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## DECLARATION

I, Innocent Rukundo, do hereby declare that this piece of work is my own, and that the works of other persons have been dully acknowledged, and that this work has not been previously presented at this university and any other university for similar purposes.

Signed.....

Date.....

## **APPROVAL**

This dissertation of Innocent Rukundo is as fulfilling part of the requirements for the award of degree of Master of Education in Literacy and Learning by the University of Zambia.

Signed..... Date.....

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## **ABSTRACT**

This study was set out to establish the challenges faced by refugee pupils in initial literacy acquisition at Meheba D Basic School.

The research design was a case study and for that reason qualitative method was used to collect data. The data were collected through interviews, lesson observations and out of classroom observations. The target population was all the Grade One refugee pupils at Meheba D Basic School. The total number was one hundred and twenty four (124) pupils. The class teacher, school head teacher and District Educational Board Secretary (DEBS) also were sampled in the study. The total of one hundred and twenty seven (127) respondents participated in the study.

The study revealed six main challenges faced by refugee pupils in initial literacy acquisition. These were: the use of an unfamiliar language (Kikaonde) to teach/learn initial literacy, long distance between refugee pupils' homes and the school; overcrowded classrooms; shortage of NBTL learning/teaching materials; frequent movements of refugees, and poverty among refugees.

The study further revealed that Kikaonde was not the refugee pupils' language of play both at home and school.

In view of the findings, the following recommendations were made. The Ministry of Education, Science, Vocational Training and Early Education should revisit the language being used for teaching at Meheba D Basic School. The mother tongue of the refugee pupils should be used to teach and learn initial literacy.

Since Meheba D Basic School is a public school, the government of Zambia through the Ministry in charge of Education in collaboration with UNHCR should train and employ refugee teachers to teach NBTL lessons so that refugee pupils are taught in their mother tongues.

UNHCR in collaboration with the government of Zambia should build at least a basic school in all the zones of Maheba settlement in order to avoid the long distance covered by refugee pupils to Meheba D Basic School.

There is a need to have smaller classes at Meheba D Basic School. The Ministry of Education, Science, Vocational Training and Early Education should split the grade one class into three classes.

Finally, the Ministry of Education, Science, Vocational Training and Early Education should provide adequate NBTL materials in order to facilitate the acquisition of initial literacy at Meheba D Basic Schools. UNHCR should come in to help.

## **DEDICATION**

This dissertation is dedicated to my family members specifically to my father Emmanuel Gaparayi from whom I have been separated for many years but I have not stopped feeling his great encouragement. Special thanks to my brothers Israel Ndayambaje and Elijah Twizere for their enormous support and encouragement through out my education. Sincere gratitude goes to my colleagues who shared ideas with me during the research.

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## **LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS**

1. AHA- Africa Humanitarian Agency.
2. CORD- Christian Outreach Developments
3. DEBS- District Education Board Secretary
4. MOE – Ministry of Education
5. NBTL- New Breaking through Literacy
6. PEO- Provincial Education Officer
7. USA- United States of America
8. UNHCR – United Nations High Commissioner for refugees
9. UPE – Universal Primary Education

## **CHAPTER ONE**

### **INTRODUCTION**

#### **1.0 Overview**

This chapter presents the background of the study that is; the statement of the problem, the purpose of the study, the objectives, the research questions; significance of the study, delimitation, limitations and operational definitions.

#### **1.1 Background:**

Since independence in 1964, Zambia has hosted refugees from different countries running away from strife and civil war (Nsolo, 1995). These are from Angola, Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC), Mozambique, Zimbabwe, Burundi, Uganda, Somalia, Sudan, Rwanda, Liberia, Botswana and Namibia. The 1971 Act which was the first legislation passed to cope with the growing numbers of refugees in Zambia, states that all refugees must live in an area designated by the Zambian government unless they receive special permission to remain outside (Nsolo, 1995). One of the main settlements has been Meheba near Solwezi town, in North-Western Province with 14,181 refugees (Nsolo, 1995; CORD, 2000). This settlement is composed of eight zones; these are; zones A, B, C, D, E, F, G, and H.

The United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees UNHCR realized that it was a right for refugee children to participate in education. It introduced literacy programs through different non-governmental organizations such as the Jesuit Refugee services (JRS) Africa Humanitarian Agency (AHA) and Christian Outreach Development (CORD) (Nsolo, 1995; UNHCR, 2006; CORD, 2000). Four basic schools were built at Meheba refugee settlement. These were Meheba A, B, C, and D basic schools. Refugee pupils from zone E, F, G and H went to Meheba D Basic

School which was opened on 7<sup>th</sup> January 1989. Meheba D Basic School is the only school that accommodated pupils from eight countries. These are Angola, Burundi, Congo, Rwanda, Somalia, Sudan, and Uganda.

Refugee pupils at Meheba speak different mother tongues and languages, such as Arabic for Sudanese and Somalis, Kirundi and Kinyarwanda for Burundians and Rwandans, Swahili, Lingala and French for Congolese, Luganda and Ikinyankore for Ugandans and so on. There are also many Zambians who work at Maheba settlement. Some are formal workers such as nurses, teachers, and social workers, among others. There is also a big number of Zambian informal workers, such as farmers, traders, transporters, among others. Children of these Zambians speak their respective mother tongues including Kikaonde which is one of the regional languages in North Western Province. These Zambian children together with refugee children attend one school, one classroom, have one teacher and attend the same lessons.

Studies have revealed that initial literacy is easily learnt if done in a mother tongue (MOE, 1996; Jones, 1921). This is not the case with the refugee pupils at Meheba D Basic School, because the initial literacy for them is acquired in a non-mother tongue which is Kikaonde rather than their mother tongues. Kikaonde is one of the seven Zambian languages being used to teach initial literacy in Zambia. It is in this context that this study sought to find out the challenges the refugee pupils were encountering, considering the scenario in which they are living or learning.

## **1.2 Statement of the problem**

Meheba D Basic School hosts refugee pupils from various countries of Africa. These pupils are subjected to Kikaonde to acquire initial literacy a language which is not their mother tongue. In

such an environment, our research problem in a question form was ‘what are the challenges these pupils were facing in acquiring initial literacy?’ in other words we do not know the challenges.

### **1.3 Purpose of the study**

The purpose of this study was to investigate the challenges faced by the refugee pupils at Meheba D. Basic School in acquiring initial literacy.

### **1.4 Research Objectives**

The specific objectives of this study were to:

1. Establish the challenges faced by refugee pupils in initial literacy acquisition.
2. Establish the refugee pupil’s language of play at Meheba D Basic School.
3. Establish the refugee pupil’s language of play at home

### **1.5 Research Questions**

- 1) What are the challenges faced by refugee pupils in literacy acquisition at Meheba D. Basic School?
- 2) What is the refugee pupils’ language of play at Meheba D Basic School?
- 3) What is the refugee pupils’ language of play at home?

### **1.6 Significance of the study**

The findings from this study may assist teachers who are mostly Zambians to evaluate their teaching. The findings from this study may also help language policy makers and decision makers in general to improve literacy acquisition for refugee pupils. In addition, the findings from this study may be used by the international humanitarian agencies such as the UNHCR, UNICEF, and



UNESCO to improve initial literacy programs to refugee pupils. Finally the results from this study may contribute knowledge in the discipline of literacy.

### **1.7 Delimitation**

This study was conducted in North Western province of Zambia, specifically at Meheba refugee settlement at Meheba D. Basic School.

### **1.8 Limitations of the study**

One major limitation to this study is that, the findings may not be generalized because the study was done in one particular school in the whole country that was Meheba D. Basic School. Another limitation was the time limit for the study; the study was conducted during the first term 2012. As a result the researcher could not make a follow-up on the refugee pupils to establish whether they were able to read or not. Thirdly, the pupils were not interviewed because the researcher thought they were too young to be subjected to interviews may be we could have got something from them.

### **1.9 Operational definitions**

**Literacy:** literacy basically means the ability to read and write at an adequate level of proficiency that is necessary for communication.

**Initial literacy:** it is the official start of learning how to read and write.

**Refugee:** A person who is outside his/her country and cannot return owing to a well-founded fear of persecution because of his/her race, religion, nationality, political opinion or membership of a particular social group.

**Mother tongue:** the first language a pupil acquires from home. In other words it is the parental language.

**Familiar language:** a language which is well known and commonly used by people in a given area.

**Unfamiliar language:** a language which is not well known and not commonly used by people in a given area.

**Multilingual society:** a society consisting of different languages.

**Indigenous language:** a native language. In other words it is an original language spoken by local people in a given area.

**Foreign language:** this is the language which is not indigenous comes from outside a country.

**Language of play:** the language children speak when they are interacting with their friends.

## **CHAPTER TWO**

### **LITERATURE REVIEW**

#### **2.0 Overview**

This chapter reviews relevant literature, on the topic researched into.

