

THE ROLE OF STRATEGIC PLANNING IN SCHOOL IMPROVEMENT IN SELECTED  
SECONDARY SCHOOLS OF SOLWEZI DISTRICT, ZAMBIA

By

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A dissertation submitted to the University of Zambia in partial fulfillment of the requirement  
for the award of the degree of Master of Education in Educational Administration and  
Management

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## DECLARATION

I, **Evans Nkumbwa**, do hereby declare that this research report is my original work and that all the works of other persons used in this dissertation has been duly acknowledged; and that this work has never been presented to the University of Zambia or any other university for academic award.

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## APPROVAL

This dissertation of **Evans Nkumbwa** has been approved as a partial fulfillment of the requirements for the award of the Degree of Master of Education in Educational Administration and Management at the University of Zambia.

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## ABSTRACT

The purpose of the study was to investigate the role of strategic planning in school improvement in selected public secondary schools in Solwezi District, Zambia. Objectives of the study were to assess the implementation of Strategic Planning; determine the influence of Strategic Planning on school improvement; and to establish the major constraints encountered in implementing Strategic Planning. The objectives were achieved using a descriptive design which was employed on a target population from six public secondary schools. The sample comprised six secondary schools, six head teachers, six secondary school deputy head teacher and six board chairpersons. Purposive sampling was used to select participants. Data was collected through interviews. Document analysis was also used to verify the available of documented information that was needed as supportive evidences in the study. Data collected through interviews were analyzed by thematic analysis, while data collected through document analysis were interpreted and presented through narrations. The study revealed that implementation of strategic planning contributes to improved school performance and learners' achievements in selected secondary schools. The study also revealed that strategic planning plays a key role towards the positive performance of schools as a tool that directs resource mobilization and allocation and also enables secondary schools to conduct both internal and external analysis of school improvement. The study also revealed that selected secondary schools faced challenges of inadequate resources such as financial, material and training in the implementation of strategic planning. The study recommends that, the Ministry of General Education should provide support towards the implementation of strategic planning in form of financial, material, training and regularly monitor and evaluate the implementation of the objectives in the strategic planning. The secondary schools should also have school monitoring committees to assess implementation of strategic planning.

**Keywords:** *Strategic planning, School Improvement.*

## **DEDICATION**

This publication is dedicated to my dear beloved wife Lillian Ng'ona and my children Evans Nkumbwa Junior, Edwin Nkumbwa, Precious Nkumbwa and Joseph Nkumbwa for their continued support and encouragement rendered to me during the course of my study.

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## ACRONYMS

- DEBS : District Education Board Secretary
- ECZ : Examination Council Zambia
- ESO : Education Standards Officer
- MoGE : Ministry of General Education
- PESTLE : Politically, Economically, Socially, Technologically, Legally and  
Environmentally
- PEO: Provincial Education Officer
- SWOT: Strength, Weaknesses, Opportunities and Threats

## DEFINITION OF TERMS

**Evidence** : most commonly thought of as proof supporting a claim or belief.

**Improvement** : is the process of a thing moving from one state to a state considered to be better, usually through some action intended to bring about that betterness.

**Planning** : A basic management function involving formulation of one or more detailed plans to achieve optimum balance of needs or demands with the available resources.

**Role** : A prescribed or expected behavior associated with a particular position or status in a group or organization.

**Secondary school:** A school intermediate between elementary school and college and usually offering general, technical, vocational, or college preparatory courses.

**School Improvement:** Is a distinct approach to educational change that aims to enhance student outcomes as well as strengthening the school's capacity for managing change.

**Strategic** : Relating to the identification of long-term or overall aims and interests and the means of achieving them.



## **CHAPTER ONE**

### **INTRODUCTION**

#### **1.1 Overview**

This chapter presents the background to the study, statement of the problem, purpose of the study, objectives of the study, research questions, significance of the study, delimitations of the study, theoretical framework, conceptual framework and limitation of the study.

#### **1.2 Background to the Study**

The central premise of the Ministry of General Education is to enhance school improvement in secondary schools by facilitating the implementation of strategic planning (MoE, 1996). The deterioration in quality of public education had necessitated the mandate of the Ministry of General Education to develop strategies in form of tools for school improvement. One management tool that has been acclaimed as effective in improving the performance of an institution of learning is the use of strategic planning. Therefore, the Government of the Republic of Zambia through the Ministry of General Education initiated the implementation of Strategic Plans in schools in a quest for enhancing school improvement.

Generally, a strategic plan is a plan that is intended to achieve a particular purpose using fundamental decisions and actions that shape and guide what an organisation is, what it does and how it does it with a focus on the future. However, the term strategic plan has been defined differently by various scholars. According to Bryson (2011), strategic planning is a plan that is intended to achieve a particular purpose. Bryson further says that, “it is a disciplined effort to produce fundamental decisions and actions that shape and guide what an institution is, what it does and how it does it with a focus on the future”. According to Warner (1984), a strategic plan is the direction and scope of an organization over the long term. Warner’s definition of a strategic plan is helpful in understanding the value of setting up a direction to achieve an organization’s objectives. Without a direction, it is difficult to know where an organization is going and if it is succeeding or not. A Strategic Plan is thus direction or control mechanism for allocating resources in order to meet certain objectives. It is a way of determining how organizational resources, skills and competencies should be combined to create competitive advantage. It is thus important that all organizations, despite their size and objectives, put in place effective strategic plans. The value of Strategic

Planning to any organization is that it determines the organisation's success or failure. In a nut shell, Strategic Planning identifies where an organisation wants to be at some point in the future and how it is going to get there. It is the process of defining the direction of the institution and allocating resources to pursue this strategy (Maluku and Maluku, 2009).

Strategic planning is important to any institutional work performance because it determines the actualisation of the mission and the vision of an institution. As such, many institutions in different sectors, including the education sector, have taken interest in developing strategic plans because many policies and programmes which they initiated at different times have failed them. The Strategic Planning introduced in the ministry of education has eight (8) components that include Curriculum, Induction of new staff, Decision-making, Assessment, and Learner Preparation for Examination, Monitoring, Incentives and Records Management. In order to effectively implement the Strategic Plan, each of these eight components have been given a situational analysis, vision, policy statement, goal, strategic objectives, strategies, priority activities and an operation and compliance plan. The introduction of strategic plans in schools was a way of acquiring or attaining quality education, improving standards and bringing schools to effective self-management statuses (MOE, 1996). In so doing, it brought about school improvement in which teaching and learning were enhanced.

The main objective of strategic planning in institutions of learning was to contribute to school improvement strategies. However, many secondary schools were developing and implementing the core values enshrined in their strategic plans but low school improvement was consistently reported in the Educational Statistical Bulletins (MOE, 2015; MOE, 2016). Hence, the need to investigate the role of strategic planning in school improvement in selected secondary schools in Solwezi district, Zambia. However, the low school improvement was attributed to the findings of Johnson (2004) who says that, "the main problem is not with the development of a Strategic Plan but its implementation". In this regard, it appeared that the strategic planning in many organizations did not tend to be done well and what was often called strategic planning was actually focused at lower-level issues (Watkins, 2004). From the information given above it could be seen that there were various factors that affected the successful implementation of a strategic plan among which was the quality and commitment of its human resource to implement the strategy (Biting, et al 2010). According to Mashhad, et al (2008), among the factors that negatively affected the successful implementation of a Strategic Plan included organisational structure, organizational culture, information and communication technology, reporting systems, motivation and reward

systems, the availability of adequate resources, decision making process, effective communication, education, capabilities and skills. However, the reasons as to why school improvement had continued to go down and yet schools were implementing strategic planning appeared not to be clear. Therefore, it is from this background that this study was designed to investigate the role of strategic planning in school improvement in selected secondary schools in Solwezi district, Zambia.

### **1.3 Statement of the Problem**

The aim of strategic planning is to provide leadership and direction to all those within a sector, such as the education sector by setting out a clear and agreed agenda for action (Aldehyyat, et al, 2011). It is against this backdrop that the concept of strategic planning became a popular management tool not only to steer an institution's survival but also to improve the quality of services it offers. A number of scholars such as Cole (2008) argued that there is a positive correlation between strategic planning and school improvement. In the light of the information highlighted above, the Ministry of General Education (MoGE) directed that schools should develop and implement strategic planning in a quest to bring about school improvement. Despite the directives from MoGE, secondary schools continued to register varied levels of improvements as highlighted in Education National Assessment surveys (ECZ, 2010; ECZ, 2012). What was not known was the influence of implementing strategic planning in school improvement; hence this study was designed to assess the role of strategic planning on school improvement as observed from selected secondary schools in Solwezi district, Zambia.

### **1.4 Purpose of the Study**

With the global challenges and technological advancements in education systems provision, planning in education systems appears central on the agenda of institutions of learning to engage in strategic planning. Therefore, it was critical to gather evidence for or against the assumed important role played by strategic planning in school improvement.

## **1.5 Research Objectives**

### **1.5.1 General Objective**

To provide evidence of the role of strategic planning in school improvement in selected secondary schools.

