

# **Factors Affecting Pupil Academic Performance at Grade Twelve (12) Level of Selected Grant-Aided Secondary Schools In Zambia**

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## **Abstract**

The purpose of the study was to identify the factors affecting pupil academic performance of the selected high and low performing grant-aided secondary schools in Southern Province of Zambia at Grade 12 level for the five-year period from 2011 – 2015. The objectives of the study were to identify factors accounting for constant high and constant low pupil academic performance among the schools in the sample and to identify the measures that have been put in place to improve performance in low performing grant-aided selected secondary schools. The study used a descriptive survey design and both qualitative and quantitative techniques to collect data. Two (2) high performing and two (2) low performing schools were sampled. The sample size was 135 comprising school proprietors, District Education Standard Officers, head teachers, deputy head teachers, heads of department, classroom teachers and Grade 12 pupils. The data was collected through self-administered questionnaires, interview schedules, FGDs and document review and was analysed thematically.

The study revealed that the excellent performance of the two high performing schools could be attributed to factors like the availability of constant proprietor support, competent administrators and availability of adequate infrastructure, while low academic performance of the low performing schools was attributed to inconsistent proprietor support, and incompetent administrators, among others.

The study concluded that the variations in the pupil academic performance in the selected grant-aided secondary schools hinged mainly on the instrumentality of the proprietors and competences of the administrators. The study recommended that proprietors should constantly support the schools they own and thoroughly scrutinize personnel recommended for administrative roles.

**Key words:** Grant-aided schools, teacher and pupil motivation, managing agency, academic performance, low and high performing schools

## 1.0 Introduction

The emergence of grant-aided schools in Zambia is related to a specific historical context. Missionaries were the first ones to offer formal education in Zambia. However, these missionaries faced a challenge in as far as evangelization was concerned due to inability of the Africans to read and write. This gave birth to the plan by the missionaries to offer education to the Africans. As Snelson (1974:11) contends that;

There were two main motives for the missionaries' zeal to educate the people. The motive start to formal education was to facilitate the spread of the gospel by the converts themselves and they also believed that education would be a civilizing force and would become a powerful weapon against pagan beliefs and sorcery.

In agreeing with Snelson, Kelly (1999:221) further states that:

Historically, formal education in Zambia originated through the work of voluntary agencies, dominant among them being the Christian missionaries. From the time that an organised educational structure was established in the mid-1920s up until after independence in 1964, the basis of education was a wide ranging partnership that involved central and local government agencies, missionary societies and the private sector.

The missionaries used to bear the financial burden of providing education services until the Phelps-Stoke Commission Report of 1924 recommended the necessity to raise government expenditure to aid missionary work in offering formal education to the Africans. Up to today government continues to render this support to church-based organisations that provide educational services (Kelly, 1999). This

was the genesis of the present day grant aided schools in Zambia. Overtime, the grant aided schools have increased in Zambia.

A grant-aided institution is one that receives a government grant of 75% of the capital costs of the approved budget and an annual grant-in-aid of running costs. The government also pays the salaries of teachers and approves personnel at these institutions (MoE, 1996). These grant-aided institutions are in essence run by different religious organisations or denominations commonly known as church mother bodies (Phiri, 2015).

In 1993, following the extensive consultations with the voluntary agencies, the regulations governing the grant-aided schools were revised. The new regulations provide for establishment at each aided institution of virtually autonomous boards of management which exercise extensive control of every aspect of educational provision at the school. This also empowers the boards of management to protect the particular ethos of their institutions through control over the appointment and retention of staff (MoE, 1996).

Phiri (2015) and Malambo (2012) have reported that grant-aided institutions have received merited acclaim from both government and stake holders for their good pupil academic performance at both grade 9 and 12 levels. Though there has been that repeated merited acclaim by the government and stake holders, there have been some grant aided schools that have not been performing well. In some instances, government schools which are perceived to have poor performance have been recording better pupil academic performance than some grant-aided schools as was observed from the Examinations Council of Zambia mark schedules for the period 2011 to 2015 (Examinations Council of Zambia Results, 2011-2015). This can be seen from the following tables which also show how government schools and grant aided-schools have been performing for the past five (5) years from 2011 to 2015.