#### **2.1 Conceptual Framework**

The main purpose of this study was to establish the challenges faced by refugee pupils in acquiring initial literacy. A refugee is a person who is outside his/her country and cannot return owing to a well-founded fear of persecution because of his/her race, religion, nationality, political opinion or membership of a particular social group (Masny, 1999). A challenge is a new or difficult task that tests a person's ability and skill. In the same line refugee pupils at Meheba settlement may face many difficulties to acquire initial literacy skills. It is very important to know the meaning of literacy in order to understand the difficulties in initial literacy acquisition skills,

Literacy basically means the ability to read, write, speak and listen at an adequate level of proficiency that is necessary for communication. Masny (1999) stated that literacy (oral and written forms) is interwoven with religion, gender, race, culture, identity, ideology and power. Gee (1991) stated "literate behaviors incorporate ways of talking, reading, writing, and valuing" these are also the ways of being in the world.

Initial literacy is the official start of learning how to read and write. The term 'reading' may be defined as an activity characterized by translation of symbols, or letters, into words and sentences that have meaning to the individual (Chall, 2007). Reading also is the ability to decipher meaning from print (Matafwali, 2010). Writing is the ability to communicate with others using print. This

notion of reading and writing implies that they are more than merely decoding and encoding prints. Therefore, literacy can be seen as constructing and communicating meaning using written language.

## **2.2 Studies on Challenges Faced by Refugee Children in accessing Education in General**

There are several studies on challenges faced by refugee pupils in accessing educational opportunities. Kanyengo (2007) reported that, refugees especially those from Congo and East Africa, have been facing problems since 1994 when they arrived in Zambia. Firstly, they suffer because of the psychosocial trauma of having to flee their home to a territory that is unknown and unfamiliar to them. Then there is the uncertainty of what the future holds for them and their children. Other problems faced by refugees has to do with accessing social services, such as access to health care, education, legal services and participating in economic activities. All these problems are obstacles that are hindering the development of educational opportunities for refugees.

Like Zambia, Uganda is hosting some of the refugees from countries where the language of instruction in schools is not English. According to the study done by Sarah and Peterson (2003), many refugees from southern Sudan seek education in English and readily join the Ugandan education system. Refugees from countries where the language of instruction in schools is French faced a different situation. These refugees from Congo, Rwanda, and Burundi are left at a disadvantage when they arrive to find that education in Uganda is only open to them in English. This language barrier is a challenge for refugee pupils in accessing education in Uganda. Uganda also prohibited many refugee teachers from gaining employment in schools simply because they did not have sufficient knowledge of English.

Wilson (2008) reported that Universal Primary Education (UPE) for refugee pupils in Kampala is not free. Due to the extra burden of the cost of water, electricity and higher salaries for teachers, government aided schools in Kampala received more aid under UPE grants (US\$810 per pupil per term as compared to US\$550 per pupil per term in rural areas). They also charged parents school fees, usually US\$10, 400 per term. As a result; education in urban areas is out of reach for most of the refugees who make their home in Kampala and are not on United Nations High commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) urban caseload.

Kenya has hosted refugees from war-torn African countries for more than four decades. The number of refugees seeking asylum in Kenya increased gradually, with a significant increase in 1992 when refugees totaled approximately 427,000 (Dryden-Peterson, 2004).

Wagacha and Guiney (2008) reported that many refugee pupils in Nairobi were born in Kenya, but they did not have birth certificates, which hindered their enrolment into public schools in Nairobi. However, proper documentation does not necessarily guarantee access to education by urban refugee children. Other barriers, such as discrimination and extortion, prevent the enrolment of refugee children in some city public primary schools.

A study done by Karanja (2010) revealed that, although Kenya introduced free primary education in 2003 providing for the enrolment of refugee pupils into public schools, many urban refugees are not aware of this opportunity, or lack the capacity to benefit from it. Moro, (2002) reported that the introduction of free primary education in Kenya also increased the number of Kenyan children accessing education, resulting in limited spaces, resources, infrastructure, and deterioration quality of education. Some school administrators refuse to enroll refugee pupils in order to preserve spaces for Kenyan pupils.

Like Kenyan parents, refugee parents and guardians whose children access free primary education must shoulder the burden of providing school-related materials including exercise books, textbooks, uniforms, and, in some cases, a desk for one's child. The precarious economic situations of refugees in Nairobi make it difficult for many of them to support their children's education, even when access is available (Karanja, 2010).

Refugee pupils from all groups face somewhat similar educational access and support challenges in Nairobi. However, Sudanese pupils face more barriers in getting adequate support for their education. Somali, Ethiopian, Rwandan, Burundian and Congolese refugees are entrepreneurs and have managed to engage in businesses in the informal economy in Nairobi, which make survival slightly bearable. On the contrary; many Sudanese do not perceive themselves as entrepreneurs. Instead, their priority is to acquire an education, which they view as an instrumental to self-development. This has left the Sudanese refugees more vulnerable to economic hardships in the city, limiting the support they provide for their children's education. (Karanja, 2010).

Egypt is another country which hosted so many refugees from different countries. Dingiman's report, (2002), presented the obstacles that were hindering access to education among refugees. Refugee parents are afraid of sending their children to school fearing Egyptian discrimination and maltreatment towards their children. The lack of pupil's safety on the way to and from school due to Egypt's hazardous roads is also a risk that some parents do not wish to take. Parents do not enroll their children in public schools, because of financial incapacity and unfamiliarity of the proper documentation that is required for enrolment (2002: 16-26).

In an article published in the *Cairo Times* in summer 2001, Peterson noted that converting the right to education for refugee pupils into reality was a complex and difficult process which would

require flexible thinking and active collaboration between refugee families, UNHCR, the Egyptian government, educators, and other interested parties.

Zine (2001) reported that pupils within Canadian schools negatively stereotype Somali refugees and that school children often tease foreign-born peers about their Arab names. Somali students are often alienated for displaying outward signs of their religion, such as wearing hijab and fasting during Ramadan. Zine (2001) reported that most Muslims including Somalis considered by other races to be terrorists and criminals, and Muslim pupils reported that they have to defend themselves against being called terrorists. This discrimination also is a big challenge faced by refugee pupils especially Somali pupils in accessing education.

Gilbert (1999) conducted research which sought to examine the experiences of thirty (30) Muslim children in a primary school in north-west Britain. Findings demonstrated how the process, procedures and rationale of school policies and administrators continued to privilege whites and discriminate against non-whites, more specifically refugees from Africa and Muslims. These experiences of discrimination towards refugees hindered their educational development.

The profile of recent refugee pupils and youth has been recognized as unique, with the large majority having a history of trauma, multiple displacements, extended stays in refugee camps and severely disrupted schooling (McBrien, 2005).

### **2.3 Studies on Challenges Faced by Refugee Children in Acquiring Initial Literacy**

Like any other children, there are many possible reasons why refugee pupils may experience difficulties in learning initial literacy. Some of the challenges may be due to outside factors while others are due to factors intrinsic to the learner.

Of the outside factors, poor teaching method is one of the most powerful challenges. The ineffective educational practices (i.e. teaching methods) contribute to pupil's difficulty in learning initial literacy. More recently teaching approach as a major causal factor has been strongly confirmed. Keyes, (2000), reported that certain teaching methods were far more effective than others in teaching pupils initial literacy. But this report also noted that these effective methods were not always used in schools. Other studies indicated clearly that learners needed to be taught explicitly the principles for applying phonic knowledge (letter to sound correspondences) in order to decode and spell unfamiliar words (Lee Mottee, 2008).

Time allocated for learning initial literacy is one of the outside factors in learning initial literacy. Insufficient time impacts most severely on the least able readers and writers (Burns and Griffin, 1998). Matafwali (2010: 32) found out that the duration of acquiring initial literacy in local languages in Zambia was not enough. She recommended four years of teaching/learning initial literacy for pupils in order to develop literacy skills effectively.

Another outside factor on initial literacy learning includes the language environment of the home in which young children spend their early formative years. Alidou (2003) reported that when the language development of some children is not stimulated adequately in some environments those children may come to school lacking the vocabulary and syntactical knowledge necessary for understanding a teacher's language of instruction and for processing the language of books. It is



also known that language inability particularly vocabulary knowledge is one of strongest predictors of successful entry into initial literacy. Pupils with underdeveloped language skills may also have greater difficulty in developing phonemic awareness. (White and Lonigan, 1998).

The intrinsic factors that may inhibit literacy learning in individual pupils include weak cognitive ability (general intelligence), deficiencies in relevant psychological process such as working memory and visual or auditory perception and attitudinal and behavioral aspects such as motivation, concentration span and attention to task) a few learners have a particular constellation of such difficulties that comprise what has become known as a specific learning disability (SpLDs) – dyslexia in the case of reading and dysgraphia in the case of writing. In SpLDs, the core deficit appears to be a major problem with phonological awareness, often coupled with an inability to retrieve information such as words or letter to sound relationships rapidly from memory (Wolf and Bowers, 1999). These pupils are often most accurately identified by their very slow (sometimes negligible) response to intensive remedial intervention.