### **1.5.2. Specific Objectives**

1. To assess the implementation of Strategic Planning in selected secondary schools in Solwezi district.
2. To determine the influence of Strategic Planning on school improvement in selected secondary schools in Solwezi district.
3. To establish the major constraints encountered in implementing Strategic Planning in selected secondary schools in Solwezi district.

## **1.6 Research Questions**

### **1.6.1 General Question**

How is Strategic Planning contributing to school improvement in selected secondary schools?

### **1.6.2 Specific Questions**

1. How is Strategic Planning carried out in selected secondary schools in Solwezi district?
2. How does Strategic Planning influence the way things are done in selected secondary schools in Solwezi district?
3. What are the major constraints in the implementation of Strategic Planning in selected secondary schools in Solwezi district?

## **1.7 Significance of the Study**

The study was important as the findings provided both insight and empirical understanding of the current ways of implementing strategic planning as well as its contribution to school improvement. The findings also enabled the researcher enumerate and understand the challenges faced by schools and its stakeholders in the process of implementing strategic

plans in secondary schools. The study also enabled the researcher to have an insight on how a well implemented strategic planning can translate into a successful improvement process of a school as a whole.

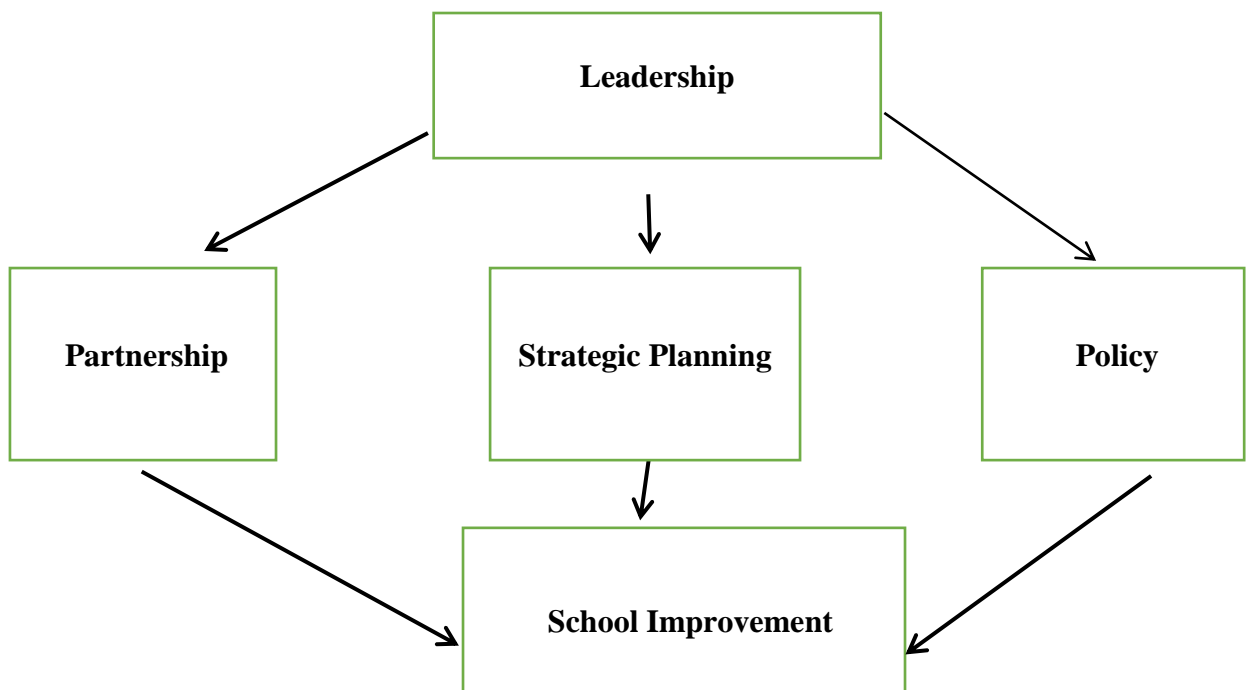
### **1.8 Theoretical Framework**

This study was guided by Igor Ansoff strategic management theory. This theory was developed by Igor Ansoff (1918-July 14, 2002). Igor Ansoff was an applied mathematician and business manager. Ansoff felt that, in developing strategy, it was essential to systematically anticipate future environmental challenges to an organization, and draw up appropriate strategic plans for responding to these challenges. Igor Ansoff explored strategic planning issues, and built up a systematic approach to strategy formulation and strategic decision-making through a framework of theories, techniques and models. Ansoff identified four standard types of organizational decisions as related to strategy, policy, programmes, and standard operating procedures. The last three of these, he argued, are designed to resolve recurring problems or issues and, once formulated, do not require an original decision each time. This means that the decision process can easily be delegated. Strategy decisions are different, however, because they always apply to new situations and so need to be made anew every time. It is from this theory that a conceptual framework for this study was developed.

### **1.9 Conceptual Framework**

The conceptual model in this section aimed at illustrating the relationship between strategic planning and school improvement. In this model, strategic planning is the independent variable while school improvement is the dependent variable. Strategic planning entails the entire process of developing a strategic plan for an organization. In case of a school as an organization, strategic planning covers all major key accountability areas in the school which includes; teaching and learning, management and administration, infrastructure development, staff development, professional development programmes, curricular among others. Presence of a mission statement and vision spells the strategic direction of the organization. Based on this, the organization conducts an extensive internal and external environmental analysis to establish the strengths and weaknesses of the organization and the opportunities and threats in the external environment. The findings of the analysis are used to make strategic choices from the alternatives at hand and strategic objectives are set. Proper implementation of the strategies decided upon in the strategic plan determines its influence on organizational

performance. In this model, strategic direction (mission and vision), environmental analysis (SWOT and PESTEL), strategic choices and implementation are used as indicators of strategic planning (independent variable). Similarly, academic excellence, discipline and school culture, land and infrastructure development, stakeholder satisfaction, financial stability and excellence in non-academics are used as indicators of school improvement. The model thus illustrates that strategic planning (independent variable) influences school improvement (dependent variable). Conceptual framework is shown in Figure 1.



**Figure 1:** Shows a Conceptual Framework

The conceptual framework representation outlines how variables in a secondary school strategic planning interacts with one another for a school to attain its optimal intended outcome. In secondary schools, strategic planning is guided by the policy (Educating Our Future Policy) which paves a leadership direction in the development and implementation of strategic planning. The independent variable in this conceptual framework is leadership. Leadership uses the available policy guidelines to influence partnership with school stakeholders to make informed and lasting decisions about strategic planning in secondary schools

### **1.10 Delimitation of the Study**

The study was conducted in Solwezi district of North-western province and was only confined to Six (6) selected secondary schools. This means, therefore that the results were not generalized to any other secondary schools in Zambia.

### **1.11 Limitations**

Limitations mean those conditions which are beyond the control of the researcher and may also place restrictions on the conclusions of the study. It is possible that responses might not reflect the accurate experiences surrounding strategic planning, and responses could have been strongly impacted by the respondent's personal bias. The results generated by this study could only be directly generalized to individuals and schools with similar demographics to those that were used in the study.

## **CHAPTER TWO**

### **REVIEW OF RELATED LITERATURE**

#### **2.1 Overview**

This chapter presents a critical analysis of the views and findings of other researchers on the implementation and performance of strategic planning in schools as well as other institutions.

#### **2.2 Rationale for Strategic Planning in schools**

The education sector, like the economic sector, needs the use of human, material and financial resources to function. The Secondary school sector is the springboard of all educational institutions where students, teachers, and other school stakeholders are prepared to take a lasting decision of the school improvement. This calls for the need to engage in strategic planning to meet this expectation. Research has shown that strategic planning is one of major steps that schools can take to address challenges they face in enhancing the quality of programmes in provision of Education (Bell, 2002). Most times many organizational leaders walk around with a virtual strategy locked in their heads they know where their organization needs to be and the key activities that will get it there but unfortunately, the strategy isn't down on paper and hasn't been communicated thoroughly. As a result, few people are acting on it.

Therefore, there is need to develop strategy to get to the goals. Wilkinson (2011) gives these reasons why organizations must develop plans. It is to set direction and priorities; to get everyone on the same page; to simplify decision-making; to drive alignment and to communicate the message. Developing a workable strategic plan means dissecting the organization's objectives and strategies and determining which takes precedence. Strategic plan becomes a management tool that serves the purpose of helping an organization to do a better job, because a plan focuses the energy, resources, and time of everyone in the organization in the same direction. According to Mittenenthal (2002) strategic plan is a tool that provides guidance in fulfilling a mission with maximum efficiency and impact. If it is to be effective and useful, it should articulate specific goals and describe the action steps and resources needed to accomplish them.



### **2.3. Strategic Planning Process**

The strategic management process entails four core stages including environmental analysis, strategy formulation, implementation and the evaluation and control stage, (Johnson et al, 2008). However, practitioners emphasize various stages based on their context, content or the strategic process itself. First and foremost, the management should establish mission, vision and objectives from which it can derive meaningful strategies. Next, environmental analysis is a critical stage as it ensures formulation of strategies from an informed view-point of the external and internal environment. The second and crucial stage in strategic planning is strategy formulation. It builds on the first stage where strategic issues are identified, opportunities, threats or constraint and strategic alternatives weighed to decide on best strategic action to be taken.