**Table 1: Academic performance of government secondary**

## **schools of Southern Province**

YEAR	A	B	C	D	E	F	G	H	I	J	K	L	M	N
2011	68.2	41.1	52.4	66.5	42.4	61.3	64.7	51.7	61.1	45.9	57.7	46.4	54.8	48.4
2012	62.4	54.6	55.4	79.9	48.3	48.2	62.0	67.5	26.5	41.3	59.8	63.6	86.3	49.2
2013	75.4	100	60.2	67.6	55.5	53.2	46.6	55.4	51.5	38.1	61.2	54.3	78.1	49.3
2014	63.6	57.3	62.9	69.6	63.2	56.2	52.3	65.9	60.2	54.7	68.0	65.1	79.5	69.1
2015	72.1	66.2	56.2	74.2	71.3	55.9	44.8	65.5	76.7	63.8	82.9	60.5	70.7	63.1

**Table 2: Academic performance of grant-aided secondary schools in Southern Province of Zambia-2011-2015**

### < S C H O O L S >

YEAR	A	B	C	D	E	F	G	H	I	J	K	L	M	N	O	P	Q	R	S	T
<b>2011</b>	100	100	100	100	96.2	98.3	93.9	77.7	96.7	74.7	84.2	46.2	60.7	61.9	71.33	71.9	65.6	65.8	43.7	38.0
<b>2012</b>	100	100	98.3	96.5	95.3	94.7	87.7	97.2	97.3	83.8	87.6	84.1	65.3	65.9	66.85	86.3	64.6	68.3	67.0	49.2
<b>2013</b>	100	100	100	95.3	87.5	96.8	87.2	96.6	99.5	97.0	89.7	81.1	88.1	69.2	74.08	65.9	60.0	78.7	51.7	41.7
<b>2014</b>	100	100	100	92.3	99.0	95.5	95.5	100	98.8	94.3	95.5	90.0	94.2	92.3	51.68	64.2	72.2	75.8	50.7	44.3
<b>2015</b>	100	100	100	84.1	100	91.9	96.6	97.4	98.3	98.7	89.6	99.2	74.1	75.0	78.33	70.2	74.3	66.67	69.2	50.4

### < P A S S P E R C E N T A G E >

*Source: Examinations Council of Zambia*

It can be seen from *table 1* that even when government schools are assumed to have poor performance, there are some very good government schools that produce remarkable academic pass percentage. As illustrated from *table 1*, schools A, M, D, K, and H were doing well compared to some grant-aided schools as shown in *table 2*.

From *table 2*, it is clearly illustrated that some grant-aided secondary schools have been achieving high pupil academic performance constantly for the past five years while others have been achieving low performance. GECN (2014) reports that generally there is acknowledgment that mission schools produce good academic performance. However, *tables 1 and 2* show that the performance of schools **M, N, O, P, Q, R, S** and **T**, is not any different from that of government schools. The puzzling question is what could be the hindrance to high performance in these low pupil academic performing grant aided schools?

It is important to note that the viability of these grant-aided institutions depend, to a large extent, on the intended goal for setting up such an institution and support that they receive from their Church mother bodies. For missionary societies whose prime goal was to spread the gospel, there was no much development that took place in the provision of education as they merely saw a school as an evangelising agency. However, those missionaries who wanted to provide both the gospel and education for life to the converts went ahead and developed the schools. Snelson (1974:14) says;

Certainly, there are differences of opinion, among the missionaries. Some regarded the school chiefly as an evangelising agency and looked to decisions for Christ or conversions as the ultimate proof of the value of education activity. Some missionaries receive financial resources while others receive human resources and yet others have very little support.