There are many studies on challenges faced by Somali refugee pupils in initial literacy acquisition. For example Masny (1999) wrote about how school-based literacy practices were often less accessible to non-mainstream pupils in the USA since their personal and community illiteracies, relate to their home culture and with their characteristic values and ways of making sense, were seldom represented in the culture of the school. These differences between home socialization and school expectations often contributed to the literacy acquisition failure as well as to a negative effect on the pupil's identity formation.

Masny (1999) reported that Somali refugee pupils faced so many challenges in literacy acquisition because of language barriers in the USA. He suggested the use of a familiar language

approach, which was based on the pupils' personal experiences. The author proposed to teach about the cultures and experiences of the Somali pupils in order to facilitate their acquisition of initial literacy and academic skills as well as provide the pupils with a sense of voice and a link between school and community cultures.

Oikonomidou's study (2007) revealed that when Somali refugee pupils arrived in the US, they did not know how to speak English. For some of them, having a classmate from Somalia was a source of relief and encouragement. The inability to speak English was a challenge for Somali refugee pupils to acquire initial literacy and it meant exclusion from academic and social functions.

Another study on challenges faced by refugees in acquiring initial literacy in Uganda was done by Buregeya (2005). He noted the language barrier as the challenge of acquiring literacy and he stated, "The language barrier creates problems for refugee pupils in school that go beyond language. As they are not able to communicate in English, or in the vernacular of the area, pupils of all ages are placed in lower classes as an attempt to have them learn English". These refugee pupils are not able to express their knowledge and ideas in a language of the teachers. For example, most of the refugee pupils from Congo speak Lingala at home, are learning Luganda as they play with friends in the street, and are taught initial literacy in English at school. This situation contributes negatively to the social development of refugee pupils; it also leads to increased rates of school drop-out.

Recent studies in Australia have identified complex issues and the need to further examine potential solutions so as to ease the transition for African refugee students. Issues of pedagogy, teacher and student identities; social relations, parental/guardian and community involvement;

learning styles and resources for learning; the impact of trauma, displacements, readjustment on language and initial literacy acquisition were documented. African refugee pupils place education as a high priority, often possessing high expectations of education and future employment (Cassidy and Gow, 2005). Unfortunately, the current system in Australia is failing them because of frequent displacements and racial discriminations.

## **2.4 Summary**

In this chapter the literature review has revealed some challenges faced by refugee pupils in accessing educational opportunities. These are psychosocial trauma, displacements, discrimination, language difficulties, cultural problems, and the bad reception that refugees receive from their host society. The literature review has also revealed the challenges faced by refugee pupils in acquiring initial literacy. These may be classified as outside and intrinsic factors. Some outside factors are; unfamiliar language, poor teaching methods and insufficient time for learning/teaching literacy, Some of the intrinsic factors are; weak cognitive ability (general intelligence), deficiencies in relevant psychological process, and learning disability (dyslexia and dysgraphia).

Generally the studies focused on challenges faced by refugee pupils in initial literacy acquisition in urban areas of different countries, while this study is specifically focused on challenges faced by refugee pupils in initial literacy acquisition at Meheba D Basic School in a rural area using a local language (Kikaonde)

## **CHAPTER THREE**

### **METHODOLOGY**

#### **3.0 Overview**

This chapter presents the research methods used in the study. These are: research design, target population, sample size, sampling procedure, and research instruments data collection procedure and data analysis.

#### **3.1 Research design**

This study is the qualitative study which sought to establish the challenges faced by refugee pupils in literacy acquisition at Meheba D Basic School in North Western province of Zambia. To achieve this purpose, the researcher used a case study. A case study is defined as an in-depth study of a single unity such as individual, one group, one organization, one program and so on. Kombo & Tromp, (2006) assert that a case study seeks to describe a unity in detail, in context and holistically. In other words it is the study of an instance in action. A case study provides a unique example of real people in real situations, enabling readers to understand ideas more clearly than simply by presenting them with abstract principles.

#### **3.2 Target population**

A population is defined as all members of any well defined class of people, events, or objects (Kombo & Tromp, 2006). In research, a target population is the population that the researcher is interested in studying. In this study the population composed all the Grade One refugee pupils at Meheba D. Basic School.

### **3.3 Sample size**

A sample is a small group that is studied. The participants of this study consisted of one hundred and twenty four (124) pupils in Grade One at Meheba D. Basic School. The class teacher, school head teacher and the District Educational Board Secretary (DEBS). The total of one hundred and twenty seven (127) respondents participated in the study.

### **3.4 Sampling procedure**

In this study, the researcher used the purposive sampling technique. The researcher chose the purposive sampling because in this method the researcher targeted a group of people believed to be reliable for the study (Kombo & Tromp, 2006). In the same line, in this study the grade one pupils, Grade one class teacher, the head teacher of Meheba D Basic School and the DEBS were targeted as reliable participants of the study. In any case, there was only one grade one class at the school at the time of the study.

### **3.5 Research instruments**

The researcher used face to face interviews and lesson observation checklist. The researcher also used the video camera in order to record the refugee languages at Meheba settlement.

### **3.6 Data collection procedure**

Data was gathered during the first term of the 2012 school year. Before data collection permission to conduct this study was given by the relevant authority at the University of Zambia, The High Commissioner for Refugees Head Office in Lusaka, the Office of Refugees at Meheba Settlement, and from the Provincial Education Officer (PEO). The researcher also visited Meheba D Basic School to make arrangements with the school authority before starting research.

### **a. Interviews**

The interview schedule is one of the research instruments the researcher used for obtaining the primary data for this study. The researcher used this instrument to gather data on the informant's opinions, beliefs and feelings about the challenges faced by refugee pupils in initial literacy acquisition. The key participants were the district Education Board Secretary (DEBS), the head teacher of Meheba D Basic School, and the grade one class teacher of the same school. Pupils were not interviewed because they were young to be subjected to interviews. All the participants were interviewed by the researcher on agreed dates. The DEBS and the head teacher were interviewed in their respective offices while the teacher was interviewed in the school staff- room. The researcher used face to face interviews in order to allow for the collection of in-depth information on the issue. The researcher took notes as the interview was in progress. The researcher also used audio/video tapes as the two methods of recording interviews. Records were used so that the contexts and instructions were not lost and also that the researcher could check later on the proceedings of the interviews.

### **b. Lesson Observations**

Classroom observation is another method which was used by the researcher to obtain data on challenges faced by refugee pupils in initial literacy. The main areas of interest on the checklist were the language used, oral reading, language writing as well as pupil participation in class. The researcher had a discussion with the class teacher at the end of the lesson. The purpose of conducting the observation was to verify the information given by the key participants.

### **C. Out of Classroom Observations**

Out of classroom observation was used by the researcher as another method of collecting data. The main interest of the researcher was to establish the refugee pupil's language of play when they were out of classroom. The researcher observed refugee pupils when they were playing at the school playground and he recorded the language that pupils were using. The researcher also visited different refugee homes in order to establish the refugee children's language of play when they were at home.

#### **3.7 Data analysis**

In this study data was analyzed qualitatively. In other words the researcher analyzed data thematically. In using this form of analysis major concepts or themes were identified by the researcher. In this form of data analysis the researcher did the following: Perused the collected data and identified information that was relevant to the research objectives and questions. Developed a coding system based on the sample of collected data; classified major issues or topics covered and indicated the major themes in the margins. The researcher also used the graphics and direct quotations to present the findings.

#### **3.8 Ethical issues**

Ethical issues were considered in this study. Permission was first sought from the High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) office, and North Western Provincial Education Officer (PEO) for using the refuge settlement and the school. At the school level the head teacher gave consent for children to participate in the study and allowed the class teacher and himself to be interviewed. The head teacher also allowed the researcher to observe a lesson. The purpose and

the aim of the study were explained to the participants before the commencement of the study. The researcher also maintained an open and honest approach and ensured that the participants were protected. As away of protecting a participant's right to privacy, the researcher promised to keep confidential of whatever information (such as names, addresses, or other means of identification) released on an individual participant.

### **3.9 Summary**

This chapter has presented the research methods used to collect data. The next chapter presents the research findings.



## **CHAPTER FOUR**

### **PRESENTATION OF FINDINGS**

#### **4.0 Overview**

Chapter three has outlined the methodology used in the collection of data. This chapter presents the findings of the study. The chapter is ordered as follows: the first part presents data obtained through interviews and lesson observations. The second part presents data obtained from out of classroom observations. The findings are based on the questions of the study.

#### **4.1 What were the Challenges Faced by Refugee Pupils in Literacy Acquisition at Meheba D. Basic School?**

Interviews with grade one teacher revealed that the main challenge faced by refugee pupils in initial literacy acquisition was the unfamiliar language that is used to teach initial literacy. Since Meheba D Basic School is found in the area of Kaonde people, the regional language recommended by the Zambian education policy to teach initial literacy is Kikaonde. The teacher who is a Lunda by tribe confirmed to the researcher that, among the 124 pupils in Grade One only 6 were Kikaondes, 15 were Zambians from other tribes while 103 were refugees from different countries.