Although strategic planning ends in making of strategic choices, the strategic management process emphasizes on the implementation stage because brilliantly formulated strategies that are not implemented do not add any value to the firm. According to Chang (2008), strategy implementation is the process by which objectives, strategies and policies are put into action through the development of programs, budgets and procedures. Finally, evaluation and control process seeks to ensure that a firm is achieving what is set out to achieve by comparing performance with desired results, revealing the performance gap and providing feedback necessary for the management to take correct action (Yabs, 2007).

Strategic planning takes various approaches in different organizations depending on their size. Some firms undertake formal, semi-formal or informal strategic planning. Carter et al (2006) notes that small firms do not largely engage in formal strategic planning because the entrepreneur engages in creative ways of generating resources and sales in an unplanned and purely guesswork manner. Although strategy making and planning in small firms is opportunistic and informal, strategic management process is significant in both small and large enterprises. Formality defines the extent in which a strategy is deliberate, documented, communicated and the time spent on planning as well as degree and involvement of participants and specifications of the process, resources and responsibilities (Gode, 2009). According to Ansoff (1997), deliberate and systematic strategic planning was introduced in 1960s. However, Johnson (2004b), reports that formal system of strategic planning can lead to misunderstanding of the purpose of planning, problem in design and the strategic planning

system may fail to gain ownership of strategic plan leading to loss of innovativeness and authenticity.

## **2.4 Strategic Planning**

Josef (2015) conducted a study on Strategic Planning in the public sector. The aim of the study was to determine if there is a relationship between the normative theory and practical implementation of strategic planning among public sector organizations in California. The research reviewed the current public sector strategic planning literature and identified four critical elements that the normative literature suggests should be present in a strategic plan. The study used a qualitative evaluation system to determine if the content of three strategic plans contains the four major themes from the normative literature. Results of the study indicated that two cities' strategic plans contain all four normative criteria; only one of the three cities uses its strategic plan to guide decision-making. Furthermore, one city's plan is fully integrated, the other is partially integrated, and the third is not integrated into their respective organizations. The study also found that the impact of a strategic plan is mitigated by its connection to fiscal resources, more specifically, a municipal budget. However, the current study investigated the role of Strategic Planning in School Improvement in Selected Secondary Schools of Solwezi District, Zambia.

Marie Nauheimer (2007) conducted a study on the strategic planning process in large organisations: Theoretical perspectives and evidence. This thesis aims to contribute to strategic planning process research. Currently, practitioners as well as academics liken strategic planning with making strategy. This, however, is a fundamental misunderstanding that has further been limited by the lack of empirical investigation of the phenomenon itself. This study is different from the current study in its theoretical approach. This thesis will use three different established strategic management approaches resource-based and dynamic capability view, institutional theory and organizational routines approach and apply their underlying logic in the context of organizational strategic planning. The methodological approach of this thesis is based on a comparative case study. The study found contextual changes in strategic planning systems by showing that they are a mechanism of coordination and control. The findings of this study have practical implications: strategic planning effectively takes on the internal organizational roles of communicator between divisions and corporate leadership simultaneous to being a mechanism of coordination and control. It

therefore deduces recommendations for multinational organisations that are faced with strategic planning tensions between the corporate centre and its divisions.

Strategic planning is the process of matching the school's activities to the current and emerging environment, bearing in mind what can feasibly be achieved with the resource base which can be generated. According to Johnson and Scholes (1989), the process of school strategic planning can be seen to encompass three stages: strategic analysis, strategic choice, and strategic implementation. In strategic analysis, the aim is to form a view of the strategic position of the school and the key factors which will influence it in both the short and long term. These factors will affect the choice of strategy. To appreciate fully the strategic position of the school it is necessary to understand how a wide range of stakeholders, such as pupils, staff, employers, board members and the community, view the situation which the school faces and its possible direction. The information will usually be assembled by the senior management team (Davies and Ellison, 1998).

Strategic choice involves the identification or generation of options, the evaluation of those options and the selection of an appropriate strategy. At this stage, three groups of questions should be asked in order to evaluate the appropriateness of each option which has been generated. These three groups of questions relate to the suitability, acceptability and feasibility of each option: Suitability; Does the proposal overcome difficulties identified in strategic analysis, exploit the school's strengths and opportunities and integrate with the school's aims and objectives? Acceptability; this involves the school's value system and considers whether the proposal is in accordance with the school's values. Feasibility; can the option be funded? Can the school perform at the required level? Can the necessary market position be achieved? The final decision on choices would normally be made by the governors, in consultation with the principal or with the whole senior management team (Davies and Ellison, 1998).

The third stage, strategic implementation, involves planning how the choice of strategy can be put into effect and managing the necessary changes. Also referred to as school development planning, strategic implementation is seen as the critical stage at which those within the school develop a plan for achieving the options which have been chosen. At this stage, there should be realism about the balance between new developments and the maintenance of the existing activities; otherwise there will be work overload and a lack of resources. If the plans are to come to fruition, it is important to consider both the process of

creating the strategic plan and the nature of the document itself. In too many cases, the document has become so detailed and unwieldy that it cannot be used as a working document. At the strategic planning stage, Davies and Ellison (1998) advise that a useful phrase to remember is “the thicker the plan the less it affects classroom practice”. It should, therefore, be set out in an easily read format.

## **2.5 Extent of Strategic Planning in Secondary Schools**

Strategic planning in schools is well advanced in developed countries. In the United States of America for instance, Knoff (2005) states that virtually every state and school district in the country has worked in the area of school improvement in order to improve the academic and social-behavioural outcomes of all students. Prompted in the 1980s by the business community’s demand for a more prepared workforce, in the 1990s by eight National Education Goals (National Education Goals Panel, 1999), as cited in Chukwumah (2015) and in the new millennium by the No Child Left Behind legislation, school-wide efforts to hold educators accountable for student outcomes are now required, continuously monitored, and reported annually. However, the Comprehensive School Reform Quality Centre (2006) as cited in Chukwumah (2015) in the US argues that while a number of school improvement models exist, their outcomes have varied, largely due to the interdependency between these models’ ability to adapt and respond to local school and district conditions, and the local acceptance of a particular model along with a commitment to its sound implementation.

Planning in schools has been categorized in a number of ways. For example, Wallace (1994) argues that, at both regional and national level, frameworks for planning have been produced based on cycles of review, planning and implementation. At institutional level MacGilchrist et al. (1995) claimed that four different types of school plans could be identified: i) the rhetorical, which had no credence within the school; ii) the singular, produced by the principal alone; iii) the cooperative, produced by a group of staff and focusing on finance and staff development; and iv) the corporate, produced by the staff working together and focusing across an agreed range of the school’s priorities. Bell (2002) says that neither of these typologies of strategic planning in Europe and the US takes into the account either the real nature of planning in schools or the extent to which such plans are determined by external factors.

## **2.6 Steps Followed in School Strategic Planning**

A strategic plan is a road map to lead an organization from where it is now to where it would like to be in five or ten years. According to Grant (2003), strategic planning is one step of strategic management, which is the process of defining the purpose and pursuits of an organization and the methods for achieving them. Strategic planning comprises the procedures of defining objectives and creating strategies to attain those objectives. A strategy is a long-term plan of action designed to achieve a particular goal, as differentiated from tactics or immediate actions with resources at hand. The reason for strategic or long-range planning is to assist organizations in establishing priorities and to better serve the needs of the stakeholders. A strategic plan must be flexible and practical and yet serve as a guide to implementing programs, evaluating how these programs are doing, and making adjustments when necessary.

A strategic plan must reflect the thoughts, feelings, ideas, and wants of the developers and mould them along with the organization's purpose, mission, and regulations into an integrated document. The development of a plan requires much probing, discussion, and examination of the views of those who are responsible (Stakeholders) for the plan's preparation. However, more often than not, the development of the plan is less complicated than is the implementation. Implementation, in essence, pulls a plan apart and diffuses it throughout an organization. Every unit within the organization which is involved must then accept the plan, agree to its direction, and implement specific actions (Bell, 2002).

In order to effectively and efficiently implement a plan, all individuals involved in its implementation must function as a whole or the plan is destined for failure. In this respect long range/strategic planning describes results that will probably take place. Strategic planning aims to build more desirable upcoming results either by adjusting current programs and proceedings so as to have more favourable outcomes in the external environment, or by influencing the outside world. Strategic planning is essentially the determination by administrators of an enterprise to draw a picture of what they would like the organization to become, perform an environmental scan on resources it has or must acquire to become what they have envisioned, then formulate actions that will provide a pathway to the envisioned future. It is, fundamentally, a statement of belief that an institution can shape its own destiny by controlling the change it encounters daily (Fox, 2002).

Strategic planning, based on an analysis of available information, is something an organization uses in order to establish its position in the world of competitive rivalry. It is what makes a firm unique, a winner or a survivor and is intended to give an organization a competitive advantage over its rivals (Thomas, 1993). Strategic planning therefore can best be understood as matching the activities of an organization to its environment and to its resource capabilities. It has been argued that, in schools, developing strategy is a key management process, which draws together institutional values and goals and provides a framework for the quality of provision and the deployment of resources (Preedy et al, 1997).

