative study between the levels of pupil absenteeism during Grade 7 composite examinations in rural and urban basic schools.
- To carry out a comparative study between the rich and the poor with regard to pupil absenteeism during Grade 7 composite examination.
- To investigate the rate of pupil absenteeism during Grade 7 composite examination in government and private schools.

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**APPENDIX 1**

**SELF ADMINISTERED QUESTIONNAIRE FOR GRADE 7 TEACHERS**

**THE UNIVERSITY OF ZAMBIA**

**SCHOOL OF EDUCATION**

**DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATIONAL ADMINISTRATION AND POLICY STUDIES**

QUESTIONNAIRE No.

--	--

DATE.....

Dear respondent,

I am a student from the University of Zambia, conducting a research on the causes of pupils' absenteeism during Grade 7 Composite examinations. The investigations enabled me collect data required by Ministry of Education and other stakeholders in education

You have been purposefully sampled to be one of the respondents in this research, and therefore, the information that you will provide is specifically for academic purposes and shall be treated with high confidentiality.

God bless you.

## QUESTIONS

1. Answer all questions.
2. The questionnaire allows you to tick or supply phrase answers.

Province-----

District-----

School-----

For official use

1. Sex of respondent    male  Female

2. Age

3. What are your qualifications?

Pre-School

Certificate

Diploma

Degree

Masters

Doctorate

4. How long have you been teaching Grade 7?



1 year

2 years

3 years

4 years

Other specification

5. List down the programme you did.

Initial training	2 <sup>nd</sup> training	3 <sup>rd</sup> training	<input type="checkbox"/>
			<input type="checkbox"/>
			<input type="checkbox"/>
			<input type="checkbox"/>

6. a) Does the school administration support you with teaching and learning material?

Yes

No

b) If not, what are the reasons?

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c) If yes what materials

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7. How well do you prepare your pupils for examinations?

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8. Have you been involved in the invigilation of Grade 7 composite examination?

Yes

No

9. How has been the pupils' attendance from the examinations?

Good

Fair

Bad

10. Did you record any cases of pupils being absent from examinations

Yes

No

11. What, in your own view could have been the causes of this

Absenteeism in '10'?

- i. \_\_\_\_\_
- ii. \_\_\_\_\_
- iii. \_\_\_\_\_
- iv. \_\_\_\_\_
- v. \_\_\_\_\_
- vi. \_\_\_\_\_

12. Which gender is more affected in terms of absenteeism during examination at Grade 7 level?

Female

Male

13. a) Has pupils absenteeism from Grade 7 composite examination increased or decreased over the years?

Increased

Decreased

(b) If it has increased, what are the reasons?

\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

(c) If it has decreased, what are the reasons?

\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

---

14. (a) Is pupils' absenteeism from examination, at Grade 7 justifiable?

Yes

No

(b) If yes, give reasons.

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(c) If no, give reasons.

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15. (a) Do you think, the location of your school has an influence on pupils' absenteeism from examinations (especially at Grade 7)

Yes

No

(b) If yes, give reasons.

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(c) If no, give reasons.

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16. (a) Do parents and school have a role to play in curbing pupil's absenteeism from Grade 7 examination?

Yes

No

(b) If yes, give reasons.

---

---

(c) If no, give reasons.

---

---

17. What role should parents and Schools play to curb pupils absenteeism from examinations?

(i) \_\_\_\_\_

(ii) \_\_\_\_\_

(iii) \_\_\_\_\_

(iv) \_\_\_\_\_

(v) \_\_\_\_\_

(vi) \_\_\_\_\_

18. (a) Is it possible to stop pupils absenteeism from Grade 7 Composite examination?

Yes

No

(b) If yes, give reasons.

---

---

(c) If no, give reasons.

---

---

19. What measures can we put in place to arrest this trend of pupil absenteeism From examinations at Grade 7 level.

(i) \_\_\_\_\_

(ii) \_\_\_\_\_

(iii) \_\_\_\_\_

(iv) \_\_\_\_\_

(v) \_\_\_\_\_

(vi) \_\_\_\_\_

## **APPENDIX 2**

### **Interview guides for the parents in the Focus Group Discussion**

1. Do cases of pupils absent from grade 7 composite examination exist in your community?
2. Which gender is mostly affected when it comes to pupil absenteeism from examinations?
3. What are the causes of pupil absenteeism from grade 7 composite examination?
4. What roles should parents and schools play to curb pupil absenteeism from grade 7 composite examination?
5. What measures can be put in place to curb pupil absenteeism from grade 7 composite examination?

Thank you for participating in the discussion.