The communication between teacher and pupils in teaching Kikaonde and other subjects was a big challenge simply because the majority of the pupils did not understand either English or Kikaonde. The teacher stated that she needed to always translate whatever she taught from Kikaonde into refugee respective languages of which she did not know well.

*If I want these refugees to understand what I teach*

*I am always forced to translate Kikaonde into familiar languages such as Swahili which is the popular language in this settlement and Nyanja to those who are not able to understand both Swahili and Kikaonde*

The teacher reported that some pupils misinterpreted certain words in Kikaonde. She gave an example of words such as kichii. In Kikaonde the word kichii means a tree but in Swahili it means a chair. In such a situation she used the following strategy:

*when I use kiakonde word like kichii, some pupils such as Congolese and Burundians who know this word (kiichii) as a chair confuse the meaning of that word. So I am forced to translate the word into other languages such as Chinyanja and English to those who can understand English since many children here in Meheba settlement speak Chinyanja and bit of English. Communication becomes more difficult to those refugee children who do not speak either Chinyanja or English. For such pupils I ask their friends who know their languages to help them understanding the meaning of the word. Ndugu yangu, meaning 'my friend' (addressing the researcher in Swahili), for me to teach literacy these pupils is very difficult because I am a Lunda by tribe and I am not trained in NBTL. Therefore it requires me to use more effort than usual to make sure that every child has understood whatever I teach.*

Another challenge faced by refugee children was the overcrowded classroom. The teacher stated that every year the school received pupils between one hundred and fifteen (115) and one hundred and thirty (130) in Grade One alone. At Meheba Basic School there is only one class for grade one pupils. The teacher complained that it was too much for her to manage and control all the pupils.

*Here at this school every year we receive a big number of pupils.*

*In Grade One alone we enroll pupils between one hundred and fifteen (115) and one hundred and thirty (130). On one side it is good because many children are coming for education. But on my side as a teacher it really a challenge to teach them literacy because this number is too much even them do not learn properly.*

The distance between the pupil's homes and the school was another challenge faced by the refugee pupils in acquiring initial literacy. She reported that the pupils usually came late and most of the time missed the NBTL lessons because they were held in the first session everyday.

*some refugee pupils cover a long distance from home to school.*

*For example 90% of Rwandans, Burundians and few Congolese children stay in zone E, G and F of the settlement. They use about two to three hours from their homes to Maheba D Basic School. As result of this long distance many of these refugee pupils are always late at school meaning after eight hours while NBTL is taught at eight to eight forty-five.*

The head teacher agreed with the class teacher on the challenges faced by refugee pupils in initial literacy acquisition at Meheba D Basic School. The head teacher confirmed that the main challenge faced by refugee pupils in literacy acquisition was the unfamiliar language used to teach literacy. He stated,

*The main challenge the refugee face is the language for NBTL. We have more than eight nationals with different languages and cultures. We have refugee pupils from Angola, D.R Congo, Uganda, Rwanda, Somalia, Sudan, and Burundi. On top of that we have Zambian pupils from different tribes. Our school is found in Kaonde area. For that reason we use Kikaonde in breaking through. I would like to inform you that Kikaonde is not familiar to refugees. That is a reason why I am saying that language we use to teach initial literacy is a big challenge to refugee pupils*

Apart from language difficulties, the head teacher highlighted the following as challenges faced by refugee pupils in initial literacy acquisition;

*Apart from the language we use in teaching literacy, refugees have various challenges in initial literacy acquisition. For example some years back UNHCR used to help refugees in many ways such as buying books and pens or pencils for them, paying school fees for them, feeding them and buying school uniforms for them. But today UNHCR stopped that assistance while many refugee parents are not able to sponsor their pupils; some even fail to pay fifteen thousand per year as school fees. As result of this poverty many refugee*

*pupils do not go to school. Even those who manage to pay come to school irregularly and because they do not attend classes every day it becomes so difficult for them to Acquire literacy properly.*

The information given by the head teacher agrees with the teacher that the poverty among refugees at Meheba settlement was one of challenges faced by refugee pupils in initial literacy acquisition. The head teacher also agreed with the class teacher on the challenge of long distance between Meheba D Basic School and homes of refugee pupils. He confirmed that, most of the time refugee pupils from zone G to H of the settlement came late to school because they covered between 10 to 18 km walking every day. Many times they reach at school when NBTL lessons had already been taught, because NBTL lessons were always conducted in the morning at eight hours.

Apart from the challenges mentioned above, there was also the problem of inadequate learning and teaching materials for NBTL such as picture/text books, pencils and chats. After checking the pupil's learning materials the researcher found that more than a half of Grade One class pupils did not have exercise books for that particular subject (NBTL). The insufficiency of NBTL learning materials was one of the challenges faced by refugee pupils in initial literacy acquisition because they were just memorizing the lesson without writing.

Contrary to the views and experiences of the teacher and head teacher, the District Education Board Secretary (DEBS) had different views on the matter. She accepted that the majority of the pupils at Meheba Basic Schools were refugees from different countries. However, she did not agree with the head teacher and the teacher regarding the language of learning initial literacy. She stated that Kikaonde was not a challenge to refugee pupils. According to her, Kikaonde was a

language of play in Solwezi including Meheba Settlement. As result, teaching Kikaonde in grade one was not difficult to refugee pupils who stayed in the settlement, unless may be those who just arrived from their countries and put their children in school immediately. She asserted:

*We train teachers to use the local language or the language of play which is Kikaonde. Pupils transfer the skills that they acquire during play to the classroom. As an office we have not received any report that refugee pupils were finding difficulties because they are not Zambians or Kaondes.... some refugee parents get shocked when they discover that their children start speaking in Kikaonde because children learn the language faster than adults meaning their parents. Either here in Solwezi town or in rural areas, when young refugees speak kikaonde no one can differentiate them from kaondes themselves. Therefore, we have no problem of language barrier in grade one at Meheba.*

However, the information obtained from the District Education Board Secretary through interviews indicated that the only challenge faced by refugee pupils in initial literacy acquisition was the movements of refugees from one place to another.

*Some refugees are new in the settlement, others move from the settlement to cities such as Lusaka Kitwe Ndola and others for business, after sometime they come back to the settlement. These movements confuse pupils as far as language is concerned. They fail to muster one local language because of shifting from one local language to another. But for those who are stable in settlement have no problem of Kikaonde at all.*

Another method used by the researcher to collect data was classroom observations. The researcher observed NBTL lessons in Grade One. The researcher observed the lesson presentations as well as pupil's participation in the lesson. The teacher's lesson plans were well organized. The lessons were on reading and writing. The lesson presentations were fair. To start the lessons the teacher used to first greet the pupils in Kikaonde (Mwabukabiyepi (in the morning)) the pupils used to respond in Kikaonde as well (Burongotu). As introduction the teacher used to sing with children a short Kikaonde song in order to make them read to follow the lessons. Before starting a new lesson the teacher used to ask few questions on the previous lesson to see if they could remember what they learnt. Some pupils were able to answer those questions others were not. To start the new lesson the teacher stuck pictures of the lesson on the board. The teacher put pupils in three groups as they were singing. Each group was composed of between 17 and 20 pupils. The teacher took 10 minutes with each group to teach them to read and write in kikaonde using the pictures.

For example, the first lesson that the teacher taught was on names. The teacher showed the picture to the pupils and asked them to mention the name of what they could see. Pupils mentioned names of the pictures. The teacher wrote the names against each picture and asked them to read after her. For example, she wrote the name 'nzubo' (a house) against the picture of the house; 'ngombe' (a cow) against the picture of a cow; kichii (a tree) against the picture of a tree and so on. After reading all the names the teacher asked the pupils to draw the pictures with their kikaonde names in their exercise books.

The second lesson the teacher taught was on colours. The teacher showed the pictures to the pupils and asked them to mention the name of what they could see. Pupils mentioned names of pictures. The teacher wrote the colours against each picture and asked individuals to read after her. For example, she wrote the colour kibobo (yellow) against the picture of the yellow house;

ufiita (black) against the picture of a black cow; mazhamataamba (green) against the picture of green tree, ukoota (white) against the picture of a white goat; and so on. After reading the colours the teacher asked pupils to draw the pictures with their colors in their exercise books.

The third lesson the teacher taught about sizes. The teacher showed the pictures to the pupils and asked them to mention the name of what they could see. Pupils mentioned names of the pictures. The teacher wrote the size against each picture and asked them to read after her. For example, she wrote the word kacheeche (small) against the picture of a small house; kikantampe (big) against the picture of a big house; and so on. After reading the sizes, the teacher asked pupils to draw the pictures with their sizes in their exercise books.