## **2.7 Strategic Planning and Organisational Performance**

Strategic planning is a step by step process with objectives and end-products that can be evaluated. Performance is the end result of activities while strategic planning aims to improve the quality of these results. It can be measured by quantitative methods (net or gross profit, return on investment, equity or capital, return on equity employed, etc.) or qualitative methods (absenteeism levels, job satisfaction, industrial relations, team work, best management practices, Corporate Social Responsibility, new product development, operational sufficiency, employee and stakeholder satisfaction, among others). Performance is the heart of every organization. Researchers and analysts have over the past decades investigated the influence of strategic planning on organizational performance but up to date the correlation between strategy and firm performance is an on ongoing debate (Bolo et al, 2000). Whereas some authors argue that there is quite minimal (if any) correlation between strategic planning and high firm performance, others argue that firms with well-conceived and excellently executed strategic plans have high probability of high performance. Indeed, planning-performance findings are inconsistent and inconclusive.

## **2.8 Factors that Influence Preparation of Strategic Plans**

Formulating a Strategic Plan involves analysis of environment and matching the results to goals/aims of the organization so that a strategic choice can be made (Hill-Mcshane, 2009). Organizations do not exist in isolation, they interact with their Environment. Organizational environment refers to the forces that can make an impact. Strategic planning involves making organizational decisions in condition of considerable uncertainty. The results of such decisions can be failure. Hence, to reduce the uncertainty and risks attached to decision about the Organization, Environmental scanning should be done to enable forecasting. In order to

identify the External and Internal Strategic factors of a firm, the management can employ Organizational Analysis techniques. Though many of these techniques are available, the most commonly used one is the SWOT (Strength, Weaknesses, Opportunities and Threats) analysis (Koontz and Weihrich, 2007).

In order to identify factors that influence formulation of strategies and consequently the preparation of Strategic Plans, it is imperative to understand Organizational Environment. This environment is of two kinds; Internal Environment and External Environment. Hill-Mcshane (2009) defines Internal Environment as everything inside a firm that affects Managers ability to pursue action or Strategies. On the other hand, External Environment is everything outside a firm that might affect the ability of the enterprise to attain its goals.

When managers analyze the internal environment, they typically look for Opportunities and Threats. Opportunities arise from circumstances or developments that if exploited through Strategies enable Managers to better attain the goals of their Enterprise. Threat arises from circumstances or developments in the External environment that may adversely affect the ability of Managers to attain the goals of their Enterprise.

Internal environment constitutes everything inside the firm that might affect the ability of managers to pursue certain actions or strategies. The Internal environment includes the organization of the firm which touches on its structure, culture, controls and incentives. It also includes the firm's human resources and financial resources as well as the company image the organizational structure, climate, the planning and control system as well as relations with customers (Koontz and Weihrich, 2007).

Internal environment has been referred to as internal strategic factors which are critical strengths and weaknesses that are likely to determine whether a firm will be able to take advantage of Opportunities while avoiding threats. Factors included here are organizational structure (chain of command), culture (Beliefs and values) and resources (Assets, skills, competencies and knowledge). These factors have been referred to as strategic factors. These Internal environment factors are the very factors that could influence the preparation of Strategic Plans.

External environment of an organization constitutes everything outside a firm that might affect the ability of the enterprise to attain its goals. The External environment of a firm can provide both opportunities and threats. It is notable that the external environment cannot be

easily changed by the firm. Therefore, the task of Strategic decision-maker is to develop strategies based on what the firm can do to exploit opportunities and counter threats coming from the External environment. Successful strategy is, then, about matching the resources and activities of a firm to the external environment in which it operates. This is known as a strategic fit (Mellahi, 2005). The External environment consists of variables are not typically within the short run control of the top management. Literatures indicate that management is in control of internal environment variables (Strength and Weaknesses) more than external environment variables (Threats and opportunities).

## **2.9 Effects of Leadership in Implementing Strategic Plans**

Another factor that could influence the success of strategic planning is school leadership. Often when a school performs well the head teacher, as the school leader, is the first to be congratulated, while poor performance leads to the head teacher receiving the blame. The school head teacher is the most important person in a school setting. As the chief executive of a school, he/she is charged with the responsibility of managing the day to day affairs of the institution, and ensuring that all members of the school community are moving in the right direction. A prime task of school heads is to exercise leadership of the kind that results in a shared vision of the directions to be pursued by the school, and to manage change in ways that ensure that the school is successful in realizing the vision. Profession should adopt school improvement as its Centre of gravity. This means that the head teacher, in making school-related decisions, should always have school improvement in mind.

Placing school improvement at the Centre of the profession ensures that the job of the head is pedagogically and educationally grounded, and tied directly to the core business of schooling. It requires heads that have a solid knowledge of the learning process and of the conditions under which students learn in the school setting. It also places a premium on knowledge about educational change and school improvement. In short, it emphasizes the role of the head as a knowledge manager with respect to the core business of the school, namely teaching and learning, in a context of change and the ongoing imperative for improvement. This implies that head teachers are at the Centre of school improvement, and if they fail in this task then the entire school fails.

A key role of the head teacher is to ensure that each of the elements that contribute to improved student learning outcomes is present, working effectively and in alignment with



architect of the school, the one who has the overview of systems, processes and resources and how they combine to produce intended student learning outcomes. The head teacher therefore plays an important role in strategic planning. The head teacher should be able to articulate the significance of all key elements of the strategic plan, to justify their design and configuration, and to be in a position to make judgments regarding the operational effectiveness of each element and of the total impact of all of the elements as they function in combination with one another. When outcomes are not being realized, or when evidence accumulates that particular elements are not working effectively, the head is responsible for ensuring that the redesigning of the work is carried out. This could mean minor readjustments but, in cases of endemic failure to reach required standards, is more likely to involve transforming the whole ecology of the school in order to obtain the desired results.

## **2.10 Challenges Faced in the Implementation of Strategic Plans**

Strategic planning in school settings, just like in the business sector, is dependent on leadership commitment and skills. In schools, the head teacher is the most important person in determining planning effectiveness. In spite of the important role played by head teachers in school planning and general management, many developing countries do not offer adequate training for their school heads. According to Osei (2006), school heads often work in poorly equipped schools and with teachers who are not adequately in-serviced. Yet, as Dessler (2002) advises, after the employee has been recruited, he or she must next be developed to better fit the job and the organization. No one is a perfect fit at the time of hiring, and some training and education must take place. Osei (2006) adds that there is rarely any formal leadership training and head teachers are appointed on the basis of their teaching record rather than their leadership potential. Induction and support are usually limited and head teachers have to adopt a pragmatic approach to school management. Investing in training of school managers would help by equipping them with necessary skills for school planning.

School planning in Africa is faced with a number of challenges. While some school planning initiatives have succeeded others have not been successful. In South Africa, Chinsamy (2002) notes that after transition from apartheid, there was much interest from different educational constituencies in finding out the characteristics of effective and improving South African schools. A number of school development, school effectiveness, and school improvement initiatives were initiated, both by the government utilizing donor funding, and by

nongovernmental organizations. The programmes touched different aspects of school life in individual schools - school management, teacher development in subject content and teaching methodology, learner assessment, and organizational development. However, studies of school development projects in South Africa have revealed that they have not had a significant impact on teaching and learning and subsequent learners' performance (Christie and Potterton 1997).

Chinsamy (2002) suggests that one of the main reasons for the relative failure of these projects in South Africa, despite their good intentions and excellent content in many cases, was the implementation of single change programmes or the lack of integration of many programmes initiated in schools. In addition, it was generally found that those schools that did make improvements in some aspects, and whose learners subsequently improved their performance, could not maintain that improvement in subsequent years consistently. Many of these projects, aside from having single change programmes, tended to be "supply-push" interventions, either focusing on inputs or on improved schools' processes and that was natural; they generally did not focus on "demand-side" and on accountability for final results. They were based on the notion that there was some input or process deficit, and that fixing that deficit would more or less automatically lead to better final results.

In Africa, Zambia included, schools are still faced with major challenges such as learning skills and attitudes in planning education and practice, role of new technologies in planning education (e-learning, e-tools and e-networking) and place of ethics in planning education however, there have been some major strides made in the sector of school development planning (Deal, 2008).

## **CHAPTER THREE**

### **METHODOLOGY**

#### **3.1 Introduction**

This chapter is devoted to specifying the steps and the methodology that was taken in carrying out the research. It spells out the research design, study population and sample, data collection procedures and analysis.

#### **3.2 Research Design**

A research design is the conceptual structure within which the research is constituted and provides the blue print for the collection, measurement and analysis of data (Kothari, 2004). Research design is the overall plan for connecting the conceptual research problems to the pertinent (and achievable) empirical research. According to Kothari (2004), research design is the arrangement of condition for collection and analysis of data in a manner that aims to combine relevance to the research purpose with economy in procedure. The criteria for selecting a research design depends upon the appropriateness of the techniques for the objectives of the study (Keith et al, 2000). This study adopted a qualitative approach and used a case study design. The main reason for choosing a case study was that the researcher wanted to get factual evidence from school situations and respondents with regard to the role of strategic planning in secondary schools in Solwezi District. Also, a qualitative approach was considered to be the best for this study due to its theoretical underpinnings as it regards the available facts and uniqueness in interpreting the phenomena. Qualitative research enabled the researcher to enter into the field with an open mind. It is holistic and it provided the researcher with a contextual understanding of strategic planning experiences from the participants. Qualitative research offered the researcher a more in-depth understanding of the role that was played by strategic planning in secondary schools.