It follows therefore that few missionary societies defined their educational policies in specific terms for guidance. Others had no financial and human resources to expand their education activities. To this

effect Snelson (1974:14) states that, “It was this same factor of human and financial resources which largely accounted for the difference between the missionary societies in the speed with which they expanded their education work.” This in turn determined the quality of education facilities provided which may positively or negatively affect the academic performance of those grant aided schools.

In view of the above, this study sought to identify factors affecting pupil academic performance of selected high performing and low performing grant-aided secondary schools in Southern Province of Zambia at Grade twelve (12) level. The study was guided by the following research questions:

1. What factors account for the constant high and constant low academic performance at Grade twelve (12) level in the selected grant-aided secondary schools in Southern Province of Zambia?
2. What measures have been put in place to improve the performance in low performing selected grant aided secondary schools in Southern Province of Zambia.

## **2.0 Statement of the problem**

The Global Education Conference Network (2014), Malambo (2012) and Phiri (2015) record that common assertions hold that grant-aided schools always have good performance. However, records from the Examinations Council of Zambia covering the period 2011 to 2015, revealed that there were some grant-aided schools that were underperforming in Southern Province of Zambia (Examinations Council of Zambia, Grade 12 Results: 2011-2015). These low performing grant-aided schools were even recording lower pupil academic performance than the assumed poor performing government schools. However, there seemed to have been no research work that had been done to find out why some grant-aided secondary schools were underperforming academically. Hence, this study was aimed at

identifying factors affecting pupil academic performance in selected high and low performing grant-aided secondary schools in Southern Province of Zambia at Grade twelve level.

### **3.0 Methodology**

The study used descriptive survey design to identify the factors affecting pupil academic performance in high and low performing grant aided schools in Southern Province of Zambia. The study used qualitative technique to collect data. The choice of the research design was influenced by the Social Constructivism theory which state that people and groups interacting in socio systems create, overtime, concepts of mental representation of each other's action and that these concepts eventually become habituated in society. When these concepts become embedded in society, it becomes reality. Hence, Phiri (2015) concludes that the merited acclaim gained by grant aided schools on good performance may just be a result of social constructivism while low performing grant aided schools are not noticed and nothing is known to be the cause of that low performance. Therefore, this study may help bring out the factors accounting for low performance in some grant aided schools.

For this study the target population was, 11,605, broken down as follows: 11,220 pupils from all the 21 grant-aided secondary schools in southern province of Zambia, 332 teachers, 42 administrators (school head teachers and deputy head teachers), 7 proprietors and 4 Education Standards Officers from the four districts involved. A research sample is a portion of the population. It refers to the actual number of participants drawn from the target population (Kasonde, 2013). The sample for this study was four (04) selected grant-aided secondary schools with the total number of 55 participants broken down as follows: 24 grade 12 pupils (6 per school); 12 teachers (03 per school); 04 heads of department (1 per school); 04 Deputy head teachers (1 per school); 04 Head teachers (1 per school); 04 Proprietors; and 03 District Education Standard Officers (Choma, Monze

and Pemba) where these grant-aided secondary schools are found.

The study used purposeful sampling to select six (06) grade twelve (12) pupils and three (03) teachers from each school, two high performing and two low performing grant aided secondary schools together with the administrators, proprietors for the selected schools and the three (03) Education Standard Officers for General Inspection in the relevant districts. Data was collected from teachers through questionnaires while interview schedules and focus group discussions were used to collect data from administrators and Grade twelve (12) pupils respectively. The gathered data were analysed qualitatively by categorising similar ideas into the emerging themes. The data was then presented according to the research questions using the identified themes.

## **4.0 Findings and discussion**

The following section presents the findings of the study. These are combined into factors that account for the constant high and constant low academic performance at Grade twelve (12) level in the selected grant-aided secondary schools in Southern Province of Zambia and the attendant measures each low performing school had devised and implemented to improve pupil academic performance. These factors and measures are discussed in the sections that follow.