In the fourth lesson, it was also observed by the researcher that a sentence such as “bamaama baatemwi kutoma chii” (the mother likes to drink tea), the components (words) of this sentence were not spelt and pronounced well by the refugee children from East Africa and DRC Congo. For example, children from Uganda, Burundi and Rwanda were failing to pull on double **a** and **i**. instead of spelling ba-**maa**- ma, **baa**- te-mwi and ch-**ii**, they spelled ba-**ma**-ma, **ba**- te-mwi and **chi**. The findings from these four lessons observations were that refugee children were not able to spell and pronounce well the Kikaonde words.

The following is an example of actual NBTL lesson observed by the researcher. This lesson below was conducted in Kikaonde. The text bolds in this lesson are the teacher’s translation in Swahili or Chinyanja. Words in brackets are the meaning of the actual lesson in English.

### **Lesson on Reading Names**

T: Abana mwabukabiyepi?



Ps: Bulongotu!

The teacher sang the song (Yesu watemwa bana baceche) (Jesus loves children), and ask pupils to join her.

Ps: they joint the teacher in singing 'Yesu watemwa bana baceche' (Jesus loves children)

T: Lekai kwamba (Can you all keep quiet). Twafunjile ka kasha? (What did we leant yesterday?)

Ps: pupils were silent

T: **Tinapunzila chiani mailo? Uh, tulijifunza nini jana?**

P: Mwana muceche ne bamama (a child and a mother)

T: Nga kikwabo? **Nini pia?** (What else?)

P: Batata (a father.)

T: Twafunjile pamambo lwa kitemwa (we leant about the family.) Anweba bonse mubwekeshepo, **rudia wote.** (All of you repeat.)

Ps: Mubwekeshepo (repeat!)

T: No Kitemwa, **familia** (the family) bonse! (All of you!)

Ps: Kitemwa.

T: Kitemwa kyokika ? **Familia nini?** (What is the family?)

P: Taata na maama.

T: Balubako muntu umo, yengani? **Amesahau mtu mmoja ni nani?** (He has forgotten one person who is that?)

P: Mwaana.

T: Waamba bulongo, pano banji banga bantu? **Wote ni watu wangapi?** (Very good, so how many people?)

Ps: Some said Basatu, others said watatu while few said three in English.

T: **bonse kambani mu kikaonde, basatu, nibantu bangati?**

Ps: Basatu.

T: Bangani? **Wepi hao?** (Who are they?)

P: Taata, maama na mwaana.

T: very good! All of you.

Ps: Taata, maama na mwaama.

T: Lelo tusaku fundu pamambo a manjina ok **leo tutajifunza majina** (today we are going to learn about names ok!)

Ps: yes bateacher.

The teacher put pupils in three groups as they were singing. After making three groups she put a picture of a house on the board.

T: let us all look at this picture ok? Mubena kumona ka akwa? **Munaona nini pale?** (What can you see there?)

P: Nyumba (in Chinyanja)

T: Ine! Kikwabo? (No! Another one?)

P: Maison (in French)

T: Ine! Ambai mu Kikaonde. **Sema kwa kiakonde.**(no! Say in Kikaonde.)

The pupils were silent.

T: In Kikaonde we call it inzobo, bwekeshepo! (Repeat!)

Ps: Inzubo.

T: You! (Addressing to one pupil) **unaona nini kwenye ubao?** (What can you see on the picture?)

P: Izuba (the sun In Kirundi)

T: No! Not izuba, inzubo where we sleep in the night oke? Inzubo, bwekeshepo! (Repeat!)

P: Inzubo.

T: very good, bonse (all of you!)

Ps: Inzubo.

The teacher wrote the name 'inzubo' against the picture of the house. The teacher put a picture of the cow on the board.

T: Look at the second picture, **hangalia picha yapili munaona nini?** Uh! what do you see there?

P: Ngombe.

T: Very good, ngombe, all of you.

Ps: Ngombe.

T: **Ngombe ni munyama unaotupa maziwa oke?** ngombe is a big animal that gives us milk ok?

Banji banga bamonapo ngombe? (How many of you who saw ngombe?)

Ps: All were silent.

T: **Ni wangapi waliomona ngombe?**

Ps: All pupils put their hands up.

T: Mwaimwenene pi? (Where did you see it?)

Ps: All were silent.

T: **Muliona ngombe wapi?**

P: In kirundi. 'Mwibarabara zifise amahembe manini'. In the street, they were many with big horns.

T: In Swahili 'Unasema nini'? (What do you say?)

P: Another Burundian pupil, '**aliona ngombe barabarani na pembe kubwa**'. (He saw cows in the street, they had big horns.)

T: With big horns ayi? Masengo yanji pi paki pikichala (Who can show me the cow's horns on that picture?)

Ps: All were silent.

T: **Nani anaweza kunionesha pembe za ngombe kwenye picha ile?** (The teacher translated the previous question in Kiswahili.

P: A pupil showed the horns.

T: In kikaonde we call them masengo.....Bwekshaipo! (Repeat!)

Ps: Masengo...

The teacher wrote the name 'ngombe' against the picture of the cow. The teacher also put a picture of a tree on the board.

T: Talai pa kipichala kya busatu, mubena kumona Ka kokwa? **Kwenye picha yatatu munapaona nini?** (Look at the third picture, what do you see there?)

P: Mti ( in Swahili)

T: No!

The same pupil: chimutengo (in chinyanja)

T: No!

The Kaonde pupil: kiichi

Other pupils laughed at that Kaonde pupil because in Swahili kiichi is a chair.

T: Munacheka nini? huu, why are you laughing at him? He is right! Kiichi mu kikaonde is a tree.

Kiichi, Bwekshaipo! (Repeat!)

Ps: Kiichi

T: Kiichi kyo kika? Kiichi nini? (What is kiichi?) Asking one pupil.

Ps: Two different pupils: a chair.

T: no! You should not confuse kiichi in Swahili and kiichi in kikaonde. On that picture there is a kiichi in kikaonde which is **chimutengo in Nyanja. Mwamvela!**

Ps: Yes bateacher.

T: Kiichi kyo kika? Kiichi nini? (What is kiichi?) Asking one pupil.

P: In chinyanja '**Chimutengo.**'

T: Oke, iwe! kiichi, Bwekshaipo! (Repeat!)

P: Kiichi.

T: Very good, Bwekshaipo bonse!

Ps: Kiichi.

T: the teacher wrote the name 'kiichi' against the picture of the tree. Pano pa board panji ba pikichala banga? **Tuna mapicha yangapi kwenye ubao?** (So how many pictures do we have on the board?)

P: In Chinyanja 'yatatu' (three.)

T: No mukikaonde.

P: The pupil was silent.

T: Basatu, bwekeshapo! (Three, repeat!)

P: Basatu. (Three)

T: Bulongo, (very good), bonse! (All of you!)

P: Basatu. (Three)

T: Bamba bulongo bonse! (Very good, everyone!) Kika ne kika? **Nini na nini?** (What and what?)

P: Nzuba, ngombe, kiichi.

T: You have tried **mu Kikaonde tikamba** nzubo not nzuba or zuba. Nzubo, bwekeshapo! (Repeat!)

P: The same pupil: Nzubo

T: Bulongo! (Very good!) bonse bwekeshapo! (All of you repeat!)

Ps: Nzubo.

T: Tunji ne mazhina asatu Aya ke (we have three names which are) nzubo, ngombe, na kiichi

P: Nzubo, ngombe, kiichi.

T: Nga kikwabo? **Mwingine?**(Another one?)

Ps: About five different pupils repeated correctly.

T: Excellent! bonse bwekeshapo! (All of you repeat!)

Ps: nzubo, ngombe, kiichi.

T: Kyawama. (That is good.) Yayinga mubipuna byenu. **Nendani make wengine waje.** (Go to your seats). Gulupu ikwabo iye kulutwe. **Kundi lingine njoo hapa mbele.**(Next group, come here in front.)

The teacher taught the same lesson to all the groups. After teaching all the groups, the teacher requested the pupils to draw all the pictures with their names in their exercise books and the lesson came to an end.

In reading activities pupils were not participating fully because of the big number of pupils in one classroom. In 10 minutes the teacher would present the lesson to one group and pupils between three and five among twenty would be given a chance of reading and writing on the board. Others were asked to write in their exercise books of which some of them did not have.

The researcher observed that the classroom management was poor because when the teacher was concentrating on one group other two groups were making noise and some of them were moving from one place to another playing with friends. It was observed by the researcher that pupils did not have permanent seats in the classroom. They changed seats every day and the researcher observed that pupils in each group belonged to the same nationality. As result of this seating arrangement pupils were mostly interacting with their country mates with whom they shared the same language. The researcher observed that the reading materials were not enough. One picture/text book was shared by four to five pupils. However, it was observed by the researcher that other teaching materials such as chalks, boards, chats, marks and papers were available. From



the lesson observation above the main challenges faced by pupils were; the limited time for children during NBTL lessons, misunderstanding of Kikaonde words, mispronunciations of the Kikaonde words and code switching of the teacher during the NBTL lessons.