#### **3.3 Study Population**

Population means the totality of individuals from which some sample is drawn (Kombo and Tromp, 2005). A population is a group of individuals, objects or items from which samples are drawn for measurement. Population can also refer to an entire group of persons or elements that have at least one thing in common (Kasonde, 2013). Population also refers to

the larger group from which the sample to be used in the study is taken from. Therefore, population for this study comprised all Head teachers, Deputy Head teachers and Education Board chairpersons of Secondary schools in Solwezi District.

### **3.4 Sample Size**

A sample is a subset of a population. A sample size may be defined as the size of the subset of a population. Khotari (2004) states that a sample of a research should be truly representative of population characteristics without any bias so that it may result in valid and reliable conclusions. The sample size of this study comprised Six (6) Secondary Schools, Six (6) Head teachers, Six (6) Secondary school Deputy Head teacher and Six Board Chairpersons. Therefore, the total sample comprised Eighteen (18) respondents.

### **3.5 Sampling Procedure**

The study used non probability sampling methods to sample schools and the participants. The non-probability sampling method used was purposive sampling. Creswell (2005) explains that in purposive sampling, the researcher intentionally selects individuals and sites in order to learn or understand the central phenomenon. He asserts that the standard used in choosing participants and sites is whether they are information-rich. The emphasis in these explanations and in purposive sampling is on the judgment of the researcher to make decisions on the selection of his or her sample. Kothari (2004) also argues that purposive or deliberate sampling involves deliberate selection of particular units of the universe for constituting a sample which represents the universe.

Purposive sampling was used to sample eighteen (18) respondents from Six (6) secondary schools in Solwezi district based on the nature of the job of the participants and their relevance to the study. Three (3) rural secondary schools and Three (3) urban secondary schools in Solwezi district were sampled purposively for these secondary schools were the only old schools that have been in Solwezi district while the rest of the secondary schools were newly upgraded from primary school to secondary school.

### **3.6 Data Collection Instruments**

This study was qualitative in nature; therefore it used qualitative data collecting methods and instruments. The data collection methods that were used are in-depth interviews and document analysis. The researcher used Interview guides containing semi structured question

items to engage head teachers; school deputy head teacher and board chairpersons' participants into interviews. The interview guides contained semi-structured questions items were used to accord the participants chance to clarify and expand on their views. According to Combo and Tromp (2006) semi-structured questions are flexible and enable the researcher to get a complete understanding of the issue under investigation. The researcher used an audio recorder to capture data from the interviews.

### **3.7 Data Collection Procedure**

According to Kombo and Tromp (2006), Data collection refers to the gathering of specific information aimed at proving or refuting some facts. The purpose of collecting data is to help the researcher clarify the facts.

Data were collected in January 2018 - March 2018. This means that the data collection exercise covered first term for 2018 of the Zambia education school calendar. Data were collected in a period of 3 months. Before conducting the interviews, the researcher sought permission from the District Education Board Secretary. Head teachers, Secondary school Deputy Head teacher and Board Chairpersons were engaged in separate interviews at their convenient times. Face-to-face interviews took place between the interviewees and the researcher in the participant's favorable environment. All interviews were conducted in the first term of Zambia education school calendar for 2018. The interviews and document analysis provided flexibility and interactivity which allowed discovery of in-depth experiences and views on the role of strategic planning in secondary schools.

The 6 head teachers, 6 deputy head teachers and 6 board Chairpersons were subjected to in-depth interviews at separate convenient times. Data collected from the In-Depth Interviews were recorded using an Audio Recorder Device. Document analysis was used with the head teachers, deputy head teachers and school boards chairpersons to verify the availability of strategic plan documents as well as minutes to the meetings for development of strategic planning.

### **3.8 Data Trustworthiness**

Credibility, dependability and transferability were put into consideration to ensure data trustworthiness. Credibility depended on the richness of the data gathered. Credibility was achieved through expert evaluation of gathered data from interviews and documents. Some

data that needed clarity of expert in the field were suggested to expert who clarified and authenticated the trustworthiness of data gathered from interviews.

Dependability ensured that the research findings were consistent and could be repeated. This was achieved through member check as the respondent asked to confirm their responses still maintained their earlier responses. Transferability was endured to make the research to the degree in which it can be transferred to other contexts. The data gathered and analyzed point to the participants tilt in point of view and this made the researcher to make generalizations on the results. Therefore, ensuring trustworthiness helped the evaluation of the research in line with the procedure to generalize the findings and this was achieved through giving a clear and distinctive description of the research context, selection and characteristics of participants, data collection as well as the procedure for data analysis.

### **3.9 Data Analysis**

Data analysis refers to examining the information collected in a research and making inferences and deductions (Kombo and Tromp, 2006). Qualitative method of data analysis was used in the study. Qualitative data collected from In-Depth Interviews were analyzed using thematic analysis approach. This means that data were coded and then sorted out into themes and analyzed. Data collected using document analysis was interpreted and presented in descriptive way.

### **3.10 Ethical Considerations**

Ethical issues were considered in this study. Ethics are simply moral principles that guide our behavior and based on shared values and beliefs about what is good or bad. Informed consent was used in this study to guarantee a communication between the researcher and the participants (For details on the informed consent refer to Appendix D). Informed consent was sought from participants by informing them what the study was about and their benefits of participating in the research. This guided the participants to decide on their own whether to participate in the research or not. Permission was sought from the head teachers where the sampled participants were serving before they were interviewed. All data collected were strictly confidential and were strictly for the purpose of this research. No findings were attached to any particular school. The researcher sought consent from all the participants, and permission from Head teachers of the schools in the sample and the District Education Board Secretary (DEBS).

## CHAPTER FOUR

### PRESENTATION OF FINDINGS

#### 4.1 Overview

This chapter contains findings of the study on the role of strategic planning in school improvement in selected secondary schools of Solwezi district. The findings are in relation to the interviews conducted in the field among the deputy head teachers, head teachers and education board chairpersons. Based on the study questions, the following themes emerged from the data: Players in school strategic planning; Importance of stakeholders' involvement in strategic planning; Strategic planning and school improvement; Problems associated with strategic planning. From each theme, the sub themes emerged based on the common perspectives among the participants' views.

In order to have a proper identification of participants in the present study, the researcher assigned letters of the alphabet to education board chairpersons. For instance, chairperson A, Chairperson B and so on. Similarly, with deputy head teachers and head teachers, numbers 1 to 6 were used to identify them. For example, deputy headteachers/headteachers 1, deputy headteachers/headteachers 2 et cetera. Additionally, schools were coded using numbers.

The main objective of this study was to provide evidence of the role of strategic planning in school improvement in selected secondary schools. In order to achieve this objective, the following research questions acted as a mirror:

1. How is Strategic Planning carried out in selected secondary schools in Solwezi district?
2. How does Strategic Planning influence the way things are done in selected secondary schools in Solwezi district?
3. What are the major constraints in the implementation of Strategic Planning in selected secondary schools in Solwezi district?

The emerging themes on each category were substantiated by findings from what various informants said in relation to the given common theme. The next section therefore presents the emerging themes on the experiences of evidence of the role of strategic planning in school improvement in selected secondary schools.

## 4.2 Demographic Characteristics of the Respondents

Respondents who had taken part in this study had to indicate their brief background information for the purpose of analysis regarding their gender, working experience. Figure 4.1; Tables 4.1 indicate the background information of the respondents

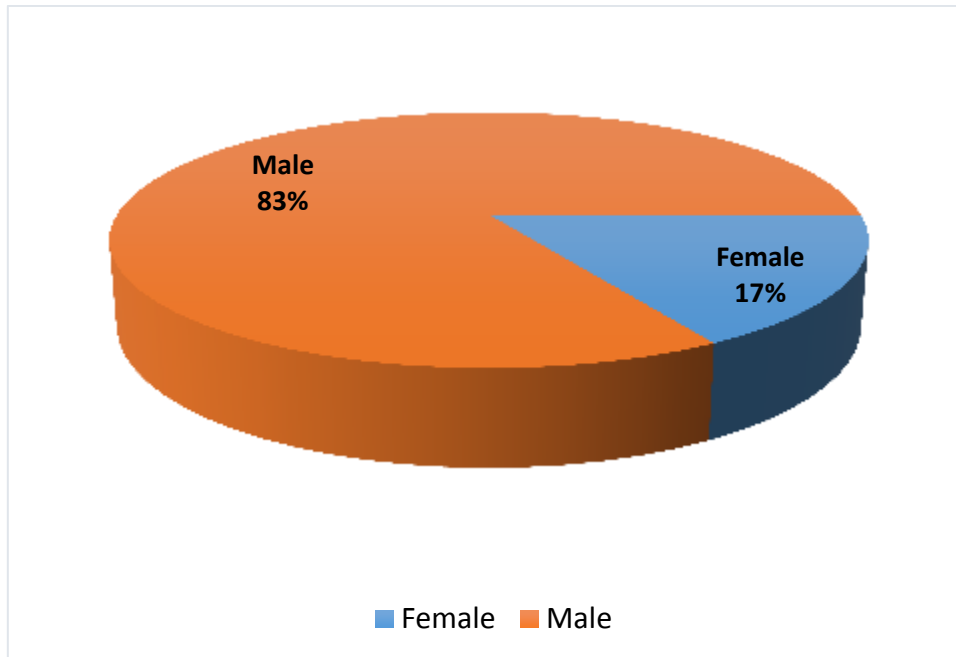


Figure 4.1: Participants' Gender

As shown in Figure 4.1, the study indicates that 83% of participants who participated in the study were male while 17% were female. This means that there were more male participants than female participants in the participating secondary schools.