### **4.1 Levels of Proprietor Support**

The findings revealed that one of the major contributing factors to either high or low pupil academic performance was viability of the proprietor support to the school owned. This is due to the fact that a grant-aided school: resources its own teaching and learning materials; has to maintain its own infrastructure; motivate the learners and teachers as the MoGE only provides teachers and a minimal supplement grant in monetary terms which is inadequate to run the entire school's day to day requirements. This study through the teachers, HoDs, d/head teachers and through in-depth interviews with the

head teachers and the ESOGIs, revealed that at the schools where proprietor support was inadequate and inconsistent, the academic performance of pupils was poor because essential school requirements to run the school were unavailable, pupils and staff were not motivated, infrastructure was limited and unattended to. This was evident in the two low academic performing schools. On the other hand, in schools where proprietor support was adequate and consistent, the academic performance of learners was excellent because all the necessary requirements were there and this created a positive teaching and learning atmosphere. In support of this the two head teachers from the high performing schools said this during the in-depth interview:

The proprietors for the school are very supportive. They support the school morally, spiritually, materially and financially. They maintain the infrastructure; provide teaching and learning materials even supply their own manpower to help out in teaching.

The schools which had the poorest proprietor support had the lowest pupil academic performance. At Schools A and B where proprietor support was good, pupil academic performance was equally excellent too.

The ESOGIs observed and commented that proprietor support was not only meant to provide materials but was also meant to be assertive to set an example to the lay personnel. Where proprietors were assertive, even internal policies of the school were not overlooked by pupils, teachers, administrators and the MoGE. For example, the absence of proprietor assertiveness has allowed low performing grant aided schools to conduct parallel classes in the afternoons instead of allowing regular pupils to use the classes for remedial work with the same teachers. This indirectly hampered the teacher performance and resource utilisation. The findings of this study are in agreement with Snelson (1974:19) who states that, "It was this same factor of human and financial resources which

largely accounted for the difference between the missionary societies in the speed with which they expanded their education work. This in turn determined the quality of education facilities provided which may positively or negatively affect the academic performance of those grant aided schools.” The proprietors are the major determinants of a school’s academic performance. They are an independent variable upon which all other dependent variables in a school situation like good pupil academic performance, rely. Hence lack of consistent proprietor support negatively impacted low performing schools as expressed by one of the two head teachers from a low performing school:

Just to say a little on this issue, there is very poor and limited support that this school receives from the owners such that we now depend on the schools to run the school.

#### **4.2 Internal school management and supervision**

Supervision is very vital in any work place. This includes a school. Without proper supervision even high levels of pupil and teacher motivation, presence of enough teaching and learning materials or proper support from the proprietors of schools, teachers and pupils may tend to relax and this may affect pupil academic performance negatively and ultimately hinder the attainment of the set goals. To this effect, Okumbe (1999) in Nkanzela (2015) considers supervision as an administrative strategy aimed at stimulating teachers towards greater pedagogic effectiveness and productivity.

The study revealed that another major contributing factor to the low performance in the low performing grant-aided secondary schools was lack of functional supervision or internal monitoring while the high performing schools had functional supervision which resulted into excellent pupil academic performance. It must be borne in mind that while appointment to senior positions in a grant-aided school is strictly limited to members of that religious denomination, it is inappropriate to just appoint people based on their allegiance to the church but there should be a balance between church allegiance

and supervisory competence. Though the teachers, HoDs and deputy head teachers' responses indicated that there was effective supervision, the in-depth interviews with the head teachers, ESOGI, and managing agency representatives revealed that the absence of functional supervision resulted into low pupil academic performance. The ESOGIs revealed that the weakness was on the appointment of the incompetent administrators by the managing agencies. This incapacitated the two schools to the extent of being identified as low pupil academic performers as teachers relaxed, became disoriented, worsened on beer drinking habits in villages, and got permission to be away from work every now and then at the expense of the pupils. Where administrators were weak they could not control the situation and the end result was poor academic performance. In this vein, one head teacher from the low performing schools said;

The situation I inherited my dear was not good. It was pathetic. There was no control of teachers. Teachers were too much into beer drinking in villages. There were excessive movements among teachers as they would just get permission every now and then at the expense of the poor pupils who needed to learn.