#### **4.2 What is the Refugee Pupil’s Language of Play at Meheba D Basic School?**

Out of classroom observations were another method used by the researcher to collect data. The main purpose of out of classroom observations was to find out if Kikaonde was the language of play of the refugee pupils at Meheba settlement. Observation was conducted by the researcher at Meheba D Basic School playground where pupils from different countries were playing football.

When all the children were playing together either at school or in the streets of the settlement they spoke Chinyanja and Kiswahili. Table 1 below shows examples of words spoken by refugee pupils when they were playing football. The first column indicates some of the words used by the refugee pupils when they were communicating in the playground, the second column shows the meaning of those words in English and the third column shows the type of the language they were using.

**Table 1: Examples of Words Spoken by Refugee pupils when they were Playing Football at Meheba D Basic School Playground**

<b>WORDS SPOKEN BY REFUGEE PUPILS</b>	<b>MEANING IN ENGLISH</b>	<b>TYPE OF LANNGUAGE</b>
Kabumbu	ball	Kiswahili
Bola	Football	Chinyanja
Majezi	Jersey	Kiswahili

Anaanguka!	He falls down	Kiswahili
Refa	Referee	Kiswahili
Penari	Penalty	Kiswahili
Iwe chaya mutu	Head ball	Chinyanja
Yagwira ball!	Handball!	Chinyanja
Naga nyuma	Throw behind	Kiswahili
Koloneri	Corner	Kiswahili
madifendazi	Defenders	Chinyanja
Oruje!	Offside	Kiswahili
shundula	The net	Kiswahili
Kufla	Free kick	Kiswahili
Chaya kuno bola	Pass the ball here	Chinyanja
Tamanga maningi	Run quickly!	Chinyanja
Wele!	Goal!	Chinyanja
Iwe kumbuyo!	You behind!	Chinyanja
Kuja hapa	Come here!	Kiswahili
Bao!	Goal!	Kiswahili
Bweza kumbuyo	Pass behind	Chinyanja
Golizamu	Goalkeeper	Kiswahili
Tumewafunga mabao mawili kwa sifuri	We have beaten you two goals to zero	Kiswahili
Bonse imililani kusogoro	All stand in front	Chinyanja

Bola yasila	Football has finished	Chinyanja
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The table 1 above shows that the pupil's language of play at school was not Kikaonde instead, Kiswahili and Chinyanja were used.

#### **4.3 What was the refugee pupil's language of play at home?**

To answer this question, the researcher visited four zones of Meheba settlement which are zone D, E, F and G. After observing children when they were interacting with either their friends or their parents, it was found out that the pupils interacted in their mother tongues. For example in zone G where Burundian and Rwandan refugees lived, children spoke Kirundi, Kinyarwanda and very few words in Chinyanja when they were playing and interacting with their friends and parents. In zone F where Congolese lived refugee children spoke Kiswahili, French and some times Chinyanja, and in zone A and B where Angolans lived children spoke Luvale, Mbunda and Chokwe. The researcher visited five homes. Three of them were visited during the day while two were visited in the night.

The three homes visited during the day, the researcher found the pupils playing different games such as igisoro (insoro), dame (draft), amakalita (cards), amabuye (stone game), gusimbuka umugozi (jumping rope game), and so on. The table below shows some of the words used by refugee pupils when they were playing the games mentioned above.

**Table 2: Some of the Words Used by Refugee pupils when they were Playing at Home**

<b>WORD</b>	<b>MEANING IN ENGLISH</b>	<b>TYPE OF LANGUAGE</b>
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Gukina	To play	Kinyarwanda/Kirundi
Kina imbere	Play in front	Kinyarwanda/Kirundi
Kina inyuma	Play behind	Kinyarwanda/Kirundi
Kubara	To count	Kinyarwanda/Kirundi
Bara neza	Count well	Kinyarwanda/Kirundi
Umugozi	The rope	Kinyarwanda/Kirundi
Zana umugozi muremure	Bring the long rope	Kinyarwanda/Kirundi
Uyu mugenzi nimuto	This rope is small	Kinyarwanda/Kirundi
Sauté vite!	Jump fast!	French
Change la corde	Change the rope	French
Amakalita	cards	Kirundi/ Kinyarwanda
Ibigarasha	Useless cards	Kinyarwanda/Kirundi
La corde est courte	The rope is short	French
Chaya fast!	Play fast!	Chinyanja
Uyembekeza chain?	What are you waiting for?	Chinyanja
Les cartes	The cards	French
Bwana	The greatest card	Kiswahili/Kinyarwanda
Icyondi	Smallest card	Kinyarwanda
Tenga yabili	Take two	Chinyanja
Huu ni mchezo wamwisho	This is the last game	Kiswahili
Agasimba	100% wining	Kinyarwanda
Dame	draft/draughts	French

capsules	Caps of bottles	French
Amakengeri	Caps of bottles	Kinyarwanda
amabuye	Stones	Kirundi/Kinyarwanda
intsinzi	victory	Kirundi/Kinyarwanda
Imifuniko yamacupa	Caps of bottles	Kirundi
amaturufu	The useful cards	Kinyarwanda/Kirundi

The table 2 above shows that Kikaonde was not the language spoken by refugee pupils at home. Instead, mother tongues were used.

Another two families were visited in the night. In both families children were interacting with their parents through conversations, folklores, gospel singing and prayers. Some of the folklores noted by the researcher were proverbs (imigani migufi), riddles (ibisakuzo), taboos (imiziro), and beliefs (imyemerere). The table below shows the examples of the languages used. The first column is the type of the folklore in either Kirundi or Kinyarwanda, and the second column is the type of the folklore in English

**Table 3: The Examples of Folklores.**

<b>UMUGANI</b>	<b>PROVERB</b>
Nyamwanga kumva ntiyanze no kubona	He who does not want to listen he can not refuse to see
Ijambo rya mukuru riryoha ritevye.	The words of an old person become sweet after a passage of time.
Kwigisha umwana w'umukobwa ni nko	Educating a girl is like watering a plant in a

kuvomera igiti mumurima wumubanyi aho abavyeyi biwe ataco bunguka cane	neighbour' garden as she will join the husband once married and the parents do not benefit much.
Ubusambanyi ni umugore. (kireka umugore avyemeye, naho ubundi nta bushurashuzi bwobaho).	Adultery is a woman. (Unless the woman allows it, no adultery can be committed).
Umwana wanze kumvira se na nyina yumvira ijeri.	A child who does not want to obey the parents obeys a locust.
<b>IBISAKUZO</b>	<b>RIDDLE</b>
Sokwe (niruze) sogokuru aryohaaboze. Inyishu= <b>umuneke</b>	My grand father is sweet when he is rotten. Answer= <b>a banana.</b>
Sokwe (niruze) inzu yanjye ntamuryango ifite. Igisubizo= <b>Igi</b>	My house has no door. Answer= <b>an egg</b>
Sokwe (niruze) umurima wanjye nimunini ariko umusaruro nimuke. Igisubizo= <b>Umusatsi.</b>	My field is very big but my harvest is just handful only. Answer= <b>a human hair.</b>
Sokwe (niruze) Umushitsi wanje buri gihe aza mugitondo. Inyishu= <b>urume</b>	My visitor only comes in the morning. Answer= <b>a dew</b>
Sokwe (niruze) dore ibitoke bya so biransaba inyama. Igisubizo= <b>amababi y'imyumbati</b>	Behold your father's hands are asking meat from me. Answer= <b>the leaves of cassava.</b>
<b>IMIZIRO</b>	<b>TABOOLS</b>
Abahungu / abakobwa guca mwidirishya.	Boys /girls to pass through window.

Gukorana imibonano mpuzabitsina nabo mufite icyo mupfana ex: mushiki, musaza umubyeyi etc	Having sex with relatives e.g. sisters, brothers, parents etc.
Abana kwinjira mucyumba cyabavyeyi.	Children entering their parent's bedroom.
Kwihagarika mumvura	To urinate when it is raining
Kurya uvuga	Talking while eating
<b>IMYEMERERE</b>	<b>BELIEFS</b>
Inkoko gutembera mumvura ziraha zinatora.	Chickens braving the rains and start scratching the ground in search of food while it is raining.
Ijambo ryambere umwana agomba kuvuga ni 'tata'.	The first word a baby should utter must be 'tata'.
Kubyara abahungu gusa.	Giving birth to boys only.
Ntukaryame ureba aho rirengera.	Never to sleep with the head facing the West.

The table 3 above shows that Kikaonde was not used by refugee pupils at home instead, mother tongues were used.

#### 4.4 Summary of the Findings

Chapter four has presented the main research findings on the challenges faced by refugee pupils in initial literacy acquisition at Meheba D Basic School in North Western province of Zambia. These were: the use of unfamiliar language (Kikaonde) to teach/learn initial literacy for refugee pupils; long distance between refugee pupil's home and school; overcrowded classrooms; shortage of NBTL learning/teaching materials; frequent movements of refugees and poverty among refugees. The next chapter presents the discussion of the research findings.

## **CHAPTER FIVE**

### **DISCUSSION**

#### **5.1 Overview**

Chapter four has presented the research findings. This chapter discusses the findings of the study.