Table 4.1: The distribution of the work experience of participants in the study

Position of Officer	Below 5Years	5-10Years	11-15Years	16 Years and Above
<b>Headteachers</b>	0	4	1	1
<b>Deputy Headteachers</b>	0	2	3	1
<b>Board Chairperson</b>	6	0	0	0
<b>Total</b>	<b>6</b>	<b>6</b>	<b>4</b>	<b>2</b>



The study showed participants working experience in the ranges of: below 5 years, between 5-10 years, 11-15 years and above 16 years respectively. The study indicated that education board chairpersons who had worked for 5 years and below were 6 and none indicated worked for 6 years and above. The findings of the study indicate that 6 participants comprising headteachers/ deputy headteachers had worked for 5-10 years; 4 had worked for 11-12 years, 2 had worked for 16 years and above; and none of headteachers / deputy headteachers had worked for below 5 years. It was clear that the majority of headteachers and deputy headteachers had 5-10-year work experience. This meant that the respondents were conversant with most of the issues surrounding strategic planning in secondary schools.

### **4.3 The implementation of Strategic Planning in Secondary Schools**

Strategic planning is a tool for school improvement. The study found that the key component of strategic planning was in its laying out of priority areas. The study established that these priority areas fall into four broad categories determined by the Ministry of General Education. The priority areas are: Learning and Teaching, Community Partnership; Leadership and Management; Infrastructure Development; The study found that within these categories, individual schools determine the specific areas they will concentrate on for improvement. For each of the priority areas the goals and objectives are specified and performance of the plan can later be ascertained.

The study further found that the strategies for achieving goals and objectives in secondary schools were specified and performance indicators were spelled out. In addition, resources, time frame and key stakeholders responsible for various activities were assigned. The study also found that the Ministry of General Education recommended that all secondary schools prepare a four-year strategic planning which included priority areas needing attention and action over the four-year period. Therefore, the study established that for secondary schools strategic planning become a useful guide influencing educational development and improvement at the school level. Instead of doing things on an ad hoc basis, secondary school found strategic planning to provide a blueprint and a clear focus in promoting learners' education at each school. The following was a general comment of head teacher on the implementation of strategic planning;

*Strategic planning in secondary schools use a standard format designed by the Ministry of Education. Strategic planning itself has four components. However, the content in the four components differ from school to school because schools have different problems and needs (Headteacher 6, School 6, 2018).*

The key finding was that secondary schools developed a collegial working relationship with their key school stakeholders such as parents, Non-Governmental Organisations and civic leaders through participatory decision making processes that focused on regular teaching-staff meetings, consultation with implementation committees and heads of departments and regular dialogue with students.

#### **4.4 The Influence of Strategic Planning on School Improvement in Secondary Schools.**

In trying to establish the evidence of school administrators and education board chairpersons on the influence of strategic planning on school improvement, three sub-themes emerged as presented below:

##### **4.4.1 Participatory Planning in Strategic Planning**

The study found that strategic planning created a free interaction among learners, teachers, school administrators and the community. This was because the implementation of strategic planning was not a one-person activity but involved everyone in school. It was further found that strategic planning created a conducive environment for interaction which allowed free interaction and participation of school stakeholders in strategic planning in secondary schools. Therefore, it was clear that creating a free interaction atmosphere had helped stakeholders to freely participate and interact in school strategic planning without feeling intimidated because stakeholders were able to respond quickly to issues pertaining to planning for school improvement. The findings were in line with participants' views. The following excerpt presents views of one headteacher:

*Mmmm... I think strategic planning is a good thing. School stakeholders are able to participate in school improvement activities and they fully participate in planning the activities. I think comparing to the earlier policy where stakeholders were not part and parcel of the school strategic planning process; the key stakeholders are now able to respond quickly than before. The interaction is there. Stakeholders can express themselves freely without fearing that anybody would hinder their participation (Headteacher 6, School 6, 2018).*

Furthermore, another headteacher expressed a similar view when stressing out that the stakeholders were able to interact and participate freely when informed on the issues concerning school improvement. This is what the headteacher said:

*Although my experience may not have been completely good but one thing I can say is that the stakeholders are able to participate freely in school activities and programmes through strategic planning. The school and the community are able to help and understand each other. In fact, we don't just help each other but also help the Ministry of General Education as a whole. When the school makes a mistake, stakeholders are there to tell that there it's not like that but it should be like this we planned together. Through strategic planning, we are teaching each other and schools are being helped in the areas of school improvement (Head teacher 1, School 1, 2018).*

The study also found that the school stakeholders were able to interact easily during the process of strategic planning as they knew and understood the role to play towards school improvement. It was established that before strategic planning was introduced in secondary schools some stakeholders especially the parents could stay away from participating in school activities and programmes. However, the introduction of strategic planning brought about active participation in planning for the school whenever stakeholders were being called upon. One deputy headteacher stated as follows:

*According to my own experience, this programme is so good because I have seen that stakeholders are able to interact easily and are able to understand and participate easily even when called. This helps the school and the community to be able to build something from what together we want to achieve and everyone looks forward to work effectively towards achieving the desired goals. When we used to plan alone as a school, some stakeholders could stay away from school activities and programmes whenever called and engaged to participate. But this time stakeholders themselves will even remind the school administration if the programmes are not running as collectively planned. Now with strategic planning stakeholder always want to participate in school activities and programmes. (Deputy Headteacher 2, School 2, 2018).*

From the participating schools in the study, the education board chairpersons also explained how the community was able to participate and interact freely in school programmes and projects. The following views were expressed by one school board chairperson pertaining to his experiences:

*From what I have seen strategic planning is actually a very good programme and it just requires the support of all key stakeholders. Strategic planning has proved to be very good where stakeholders and the school work as one. This has really helped many key stakeholders to participate fully in school programmes as everyone knows what role to play and what is expected to achieve the goals of strategic planning (School board chairperson E, School 5, 2018).*

Above this, another school board chairperson from secondary school 3 similarly echoed the following views with regard to his experiences:

*The good thing about this strategic planning is that there is no one in the planning processes who feel superior or intimidated like the way it was when the schools used to plan alone. But now all the stakeholders and the communities at large feel happy to learn and it makes all of them to participate freely in school programmes and projects without fear. So it is a very good programme and it must continue (School board chairperson C, School 3, 2018).*

The next excerpt presents the views of another school board chairperson who was interviewed and commented that:

*With this new programme that they brought, it is a good programme I think. One good reason I think according to what I have seen is that communities are able to fully take part in the planning of school programmes and projects. The various organisations are freely participating in the implementation of planned programmes and projects are running very smoothly (School board chairperson A, School 1, 2018).*

In the same vein, one administrator from school 4 elaborates on how strategic planning has influenced free participation and influenced school improvements. This participant said the words below:

*I think one thing that is very clear from my experience is that strategic planning has brought about transparency because everyone is able to know what financial resources are available and when utilised how much is there as balance. The school and the community are now working well without accusing each other over misappropriation of public funds. If this policy can be maintained, it can help a lot in terms of school improvement (Deputy Headteacher D, School 4, 2018).*

Also, a deputy headteacher who was engaged in an interview hinted that the strategic planning policy was making it very easy for the school and the stakeholders to be jointly held

accountable for any failure in planned programmes and projects for school improvement. The deputy headteacher clarified that:

*Yaaa... This programme is working very well. What stakeholders' needs to do are just to work hard towards school improvement. You know in the past, it was very difficult to understand who was at faulty but it is very easy now that when a programme and project fails the school and the stakeholders have failed together. This planning programme builds a very good planning environment for schools and the community (Deputy Headteacher 1, School 1, 2018).*

The study found that the influence of strategic planning needed to go hand in hand with conducive environment for participatory planning with key stakeholders in order to maintain the match of what was on the ground with what needed to reflect in strategic planning. The study also found that the Ministry of General Education distanced itself from the full authority of school planning as individual secondary schools were given the mandate for the developing and implementation of their own strategic planning.

The key finding is that strategic planning developed a collegial working relationship between the secondary schools and the community, teachers and students through participatory decision making processes that focused on regular teaching-staff meetings, consultation with implementation committees and Heads of departments and regular dialogue with students.