### APPENDIX 3: 2006 GRADE 7 EXAMINATION STATISTICS

REGION	NUMBER ENTERED			NUMBER SAT			NUMBER ABSENT			%ABSENT	
	BOYS	GIRLS	TOTAL	BOYS	GIRLS	TOTAL	BOYS	GIRLS	TOTAL	BOYS	GIRLS
NORTHERN	21,833	13,132	<b>34,965</b>	19,794	11,697	<b>31,497</b>	2,039	1,435	<b>3,474</b>	9.34	10.93
LUAPULA	11,157	7,322	<b>18,475</b>	10,176	6,575	<b>16,751</b>	981	747	<b>1,728</b>	8.75	10.20
SOUTHERN	23,618	19,864	<b>43,482</b>	21,727	17,959	<b>39,686</b>	1,891	1,905	<b>3,796</b>	8.01	9.59
EASTERN	17,538	11,984	<b>29,522</b>	15,984	10,521	<b>26,505</b>	1,554	1,463	<b>3,017</b>	8.86	12.21
COPPERBELT	26,763	25,370	<b>52,133</b>	25,118	23,548	<b>48,666</b>	1,645	1,822	<b>3,467</b>	6.15	7.18
NORTH WESTERN	9,050	6,395	<b>15,445</b>	8,403	5,664	<b>13,707</b>	1,007	731	<b>1,738</b>	11.13	11.43
CENTRAL	19,593	15,107	<b>34,700</b>	17,917	13,678	<b>31,595</b>	1,676	1,429	<b>3,105</b>	8.55	9.46
WESTERN	9,515	7,511	<b>17,026</b>	8,527	6,556	<b>15,083</b>	988	955	<b>1,943</b>	10.38	12.71
LUSAKA	23,897	23,934	<b>47,831</b>	22,399	22,214	<b>44,613</b>	1,497	1,720	<b>3,218</b>	6.69	7.74
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>162,964</b>	<b>130,619</b>	<b>293,583</b>	<b>147,685</b>	<b>118,412</b>	<b>268,097</b>	<b>13,275</b>	<b>12,207</b>	<b>25,486</b>	<b>8.87</b>	<b>10.31</b>

**APPENDIX 4: 2007 GRADE 7 EXAMINATION STATISTICS**

REGION	NUMBER ENTERED			NUMBER SAT			NUMBER ABSENT			%ABSENT	
	BOYS	GIRLS	TOTAL	BOYS	GIRLS	TOTAL	BOYS	GIRLS	TOTAL	BOYS	GIRLS
NORTHERN	23,130	14,730	<b>37,860</b>	20,689	13,019	<b>33,708</b>	2,441	1,711	<b>4,152</b>	10.6	11.6
LUAPULA	11,759	8,175	<b>17,934</b>	10,682	7,323	<b>18,005</b>	1,077	852	<b>1,929</b>	9.2	10.6
SOUTHERN	24,559	20,597	<b>45,156</b>	22,733	18,761	<b>41,494</b>	1,826	1,836	<b>3,662</b>	7.4	8.9
EASTERN	19,373	13,309	<b>32,682</b>	17,868	11,944	<b>29,812</b>	1,505	1,365	<b>2,870</b>	7.8	10.3
COPPERBELT	28,952	27,801	<b>56,753</b>	27,204	25,862	<b>53,066</b>	1,748	1,939	<b>3,687</b>	6.0	7.0
NORTH WESTERN	10,031	7,446	<b>17,477</b>	9007	6,518	<b>15,525</b>	1,024	928	<b>1,952</b>	10.2	12.5
CENTRAL	20,574	16,446	<b>37,020</b>	18894	14,930	<b>33,824</b>	1,680	1,516	<b>3,196</b>	8.2	9.2
WESTERN	10,219	8,052	<b>18,271</b>	9146	7,062	<b>16,208</b>	1,073	990	<b>2,063</b>	10.5	12.3
LUSAKA	25,073	24,951	<b>50,024</b>	23,699	23,367	<b>47,066</b>	1,374	1,584	<b>2,958</b>	5.5	6.3
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>173,670</b>	<b>141,507</b>	<b>315,177</b>	<b>159,922</b>	<b>128,786</b>	<b>288,708</b>	<b>13,748</b>	<b>12,721</b>	<b>26,469</b>	<b>7.9</b>	<b>9.0</b>



**APPENDIX 5: 2008 GRADE 7 EXAMINATION STATISTICS**

REGION	NUMBER ENTERED			NUMBER SAT			NUMBER ABSENT			%ABSENT	
	BOYS	GIRLS	TOTAL	BOYS	GIRLS	TOTAL	BOYS	GIRLS	TOTAL	BOYS	GIRLS
NORTHERN	23,756	15,728	<b>39,484</b>	21,003	14,045	<b>35,048</b>	2,753	1,683	<b>4,436</b>	11.59	10.70
LUAPULA	12,368	8,347	<b>20,715</b>	11,273	7,483	<b>18,756</b>	1,095	864	<b>1,959</b>	8.85	10.35
SOUTHERN	25,712	22,130	<b>47,842</b>	23,505	20,153	<b>43,658</b>	2,207	1,977	<b>4,184</b>	8.58	8.93
EASTERN	19,930	14,735	<b>34,665</b>	18,291	13,095	<b>31,386</b>	1,639	1,640	<b>3,279</b>	8.22	11.13
COPPERBELT	29,600	28,462	<b>58,062</b>	27,521	26,169	<b>53,690</b>	2,079	2,293	<b>4,372</b>	7.02	8.76
NORTH WESTERN	10,508	8,260	<b>18,768</b>	9,309	7,076	<b>16,385</b>	1,199	1,184	<b>2,383</b>	11.41	14.33
CENTRAL	22,003	17,460	<b>39,463</b>	19,965	15,602	<b>35,567</b>	2,038	1,858	<b>3,896</b>	9.26	10.64
WESTERN	10,821	8,520	<b>19,341</b>	9,491	7,318	<b>16,809</b>	1,330	1,202	<b>2,532</b>	12.29	14.11
LUSAKA	26,817	27,122	<b>53,939</b>	25,084	25,044	<b>50,128</b>	1,733	2,078	<b>3,811</b>	6.46	7.66
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>181,515</b>	<b>150,764</b>	<b>332,279</b>	<b>165,442</b>	<b>135,985</b>	<b>301,427</b>	<b>16,073</b>	<b>14,779</b>	<b>30,852</b>	<b>8.85</b>	<b>9.80</b>