The discussion is guided by the objectives of the study.

#### **5.1 To Establish the Challenges faced by Refugee pupils at Meheba D Basic School in**

##### **Initial Literacy Acquisition**

The information given by both grade one teacher and head teacher through interviews indicated that the main challenge faced by refugee pupils in initial literacy acquisition was the unfamiliar language which was being used to teach initial Literacy (NBTL). Kikaonde is one of seven official local languages which are used in Zambia according to the area where each of these seven official local languages is dominant. Since Meheba D Basic School is found in the area of Kaonde people, Kikaonde was preferred to be used in initial literacy acquisition at that school. However, the findings from Meheba D Basic School manager's interview indicated that the familiar languages and languages of play for refugee pupils in Meheba settlement were their mother tongues.

The use of Kikaonde which was not the familiar language to refugee pupils in instead of their familiar languages was a big challenge for these pupils because it hindered the efficiency of initial literacy acquisition. Studies have revealed that initial literacy is easily learnt if done in a familiar language (Napoli, 2003; MOE, 1996; Jones 1921). It is axiomatic that the best medium for teaching pupils initial literacy is their mother tongue or familiar language. Psychologically, it is the system of meaningful signs that in their mind works automatically for expression and



understanding. Sociologically it brings identification among the members of the community to which they belong. Educationally they learn more quickly through it than through an unfamiliar linguistic medium Jones (1921). Prah, (2009:125) clarified that “the use of a familiar language to teach initial literacy facilitates an understanding of sound symbol or meaning-symbol correspondence”. He further stated that, “as long as the instruction is provided in the first language, learning new concepts is not postponed until children become competent in the second language.”

Acquiring initial literacy in Kikaonde was a big challenge to refugee pupils because it was neither their first language nor familiar language. It is possible therefore, to assume that any mismatch between the refugee pupil’s spoken languages (mother tongues) and what they have to read (Kikaonde), or their experience and the content of their NBTL books were obstacles to acquire initial literacy properly. Furthermore, teaching literacy in Kikaonde to refugees was more challenging because it took more time than usual. The teacher had to translate word by word from Kikaonde to familiar languages of refugees. As a result of translating words, sometimes pupils confused the meaning of those words. For instance, the word *kichii* in Kikaonde means a tree but in Swahili it means a chair; may be in other languages it means something else.

This confusion of words affected refugee pupils psychologically because in their mind they could not understand the meaning of such words automatically. The confusion of words affected refugee children sociologically, because they did not feel free to identify and express themselves among other pupils. Educationally, the confusion of words affected refugee children because they did not learn more quickly than they would learn in their familiar linguistic medium. Refugee

pupils also were affected culturally because some words might sound like insults to them. Therefore, if they pronounced such words they might feel as though they were losing values, norms and discipline.

The semantic misinterpretations expressed by the refugee pupils and observed by the researcher were in line with Napoli (2003) who advised that it is better that literacy learning reflects the specific and diverse context of acquisition. These include:

- What the learner already knows and brings to the learning experience;
- the mother tongue of the learner,
- the cultural background of the learner, including family culture, local culture, oral traditions, and indigenous knowledge of the learners and their relation to the literacy being acquired, and
- the identity of the learner in relation to gender, class, religion, and race.

The findings from the grade one teacher and the head teacher did not agree with those from the District Education Board Secretary (DEBS)'s who stated that Kikaonde taught in grade one was familiar and simple because it was the language of play in Solwezi district. Due to this contradiction between the DEBS and both the teacher and the head teacher, on one hand it seems that the DEBS was not aware of what was happening at Meheba refugee settlement with regarding to the teaching and learning of the initial literacy. On the other hand, the grade teacher and the head teacher gave valid information because they are the ones who interacted every day with refugee pupils at the school. The findings from observations confirmed that Kikaonde was not the language of play among the refugee pupils.

However, the concerns from the DEBS on the frequent movements of the refugees were valid as a challenge faced by refugee pupils in initial literacy acquisition. Although it was decided by the Zambian government that refugees should stay in settlements, some refugees at Meheba have continued to move out of the settlement and then back. They move from the settlement to Lusaka to do business and other different kinds of work to earn a living. After a stay for some time, they go back to Meheba settlement especially when it is farming season.

As a result of these frequent movements of refugees, refugee pupils also shifted from one language to another. In the case of Meheba D Basic School pupils were first exposed to Chinyanja when they were in Lusaka. When they went to Meheba settlement, they continued to speak Chinyanja and their respective mother tongues even at school. But when they were at Meheba D Basic School the teacher used Kikaonde as a medium to teach initial literacy. Thus, refugee pupils faced a lot of challenges in acquiring initial literacy in an unfamiliar language (Kikaonde). This is in line with the statement in the ministry of education policy document 'Educating Our Future' which states that, "the fact that initial reading skills are taught in and through a language that is unfamiliar to the majority of children is believed to be a major contributory factor to the backwardness in reading shown by many children" (MOE, 1996).

Long distance between Meheba D Basic School and the homes of refugee pupils was cited as one of the challenges faced by refugee pupils in initial literacy acquisition. This challenge affected mostly Burundians, Rwandans, and Congolese who live in zones of E to H of Meheba settlement who were also the majority in the classroom. However, the challenge of long distance did not affect some Angolans, Somalis, Sudanese, and Ugandans who were the minority in the classroom.

This was because these lived in zone D of Meheba settlement where Meheba D Basic School is situated.

The pupils from zones E to H of Meheba settlement covered between 10 and 18 km walking every day. As a result, they arrived late at school. At Meheba D Basic School initial literacy lessons always start at 8:00hours to 8:45hours. Because of arriving late at school, many refugee pupils missed opportunities of attending NBTL lessons. Even if they arrived on time to attend NBTL lessons, still more, they were tired hence, did not concentrate in the lesson.

Another challenge cited in this study was overcrowded class. At the time of the study Meheba D Basic School had one hundred and twenty four (124) pupils in grade one class alone. Normally, the maximum number of pupils in one classroom must be 45(Kelly, 1999 & Carmody, 2004). However, at Meheba D Basic School, the situation was different. Pupils who were supposed to be in three classrooms were put in one classroom. The big number of pupils in one class made it not conducive for pupils to acquire initial literacy. This problem of the overcrowded class also affected pupils in the sense that they did not have full opportunity to participate in NBTL lessons. In the classroom, pupils were not comfortable when they were learning NBTL lessons because one desk which was supposed to accommodate four pupils accommodated six or more. Because of the overcrowded class, it was not also easy for the teacher to attend to all the pupils and control them.

The results from the interviews also showed that the economic factors such as poverty and unemployment of refugees were challenges to refugee pupils in acquiring literacy. Most parents of refugee pupils were unemployed and poor. Similarly, Makondo (1997) reported that refugees especially those who stay in camps are victims of poverty. Most refugee parents in Meheba

settlement are poor and have to struggle to feed and clothe their children. Paying school fees is very difficult for those parents. At the same time, the school fees and other funds that were being paid by UNHCR and other humanitarian agencies to refugees were abolished. As a result, many refugee pupils did not go to school. Those who went to school did not have exercise books for NBTL lessons. In addition they went to school hungry. Because they were hungry, they did not concentrate when initial literacy lessons were being taught.

Finally the challenge of inadequate NBTL teaching and learning materials was also cited. Only very few refugees whose parents did some businesses were able to buy school items such as exercise books, pens, and pay school fees for their children. However, a big number of parents were not able to provide NBTL learning materials for their children. The issue of inadequate NBTL learning materials is not only for refugee pupils but for all the pupils who live in rural areas of Zambia especially in the provinces of North-Western, Northern, and Luapula where the levels of poverty are high (Kelly, 1999).

## **5.2 To Establish the Refugee Pupil's Language of Play at Meheba D Basic School.**

The second objective was to establish the language of play, at Meheba D Basic School. The researcher wanted to know if Kikaonde was one of languages used by refugees at Meheba D Basic School when they were playing. The findings from the researcher's observation showed that Chinyanja and Swahili were the languages of play of the refugee pupils at Meheba D Basic School.

However, as observed by the researcher, these two languages of play, Kikaonde was none of them. Hence, the use of Kikaonde as the language of initial literacy at Meheba is a contradiction to the Ministry of Education policy of using a language of play to teach initial literacy. The

Ministry of Education policy document states that, “there is strong evidence that pupils learn literacy skills more easily and successfully through their mother tongue” (MOE, 1996).

Since Kikaonde was not the language of day-to-day interaction among refugee pupils at school, it was a big challenge for them to acquire initial literacy in it. This is so because the New Breaking through to Literacy (NBTL) teaching approach is an integrated reading and writing based on children’s language experience. In line with this argument, Jones (1921:64) clarified that “mother tongue in classrooms allows children to be themselves and develop their personalities as well as their intellects. Unlike the mother tongue, the unfamiliar language in classrooms, forces pupils to sit silently or repeat mechanically. It also leads to frustration and ultimately repetition, failure and dropout.”