#### **4.4.2 Strategic Planning and School Performance**

The study found that there was much more influence of strategic planning on academics in secondary schools in Solwezi district. This was evidenced by improvement in examination results recorded by secondary schools for grades nine and twelve and also in learner performance in general. Document analysis conducted on individual schools based on examination analysis and progress charts on academic performance of learner found that there was steady improvement in learner performance and in examinations results from the 2012 to 2016 academic years at all levels in the sampled secondary schools in Solwezi. The findings showed that the implementation of strategic planning enabled learners pass with better grades in almost all study areas. The findings of the study further revealed that the school and the community were happy with the positive influence of strategic planning in changing the learner performance and increased school pass rate in examinations. One school board chairperson from secondary school 5 claimed the following in the excerpt below:

*For me this programme has really helped many school children a lot. I have seen that since the coming of strategic planning most learners are doing very fine in almost all subjects. Before that school was a disgrace. As parents from the community we could even feel ashamed that my children go to school 5 because the examination results were very bad. In think this strategic planning has made teachers to work effectively and guide learners accordingly. Many parents from communities are now very happy their children are passing (School board chairperson E, school 5, 2018).*

In agreeing with the school board chairperson from secondary school 5, another school board chairperson from secondary school 6 also expressed himself in the following way:

*I can say that I have seen more advantages myself in strategic planning. This is because the planning itself covers a lot of things that concerns teachers, learners, administration and us parents. With strategic planning us parents we are able to know what it takes for a teacher to make children perform well and pass. So when we see learners in a particular grade and class are not doing well we are now able to know that the teacher is not helping the learners well. Otherwise strategic planning has improved learner's performance and examinations in our school and we are very proud of it (School board chairperson F, School 6, 2018).*

The views obtained from secondary school 1 on school strategic planning influence on improvement were also similar to other participants' responses. For example, this is what one deputy headteacher said:

*I have seen numerous changes in the performance in our learners and the efforts put in work by our teachers since the school started implementing strategic planning. The performance of learners is wholesome and parents are equally happy about the results the school is producing. Their participation in strategic planning is bearing good fruits I just hope they will continue supporting the school in every area of strategic planning (Deputy Headteacher A, School 1, 2018).*

In the same vein, another participant was engaged in an interview and had an opportunity to say the following:

*Mmmm... For me my school strategic planning is bearing positive results. We have seen an increase in recording high learner performance and very good examination results at grade twelve. I am proud that my teachers have been working very hard to make sure that the principle accountability on learner performance targets are meet as per expectations and am so happy and even to introduce some additional incentives to teachers who are performing much more better (Headteacher 4, School 4, 2018).*

Another headteacher said the words below:

*When strategic planning came many stakeholders who were involved in the implementation said it was very technical. We encountered a bit of some challenges in implementing it but after it started showing positive results and every one became excited. Even our teachers thought the strategic planning was a punishment to them but now they are very happy because the learners are doing fine and are passing. Otherwise in my school strategic planning has brought better than harm (Headteacher 2, School 2, 2018).*

From the responses from the stakeholders, the study found that the majority of the key stakeholders were willing to participate in the implementation of strategic planning. Most of the stakeholders who were willing to participate in the implementation of strategic planning had their reasons connected to the effective implementation of the school strategic planning.

The aspect of the findings is that stakeholders were confident that given an opportunity to freely interact in strategic planning implementation and would contribute positively and consequently implement school strategic planning with ease.

#### **4.5 Implementation of Strategic Planning**

This study sought to find out the influence of strategic planning implementation in secondary schools in Solwezi district. The study found that the participating schools showed improvements in teachers' up grading of professional qualifications and rehabilitation and maintenance of school infrastructure both furniture and building infrastructures. It was established that since strategic planning was launched in the secondary schools, it was noted that there was an improvement in academics as teachers were able to upgrade their professional qualifications. This was noted to have an influence on teachers' effectiveness and efficiency in their work delivery. The study also found far more improvements in school infrastructure. The researcher engaged participant in an interview from a secondary school who also expressed the following views. One school board chairperson stressed that:

*Many parents want to take their children to our school because of late results have improved and the general physical outlook of our school is in good shape. It's like now every teacher wants to be seen that is working. I wish this strategic planning had come earlier because even those who dropped out would have managed to complete school and those who failed maybe would have passed (School board chairperson D, school 4, 2018).*

In a similar vein, one deputy headteacher from school secondary school also expressed the following views:

*I have seen a lot of improvement in the examination results and learner performances in general since the school started implementing strategic planning. Teachers' now are held accountable of their own planning for classroom work and themselves set own target which they have to achieve at the end of the day. So with strategic planning we have seen a number of our teachers show increased work performance on the job making sure that they make learners perform and pass well in all the subject areas. As a school we have been recording a good pass rate in the grade twelve examinations and we are very proud and happy of our teachers and learners. I am sure this spirit is going to maintain improvement (Deputy Headteacher 6, school 6, 2018).*

It was clearly noted from the findings that the changing in school planning and the whole set up of the school planning cycle and training of key stakeholders was vital to school improvement. The study findings also indicated that secondary schools that involved the stakeholders and encouraged consultation from the beginning of the strategic planning showed enhanced improvements in school programmes and activities.

#### **4.6 Constraints Faced in Implementing Strategic Planning in Secondary Schools**

The semi structured Interviews were equally used to collect data from headteachers, deputy headteachers and school board chairpersons concerning constraints faced in implementing strategic planning in secondary schools in Solwezi district. In order to obtain in depth views and information, the informants were interviewed separately.

The findings from the interviews revealed different categories of challenges that the participants faced. These categories were; inadequate resources, limited support from the Ministry of General Education, imposed standard planning format, policy changes in the Ministry of General Education.

##### **4.6.1 Inadequate Financial Resources**

Every school plan must be executed by use of funds and thus the study sought to know the issue of financial resources towards strategic planning. The participants interviewed indicated that lack of adequate financial resources for implementing school programmes affected effective strategic planning and implementation. Secondary school finances scarcity was



posing a very serious challenge as most of the principle accountability areas in strategic planning depended on the available financial resources. The informants said that there were no enough funds in schools to use to implementing the need areas, programmes and projects cited in strategic planning. One head teacher indicated the following:

*Financial resource I think is a very big problem in strategic planning. There are very inadequate available funds in schools and funding to schools is also very limited and usually delays in coming. Hence it is very difficult to implement what you have planned and the chances of failing to implement your school strategic planning are very high (Headteacher 6, School 6, 2018).*

In a similar way, another headteacher from Secondary school 4 indicated the following:

*It seems this new policy was just brought for school to have record of strategic planning because schools can plan well but the Government through the Ministry of General Education doesn't remit funds at all. When funds are released the amounts are very small can't even match even a quarter of the needy areas intended to be implemented. As I am talking now, there are no available funds in school but the strategic planning is there just shelved I can show you. I think government was just interested in running away from planning for school in a situation without any resources available. So this has really been a challenge and it has made our work so difficult (Headteacher 4, School 4, 2018).*

During another interview at Secondary school 3, it was similarly mentioned that lack of materials was posing a challenge to the implementation of strategic planning. For example, headteacher 3 said that:

*I think in terms of challenges we face in implementing strategic planning, one big problem is that there are no adequate funds available in school. You know it is sometimes difficult for us to implement what we have planned and again the school can't say we are not going to plan because there are no available funds, no the school has to plan because planning with or without money is mandatory. Yes, sometimes you can improvise and work within available resources but there are things you can't improvise (Headteacher 3, School 3, 2018).*

Furthermore, headteacher 2 from Secondary school 2 also said similar views as follows:

*Lack of funds within the school and delayed release of grants by the ministry is also posing a serious challenge to the implementation of strategic planning. Every planning needs funds for it to be effectively done. So lack of funds is really a very big challenge in our school and we are only left to work under such difficulties (Headteacher 2, School 2, 2018).*

Some school board chairpersons interviewed also mentioned similarly about the inadequacy of funds to support the implementation of strategic planning. They indicated that secondary schools were unable to find work easy in coordinating the implementation of school strategic planning in secondary schools. One school board chairperson indicated that:

*One problem is that I can't find funds myself neither the headteacher himself for implementing strategic planning. Strategic planning relies on the available funds and grants from the Ministry of General Education. When there are no funds available the implementation of the strategic planning becomes a problem (School board chairperson C, School 3, 2018).*

The other school board chairperson also said the following;

*The idea of strategic planning is good but the funds for implementing it not easy to find. School receives funding late and very inadequate which can't do anything to do the works in the strategic planning. The money schools receive as user fees have many areas where it goes. Any way we always manage to work within our means were funds limit us we leave it we can't force matters (School board chairperson F, School 6, 2018).*

From the responses of stakeholders, it is evident that in addition to the support received from the government through the Ministry of General education secondary schools needed to generate their own revenue to facilitate the smooth implementation of strategic planning.

The next section presents another theme: Complexity of Strategic Planning.