These findings were in agreement with Mosibudi (2012) in South Africa who found that, some of the contributing factors to high rate of failure at Grade twelve (12) level were that the departmental officials at high levels did not strengthen the monitoring and support mechanisms. Appointment to promotional posts was based on favoritism and not merit. These findings were also in agreement with Odumbe and Simatwa (2015) who found that the head teacher's incompetence in supervisory duties negatively influenced the academic performance of pupils. Through the interview, the ESOGI for Choma district disclosed that the MoGE through the District Education Board Secretary had to intervene by advising the managing agencies to change the administrators.

However, the study found that high performing schools were achieving excellent pupil academic performance constantly due in part to competent administrators. The ESOGIs and the managing agencies commended the supervision that was there in these schools. Equally pupils during the focus group discussions praised the head teachers and deputy head teachers for their vision and encouragement they gave to pupils at inception and throughout their stay. These findings are in agreement with Nkanzela (2015) who also found that principals of schools that perform well academically are usually driven by a vision for their schools to be an ideal place where teaching and learning can take place in a safe and orderly school atmosphere. Such schools value quality in teaching, learning and have high expectations as well as encouraging learner academic achievement. Similarly, Mollel (2013) also says, if heads of schools executed their administrative roles well, there would be clear remarkable efficiency in the work carried out by the juniors. Hence, the good internal monitoring by the head teachers and deputy head teachers of the high performing schools largely contributed to the excellent pupil academic performance.

One of the main measures that the low performing schools put in place was to transfer incompetent administrators and replace them with competent administrators from other schools but within the same church denomination. This was an attempt to enhance internal supervision which was missing in both schools. One ESOGI for one of the low performing schools said;

There was no internal supervision from the previous deputy head teacher but the current one is very instrumental and change has already been seen.

Further to this, through the focus group discussions, the head teachers on their part said they had stopped being expectant from the managing agencies. The two schools had now started involving the parents to take it upon themselves to develop their schools. The par-

ents were mobilising themselves to mould bricks to construct the science laboratories for Schools C and D.

The other measure was for teachers to have lesson plans checked before going to teach. However, checking on a lesson plan alone may not work well because a lesson plan does not teach itself unless accompanied by class observations and spot on check strategies. Otherwise, lesson plans may be prepared and physically presented without being implemented by a classroom teacher. Another measure was the use of grade retention where pupils not doing well were retained in the same grade the following year in order for them to improve on their performance.

The other solution they were trying to put in place was to try and continue with the pupils they had from Grade 8 to 12 because these were already familiar with the school tradition. This strategy was used by the high performing schools as one head teacher for a high performing school said;

The school usually has high cut off point at grade 8 due to the high number of applicants we maintain our own pupils at Grade 10 level and it's our policy not to get pupils from other schools at Grade 10 up to Grade 12. This kind of practice helps us because pupils already know about the school tradition and all they do is to straight go into hard work.

### **4.3 Teacher and pupil motivation**

The study revealed that both teacher and pupil motivation in school had great influence on the academic performance of pupils. Where pupils were motivated, the result was good academic performance while where it was missing, pupils attained poor academic results. Further, schools A and B strongly motivated their teachers; this reflected in their good results while Schools C and D neither motivated their pupils nor teachers and this reflected in their poor results. This finding is in agreement with Walker-Dalhouse and Risko (2008) in Nkanzela (2015) who contend that motivation has a positive and sig-

nificant impact on successful learning. If a learner is not motivated, he/she does not co-operate and participate fully in learning activities and in assessments. Motivation is not an important factor for pupils only but for teachers as well. A motivated teacher will have a positive work culture and instills a competitive spirit among learners. Where motivation was present, the pupil academic performance was also excellent. One pupil for School A said;

There is a high spirit of competition among pupils because of the prizes that we receive during awards day.