**APPENDIX 6: 2009 GRADE 7 EXAMINATION STATISTICS**

REGION	NUMBER ENTERED			NUMBER SAT			NUMBER ABSENT			%ABSENT	
	BOYS	GIRLS	TOTAL	BOYS	GIRLS	TOTAL	BOYS	GIRLS	TOTAL	BOYS	GIRLS
NORTHERN	24,236	16,474	<b>40,710</b>	21,284	14,317	<b>35,601</b>	2,952	2,157	<b>5,109</b>	12.18	13.09
LUAPULA	11,996	8,648	<b>20,645</b>	10,511	7,484	<b>17,995</b>	1,486	1,164	<b>2,650</b>	12.39	13.46
SOUTHERN	25,824	22,598	<b>48,422</b>	23,816	20,650	<b>44,466</b>	2,008	1,948	<b>3,956</b>	7.78	8.62
EASTERN	20,333	15,355	<b>35,688</b>	18,624	13,620	<b>32,244</b>	1,709	1,735	<b>3,444</b>	8.41	11.30
COPPERBELT	30,501	29,900	<b>60,401</b>	28,357	27,548	<b>55,905</b>	2,144	2,352	<b>4,496</b>	7.03	7.87
NORTH WESTERN	10,326	8,357	<b>18,683</b>	9,078	7,235	<b>16,313</b>	1,248	1,122	<b>2,370</b>	12.09	13.43
CENTRAL	22,565	18,158	<b>40,723</b>	20,373	16,139	<b>36,512</b>	2,192	2,019	<b>4,211</b>	9.71	11.12
WESTERN	10,599	8,589	<b>19,188</b>	9,173	7,359	<b>16,532</b>	1,426	1,230	<b>2,656</b>	13.45	14.32
LUSAKA	27,489	28,430	<b>55,919</b>	25,514	26,109	<b>51,623</b>	1,975	2,321	<b>4,296</b>	7.18	8.16
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>183,870</b>	<b>156,509</b>	<b>340,379</b>	<b>166,730</b>	<b>140,461</b>	<b>307,191</b>	<b>17,140</b>	<b>16,048</b>	<b>33,188</b>	<b>9.32</b>	<b>10.25</b>

**APPENDIX 7: 2010 GRADE 7 EXAMINATION STATISTICS**

REGION	NUMBER ENTERED			NUMBER SAT			NUMBER ABSENT			%ABSENT	
	BOYS	GIRLS	TOTAL	BOYS	GIRLS	TOTAL	BOYS	GIRLS	TOTAL	BOYS	GIRLS
NORTHERN	23,920	16,945	<b>40,865</b>	20,749	14,567	<b>35,316</b>	3,171	<b>2,378</b>	5,549	13.26	14.03
LUAPULA	11,253	8,794	<b>20,047</b>	9,832	7,640	<b>17,472</b>	1,421	<b>1,154</b>	2,575	12.63	13.12
SOUTHERN	26,355	23,038	<b>49,393</b>	23,980	20,815	<b>44,795</b>	2,378	2,223	4,601	9.02	9.65
EASTERN	20,135	16,602	<b>36,737</b>	18,387	14,540	<b>32,927</b>	1,748	2,062	3,810	8.68	12.42
COPPERBELT	29,870	29,719	<b>59,589</b>	27,824	27,396	<b>55,220</b>	2,046	2,323	4,369	6.85	7.82
NORTH WESTERN	10,191	8,251	<b>18,442</b>	8,812	7,000	<b>15,812</b>	1,379	1,251	2,630	13.53	15.16
CENTRAL	22,029	18,277	<b>40,306</b>	19,911	16,305	<b>36,216</b>	2,118	1,972	4,090	9.61	10.79
WESTERN	10,504	8,826	<b>19,330</b>	9,031	7,447	<b>16,478</b>	1,473	1,379	2,852	14.02	15.62
LUSAKA	28,063	28,554	<b>56,617</b>	26,097	26,375	<b>52,472</b>	1,966	2,179	4,145	7.01	7.63
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>182,320</b>	<b>159,006</b>	<b>341,326</b>	<b>164,623</b>	<b>142,085</b>	<b>306,708</b>	<b>17,700</b>	<b>16,921</b>	<b>34,621</b>	<b>9.71</b>	<b>10.64</b>