### **5.3 To Establish the Refugee Language of Play at Homes.**

The third objective was to establish the refugee language of play at home. At Meheba refugee settlement, refugee pupils interacted with their parents and friends in their mother tongues. The findings from the observations done by the researcher indicated that when pupils were playing at home they expressed themselves in their mother tongues. For example, Burundians were speaking Kirundi, Ugandans were speaking Luganda, and Rwandans were speaking Kinyarwanda and so on. But when they reached the school they were forced to acquire initial literacy in unfamiliar language (Kikaonde).

In short, since Kikaonde was not one of the languages spoken by refugee pupils at home, it was very difficult and challenging for them to use it in acquiring initial literacy at school. This is not in agreement with Vygotsky’s social theory that when children start formal schooling they should

practice what they experience at home because it is in the homes that the children are exposed to literacy practices (Vygostky 1968).

Further, what was obtained at Meheba is not in line with Vuolab, (2000:15) who stated that; “my family, my home, and nature around my home were my libraries. Stories, proverbs, sayings of the wise, riddles, beliefs, poems, fairy tails, myths, taboos, legends, were books and not only books but theatre”. These are also the activities observed by the researcher when refugee children were interacting with peers and adults in homes. The family or a home belongs to the community. Like other members of the community, children also enjoy different social services available in their community. It is in this environment that is imbued with objects and activities that play a role in children’s acquisition of literacy (Barton, 2007).

This implies that through observing as well as participating in social interactions, children begin to learn different aspects of life. These aspects include skills, knowledge and attitudes that lay the foundation of acquiring initial literacy. Contrary at Meheba D Basic School the situation was different because in acquiring initial literacy, refugee pupils were not practicing the languages they experienced at home.

#### **5.4 Summary**

This chapter has discussed the findings of the study. The next chapter presents the conclusion and recommendations.

## **CHAPTER SIX**

### **CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS**

#### **6.0 Overview**

This research was set out to establish the challenges faced by refugee pupils in initial literacy acquisition at Meheba D Basic School in north western province of Zambia. This chapter concludes the study and also makes recommendations based on the major findings of the study.

#### **6.1 Conclusion**

The specific objectives of this study were:

- 1) to establish the challenges faced by refugee pupils in initial literacy acquisition;
- 2) to establish the refugee pupil's language of play at Meheba D Basic School and
- 3) to establish the refugee pupil's language of play at home. The following were the main findings:

The study revealed that using kikaonde as language of teaching/learning initial literacy was the main challenge to refugee pupils at Meheba D Basic School. Kikaonde was not a familiar language and the language of play of the refugee pupils. The familiar language and language of play were the mother tongues of the refugees including Chinyanja.

It was revealed by the findings that refugee pupils were facing a challenge of covering a long distance between their homes and Meheba D Basic School. They reached the school late, tired and missed NBTL lessons because these NBTL lessons were conducted at Eight (8)hours.



The study also revealed that the shortage of NBTL teaching and learning literacy materials was a challenge to acquire initial literacy for refugee pupils at Meheba D Basic School. There weren't enough NBTL text books, pictures, charts and so on. As a result of this pupils were struggling to learn NBTL lessons. Equally, it was not easy for the teacher to teach with limited materials.

Another challenge revealed by the findings was the lack of funds by refugee pupils. It was observed that many refugees were very poor to the extent that they could not sponsor their children. As a result of this poverty, many refugee pupils did not have pens or pencils and exercise books for NBTL lessons.

The study also revealed that the overcrowded classroom was a challenge to acquire initial literacy for refugee pupils at Meheba D Basic School. At the time of study there were one hundred and twenty four (124) pupils in one classroom. The teacher was not able to easily control and to attend to every pupil during NBTL lessons.

Finally, the study revealed that the frequent movements of refugee pupils were a challenge to them in terms of acquiring initial literacy. As a result of change of residence, refugee pupils were shifting from one language to another and Kikaonde was not one of those languages to which they shifted from time to time, yet it was the medium of teaching initial literacy at Meheba D Basic School posing a big challenge to the pupils.

## **6.2 Recommendations**

Based on the findings, the following recommendations were made;

- The Ministry of Education, Science, Vocational Training and Early Education should revisit the language used for teaching at Meheba D Basic School. The mother tongues of the refugee pupils should be used to teach and learn initial literacy.
- Since Meheba D Basic School is a public school, the government of Zambia through the Ministry of Education, Science, Vocational Training and Early Education in collaboration with UNHCR should train and employ more especially refugee teachers to teach NBTL lessons so that refugee children are taught in their mother tongues.
- UNHCR in collaboration with the government of Zambia should build at least a basic school in every zone of Maheba settlement in order to avoid the long distance covered by refugee pupils to Meheba D Basic School.
- There is a need to have smaller classes at Meheba D Basic School. The Ministry of Education, Science, Vocational Training and Early Education should split the grade one class into three classes.
- Finally, the Ministry of Education, Science, Vocational Training and Early Education should provide adequate NBTL materials in order to facilitate the acquisition of initial literacy at Meheba D Basic Schools. UNHCR should come in to help.

### **6.3 Recommendations for further research**

This study was limited to Meheba D Basic School in North Western Province of Zambia, and it was further limited to the challenges faced by refugee pupils at Meheba D Basic School. There is a need to broaden the study to other refugee camps and settlements in the country.

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## APPENDICES

### APPENDIX A: INTERVIEW GUIDELINE FOR TEACHERS.

1) What are the challenges faced by refugee pupils in literacy acquisition in your classrooms?

.....  
.....  
.....

2) What is the language (mother tongue or LI) do your refugee pupils speak?

.....  
.....

3) When pupils are out of class, what is the language of interaction do they use?

.....

4) What is the refugee pupil's language of play at Meheba settlement?

.....  
.....

5) What language do you use to teach pupils initial literacy?

.....  
.....

**APPENDIX B: INTERVIEW GUIDELINE FOR SCHOOL MANAGERS (HODs)**

1) What are the challenges faced by pupils in literacy acquisition at your school?

.....  
.....

2) What is the language (mother tongue or LI) do your refugee pupils speak?

.....

3) When pupils are out of class, what is the language of interaction do they speak?

.....

4) What is the refugee pupil's language of play at Meheba settlement?

.....  
.....

5) What language does the teacher use to teach refugee pupils initial literacy at Meheba D Basic School?

.....  
.....



**APPENDIX C: INTERVIEW GUIDELINE FOR (DEBS)**

1) What are the challenges faced by pupils in literacy acquisition at Meheba D Basic schools?

.....  
.....

2) What is the language (mother tongue or LI) do refugee pupils speak?

.....  
.....

3) What language is mainly used to teach refugee pupils initial literacy at Meheba D Basic School?

.....  
.....

## APPENDIX D: LESSON OBSERVATIONS

### Checklist

School.....

class.....

Topic.....

Number of pupils.....

Date.....

Time.....

Sex of the teacher.....

Native/non native speaker.....

### I. Rating Scores (0-5)

5- Excellent      3- Good      1- poor

4- Very good      2-fair      0-very poor

### II. Organization of the Lesson

a) Lesson plan on reading and writing

b) Lesson presentation

c) Relevant materials

### III. The Lesson Outcome.

a) Reading activities: (spelling and pronunciation of words; reading fluency)

b) Writing activities: (words and meaning)

## **APPENDIX E: LANGUAGE OF PLAY OBSERVATIONS**

- a) Refugee pupil's language of play at Meheba D Basic School.
- b) Refugee pupil's language of play at home.

## **APPENDIX F: INFORMED CONSENT FORM**

Dear respondent,

This serves to give you an understanding of the purpose of this research and procedures that will be followed. Further the implications for your participation are explained below. Finally you are asked to sign this form to indicate that you have agreed to participate in this exercise

Thank you in advance.

### **1. Description**

This exercise is an educational research; the researcher is a student at the University of Zambia pursuing a degree in literacy and learning. This research is a major requirement for the researcher to complete this program. Therefore this exercise is purely academic.

### **2. Purpose**

The researcher wishes to find out the challenges faced by refugee children in initial literacy acquisition. The researcher is interested in how refugee children from different countries of Africa are managing to acquire initial literacy in a multilingual set up such as Meheba D Basic School. The researcher is also interested in extra teaching and learning materials available in the classrooms teaching initial literacy.

### **3. Consent**

Participation in this exercise is voluntary. You are free to decline to participate in this exercise.

#### **4. Confidentiality**

All data collection from this research is treated with utmost confidentiality. Participants are assured that they will remain anonymous and untraceable in this research.

#### **5. Rights of Respondents**

All effort will be taken to ensure that the rights of participants are protected and respected.

Participants are assured that they shall suffer no harm as a result of participating in this exercise.

Participants are free to ask for clarification at any point of the exercise and to inform the researcher if they feel uncomfortable about any procedure in the research.

#### **6. Declaration of Consent**

I have read and fully understand this document. I have agreed to participate in this exercise.

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