The headteacher at School A said”

We organize an Awards Day Celebration annually where deserving pupils in all disciplines are given various prizes. The teachers as a way of instilling hard work are also awarded (only deserving) during the World Teachers’ Day celebrations.

Therefore, it can be inferred that lack of motivation may have also contributed to the low pupil academic performance for the low performing grant aided schools.

#### **4.4 Infrastructure**

The study revealed that there was enough and necessary infrastructure in the high performing schools and inadequate and not well-maintained infrastructure in the low performing schools. This infrastructure under consideration included science laboratories, libraries, ablution blocks and classes. Particularly sanitation is vital and may cause a pandemic if not taken care of. One pupil had this to say;

The dining hall is too small and this delays us, prefects in charge to go for prep as we have to wait for other pupils to eat.

One pupil from school C said:

We also have no library for us to research from.

These findings were in agreement with Nkanzela (2015) and Odumbe and Simatwa (2015) who found that, lack of vital instructional resources and infrastructure in schools and overcrowded classrooms were some of the factors considered by learners in schools to be major contributors to low academic learner performance. Mollel (2013) also contended that physical facilities were rated as a major factor that influenced academic performance.

The situation was different with schools A and B (high performing) as these schools had all the necessary infrastructure and pupils had excellent academic performance. This is in agreement with Mary, Manjula and Porgio (2015) who assert that a good physical climate of a school translates into high academic performance of the learners. The learner has access to the library to research, does not panic when it is meal time or when it is time to answer the call of nature. A stable mind facilitates learning and understanding unlike where a pupil has to plan where to go to the toilet or think what time he or she will eat due to lack of enough feeding room.

To solve the issue of inadequate infrastructure, School C started lobbying for funds from the parents through the Parents Teachers' Association (P.T.A) to put up science laboratories, equipment and apparatus. Initially, the school was relying on the managing agency to put up the needed infrastructure. School D embarked on lobbying for donor support to build a completely new school since the buildings were very old and had not been rehabilitated. This support had already started trickling in at school D and the site had already been identified with some work going on. The poor sanitation which was identified as another inhibiting factor to good pupil academic performance at School D had been partially resolved by putting up pit latrines to compensate for the shortage of modern flushable toilets. This was the initiative of the new head teacher.

#### **4.5 Availability of teaching and learning materials**

This study found that lack of teaching and learning resources largely contributed to the poor pupil academic performance in the low performing schools. Pupils, teachers and administrators all stated that there were not enough textbooks. The deputy head teachers and HoDs stated that this was due to the change of curriculum. However, through the in depth interviews with head teachers and Standard officers, it was found out that high performing schools were usually equipped with teaching and learning resources while with low performing schools, this problem had been there long before the change of the curriculum and that the change of the curriculum had only aggravated it. Related to the inadequacy of text books was the issue of chemicals in the science laboratories. The high performing schools were well equipped while the low performing schools were not.

The study found that one of the low performing schools did not even have science laboratories. This was also confirmed by the head teachers and managing agencies for the low performing grant-aided schools. This could be one of the old problems that could have been contributing to the low pupil academic performance at Grade twelve (12) level for the low performing school as supported by Mollé (2013) who found that lack of teaching and learning resources were some of the factors leading to low performance in Morogoro municipality schools. This argument is also supported by Mbozi (2008) cited in Malambo (2012) who found that limited text books was also a factor affecting performance of learners. Lack of teaching and learning materials affects pupils' academic performance as it greatly hampers teaching. One pupil from school C (low performing) had this to say:

We do not go to the labs and we don't even know the names of the instruments. I don't know whether they are apparatus other than the beaker. What we have seen from the past grade 12s, is that they only do practicals during mock examinations and the next time is during final examinations.

Availability of text books aids the teacher and at the same time enhances a learners' understanding of concepts learnt as they can study on their own after class time. A teacher is equally motivated to teach when teaching materials are available. In the case of Science and Home Economics, teaching in abstract without pupils seeing and laying hands on what they learning about limits the learning experience, but when pupils physically see, feel, experience or perform what they are learning themselves, understanding is enhanced and retention of what has been learnt is long lasting. It also gives confidence to the learner. In stressing the critical role of teaching and learning materials one head teacher from a high performing school said:

We first identify the department that is badly hit in terms of teaching and learning materials then we give them money to purchase what is required. We do this to all the departments through the HoDs.

To promote effective teaching in the schools, teaching and learning materials were bought. These included text books, computers, chemicals for science laboratory and many others. The low performing schools have also embarked on allocating a reasonable amount of money to purchase the above outlined teaching and learning materials.

#### **4.6 Attitudes of learners**

Attitude refers to one's attached value to something or someone; it is the way one considers something or someone. Attitude has to do with a person's mind set or approach to something or a person. This attitude plays a vital role in a person's mind. When an individual has a positive attitude about a teacher or subject, often there are positive results and vice versa. Through the focus group discussions, it was found that one of the factors that influenced pupil academic performance was the negative attitude of pupils towards school work.

Pupils in low performing schools revealed that pupils were not serious with school which resulted in dodging lessons, failure to study and increase of boy-girl relationships amongst pupils with the end result being teen pregnancies. This finding is in contradiction with Oluwaseun (2016) who found that coeducation leads to good performance compared to single sex schools. In the current study, the low performing schools were coeducation. In School A and B where pupils attached great value to education, pupils termed themselves as brain shakers and were very competitive resulting in good pupil academic performance locally and at national level.

To inculcate positive attitudes in the learners, the low performing schools started giving motivation talks to pupils where they would invite young people both male and female of high profile in the society to give motivation talks on the importance of education as a way of motivating pupils to appreciate education. Schools started having supervised afternoon study to enable pupils see the seriousness of school. The head teacher for school C, stated that they had started awarding deserving pupils and even teachers. School D had also embarked on serious award of teachers and learners to encourage hard work in both. For pupils, the schools started organising inter class quiz competitions where the winners were normally given prizes. In addition to the above, the schools were also found to be running subject clubs like Maths club, Science/JETs club and so on to help change the mindset of pupils towards these subjects.

#### **4.7 High and low entry cut off points**

The study also found out that not all grant-aided schools had high cut off entry points. The high performing schools have high numbers of applicants pushing the cutoff point high while others have low demand hence end up getting pupils with very low marks for either Grade eight (8) or ten (10). This finding is contrary to Global Education Conference Network (2014) which asserts that grant aided and private schools often select, for admission, pupils with very high marks compared to government schools and this gives them higher

numbers of academic achievers and well-motivated learners. One head teacher from the low performing secondary school had this to say;

The caliber of pupils we get at Grade 8 and 10 are those mostly with low marks who have failed to go to boarding schools and mainly from the local basic schools. The MoGE insist that we enroll as long as they made certificates to grade 10. This is another contributing factor to the poor performance.

However, this study found that one of the factors that accounts for good performance for School A was the high cut off points while the other three schools were getting pupils with low marks. The head teacher from one high performing school said;

The school usually has high cut off points at Grade 8 due to the high number of applicants. We maintain our own pupils at Grade 10 level and it's our policy not to get pupils from other schools at Grade 10 up to Grade 12. This kind of practice helps us because pupils already know about the school tradition and all they do is to straight go into hard work.

This finding is in line with WEAC (2005) in Farooq, Chaudhry, Shafiq & Berhanu (2011) that states that pupils who entered school with high marks were motivated to learn while those with low entry marks lacked confidence, had low self-esteem, generally performed below average in class tests and eventually got poor marks in national examinations. The high performing schools had put in place measures to ensure that they retained their pupils from Grade 9 at Grade 10 level.

#### **4.8 Weekly Boarding School**

Through focus group discussions with pupils and in-depth interviews with the head teacher, ESOGI, and managing agency for School C, it was found out that another contributing factor to the low pupil

academic performance in the selected low performing schools was the weekly boarding scenario where pupils coming from far away areas were renting huts in the nearby villages because of lack of proper school accommodation since the school was a Day Secondary School in a rural area. This weekly boarding brought more harm than good as pupils during free time turned to vices like drug abuse among boys while male villagers took advantage of the girl child as they needed money for up keep resulting into many of them getting pregnant. This finding is in tandem with the findings of Gbollie and Keamu (2017) who found that long distances covered by day scholars coupled with poverty whereby children go to school without any money to spend on arising needs negatively influences pupil academic performance.

The issue of weekly boarding which brought about teen pregnancies in School C was partly resolved by involving the managing agency when more than 30 girls fell pregnant in 2016. The school through the managing agency built a 1x1 dormitory for girls who were most vulnerable when renting accommodation in the nearby villages. As a security measure, the school had also employed a matron to monitor the girls' movements.

In line with this one head teacher said;

When a report was given to the managing agency on the rampant pregnancy cases of girls, the church decided to come in and put up a 1 x 1 dormitory block. Girls who come from very faraway places were given room to sleep from Monday to Friday. So, most of the senior girls from faraway places have been catered for.

In this case quality of pupils enrolled who lacked parental control and lacked the necessary requisites for personal effects in the case of girls especially becomes the extraneous variable which influences such disruptive activities. This finding is in line with Bradley and Corwyn, (2002) in Farooq *et al* (2011) who argued that a child who

comes from a stressful home environment tends to channel that stress into disruptive behavior at school and be less able to develop a health socio and academic life.

## **5.0 Conclusion**

Although both high performing and low performing schools had similar measures in place, the difference seemed to lie in the fact that the high performing schools had a long tradition of such measures while the low performing schools were only beginning to implement similar measures as at the time of this study. This is in agreement with Mwaura (2010) who argued that there were no differences in the strategies used by the head teachers in well performing and poorly performing schools. But the feasibility of all the measures that were put in place to improve school operations in general and learner outcomes in particular, depended on the financial availability more than internal supervision or grade retention. Since one of the major problems or hindrance factor was the poor proprietor support, without this support the development of these schools will stall. Even when competent administrators are brought, without proprietor support, little may be achieved. Similarly, even when funds are raised, without assertive proprietors, the impact of these funds would not be maximised. Clearly, proprietor assertiveness is vital. Without forcefulness, the two low performing schools are likely to continue failing to achieve levels of pupil performance expected of mission schools. Whatever the case, the MoGE has a duty to promote the highest standard of learning for all by paying attention to various interdependent factors such as quality curriculum and provision of teachers (MoE, 1996). In the same way, it is the duty and responsibility of each school to look for interventions or measures to improve the school's academic performance.

## 6.0 Recommendations

Based on the findings of the study and the discussion above, the following recommendations are suggested:

- Managing agencies of grant-aided schools need to thoroughly scrutinise personnel recommended for the post of head teacher and deputy head teacher and such appointments should be based on merit and not allegiance to the church only.
- Managing agencies of grant-aided schools need to be assertive especially as a liaison office between the school and the MoGE on all matters affecting the schools.
- Managing agencies should continue to look for partner schools and donors for financial and material support for their schools.
- Managing agencies who fail to run their school to expected standards should be compelled to surrender it to the government through the MoGE.

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