#### **4.6.2 Complexity of Strategic Planning**

School board chairpersons for secondary schools bemoaned the complexity of strategic planning. It was observed that the Ministry of General Education proposed a standard format for secondary schools strategic planning to use which was too complex compared to the planning which schools used to have before strategic planning was introduced in secondary schools. For example, one headteacher, an informant from secondary school 4 said the following words:

*One challenge also is that the process of developing strategic planning that is proposed by our ministry is very complex which sometimes appears boring to some stakeholders participating in the implementation. The format we use as secondary schools is standard whether the schools have huge needs or small needs to plan for. It is actually to follow all the section in the standard format whether the section concerns your school needs or not. To me this jeopardise the essence of strategic plans because you end up planning for things that are not part and parcel of the local needs (Headteacher 4, School 4, 2018).*

Above this, one of the school board chairpersons who was interviewed bemoaned the same challenge of complexity of strategic planning. This is what he said;

*The format and terminologies used in strategic planning to many of us grade twos who did not go far in education and many other stakeholders who don't understand well terms used in education. The planning process is totally too difficult. It was going to be better for schools to have own strategic planning format. And again you see headteachers and deputy headteachers were trained in strategic planning but not every key player in strategic planning was trained in strategic planning. So it is so difficult for stakeholders to have a common concern in strategic planning. Because the strategic planning is technical a lot of stakeholders shun the formulation and equally the implementation part of the strategic planning (School board chairperson A, school 1, 2018)*

Because of the complexity of strategic planning some stakeholders found it difficult to participate and contribute in strategic planning. This also made situations analysis of programmes for strategic planning difficult. One deputy teacher commented that;

*Situational analysis was not properly carried out because of complexity of strategic planning. Things not covered in the previous plan were included without looking at the current situation in the school. Stakeholders needed to collect relevant data for strategic planning (Deputy Headteacher 2, School 2, 2018)*

The key aspect of the finding is that stakeholders felt left out of the design process of the format for standards strategic planning. Therefore, the strategic planning appeared to be complex to most stakeholders to understand and felt that some principle accountability areas were just imposed and secondary schools were confined to the strategic planning format that was given by the Ministry of General Education.

### 4.6.3 Lack of Trainings in Strategic Planning

Stakeholders interviewed indicated that there were little sensitisation on Strategic Planning to create enhanced awareness of the planning process and the essence of Strategic Planning in secondary schools. One school board chairperson commented that:

*Ministry of Education should conduct more workshops in all education districts so that they know how the plan is to be made; 'We had to get help from other schools and teachers, so I suggest more training for us non-teaching staff stakeholders. I think it could be that many school headteachers had no idea about school strategic planning themselves that's why they cannot educate their school stakeholders. Since I assumed this office of board chairperson have not attended any workshop or training programmes for Strategic Planning. Training for school stakeholders will help our schools'. 'Training should be provided to all staff before the school strategic plan is prepared (Chairperson B, School 2, 2018).*

Almost all headteachers commented on the need to involve all stakeholders in the planning process; surprisingly, even some of the deputy teachers mentioned that they did not know how the school's strategic planning was prepared. One deputy teacher noted that,

*We did not know what was happening and how they derived the plan which became our school strategic plan. Very few teachers attend Strategic Planning meetings but in future every teacher should be allowed to participate'. School administrators should 'involve all stakeholders to come up with a realistic plan. Sometimes not all stakeholders like teachers, members of the school management and community were present when formulating our strategic plan, they should all take part'; 'a more participatory approach which will give us more ideas on how to come up with a good school strategic plan. (Deputy Headteacher 4, School 4, 2018).*

It was noted that the key stakeholder needed to be trained first in strategic planning in order to provide the much needed support within the schools. Trained human resources for the implementation of strategic planning was key as schools that offered training in strategic planning to its key stakeholders showed successfully implementation of strategic planning and school improvement.

The key finding is that secondary schools had to grapple with a number of challenges to the School's improvement. The most taxing ones were a lack of training and sensitization in strategic planning, inadequate finances. Other challenges were complexity of strategic and

policy changes in the Ministry of Education which affected the effective implementation of strategic planning and school improvement.

#### **4.7 Summary of Strategic Planning indicators**

The secondary schools that were investigated in this study showed indicators of strategic planning. The indicators of strategic planning included improvements in academic and principal accountabilities in school strategic planning in selected schools. This was the fact that before the secondary schools which were selected in this study started implementing strategic planning academic results were poor and school infrastructure were in deplorable state. With the introduction of strategic planning implementation, the study found that the selected secondary schools were comprehensively and effectively planning. The schools developed, implemented and evaluated comprehensively school improvement plan that communicated a clear purpose, direction and action plan focused on teaching and learning.

The researcher understood that the influence of strategic planning needed to go hand in hand with conducive environment and free interactive platform for key stakeholders in order to maintain the match of what is on the ground with what needed to reflect in strategic planning. However, the comment from the stakeholders indicated that the Ministry of General Education distanced itself from the full authority of school planning as individual secondary schools were given the mandate for the developing and implementation of their own strategic planning.

From the responses from the stakeholders, it was noted that the majority of the key stakeholders were willing to participate in the implementation of strategic planning. Most of the stakeholders who were willing to participate in the implementation of strategic planning had their reasons connected to the effective implementation of the school strategic planning. These responses indicated that stakeholders were confident that given an opportunity to freely interact in strategic planning implementation and would contribute positively and consequently implement school strategic planning with ease.

It was clearly noted from the findings that the changing in school planning and the whole set up of the school planning cycle and training of key stakeholders was vital to school improvement. The study findings also indicated that secondary schools that involved the stakeholders and encouraged consultation from the beginning of the strategic planning showed enhanced improvements in school programmes and activities. From the responses of stakeholders, it is evident that in addition to the support received from the government

through the Ministry of General education secondary schools needed to generate their own revenue to facilitate the smooth implementation strategic planning.

The stakeholders felt left out of the design process of the format for standard strategic planning. Therefore, the strategic planning appeared to be complex to most stakeholders to understand and felt that some principle accountability areas were just imposed and secondary schools were confined to the strategic planning format that was given by the Ministry of General Education. It was noted that the key stakeholder needed to be trained first in strategic planning in order to provide the much needed support within the schools. Trained human resources for the implementation of strategic planning was key as schools that offered training in strategic planning to its key stakeholders showed successful implementation of strategic planning and school improvement.

## CHAPTER FIVE

### DISCUSSIONS OF FINDINGS

#### 5.1 Overview

The previous chapter presented the findings of the study. The present chapter discusses the findings of the study in view of literature and analysis of research findings. To this effect, findings of the study were discussed as they came out in all the three objectives which were mirrored by the three research questions as follows:

1. How is Strategic Planning carried out in selected secondary schools in Solwezi district?
2. How does Strategic Planning influence the way things are done in selected secondary schools in Solwezi district?
3. What are the major constraints in the implementation of Strategic Planning in selected secondary schools in Solwezi district?

The discussion is based on the findings presented in chapter four as well as the conceptual framework guiding this study and other related literature in Chapter two. The findings are discussed with special reference to the results obtained from interviews. Effort has been made to reflect, validate and broaden current knowledge and philosophy in the role of strategic planning in selected secondary schools in Solwezi district.

#### 5.2 Implementation of Strategic Planning in Secondary Schools

It is imperative to notice that implementation of strategic planning in selected secondary schools in the study played a meaningful role in making the necessary adjustments towards school improvements, students' outcomes and management of school programmes taking into consideration their experiences with the needs of the school. Therefore, strategic planning in selected secondary schools formed an integral part of secondary schools since it was a vehicle through which the improvement was translated and interpreted. This shows that the implementation of strategic planning was the biggest in school academic and infrastructure improvements. The success of strategic planning initiatives depended on its efficiency and

effectiveness in the implementation in schools. Strategic planning was therefore a necessity which once ignored could go without long lasting effects on school improvement.

Strategic planning may carry unique programmes and goals according to individual schools but the implementation part process seemingly to be carried out in a systematic manner. The study found that selected secondary schools were not implementing strategic planning alone but involved all key stakeholders in carrying out the principle accountability components in the plan. This is strongly in support of Puamau (2005) who recommends consultation and participation with key stakeholders as an important part of the strategic planning implementation process. In carrying out the implementation of strategic planning at local school level, stakeholders such as parents, school administrators, teachers, learners and cooperating partners as well as those who have an interest in children's education were consulted. This finding of this study showed that schools emulated the recommendations of Puamau (2005) in the sense that whenever they carried out strategic planning, invitations were extended to community leaders and interest groups to participate in the school's strategic planning implementation. This promoted bottom-up rather than top down processes which in turn initiated active participation of all education partners in strategic planning implementation. This finding is also in line with Tokai (2005) who asserted that there is need to involve in the planning decisions everyone concerned with the education service. He further noted that, one of the preconditions of planning for education is that everyone engaged in the service, professionally or voluntarily should be involved in planning. This therefore showed that an inclusive process likely yielded better outcomes for schools and children who were the immediate beneficiaries of strategic planning. This strongly contributed towards the principle of plan ownership and helped to raise stakeholders' level of commitment to implement the plan effectively.

The study found that secondary schools promoted school community partnership in strategic planning through the involvement of key stakeholders in strategic planning. This contributed to a stock of various stakeholders' divergent views, opinions and suggestions in forms of ideas that addressed the challenges encountered in the day to day business of school and plan for possible intervention in line with the needs of the local school. However, the study established that not all educational stakeholders were involved in strategic planning. It was established that during strategic planning, key stakeholders were involved and some secondary schools were left alone without involving key stakeholders in implementing some



programmes and activities. The study found that secondary schools that involved stakeholders promoted and encouraged partnership in strategic planning. The partners cited in strategic planning included; the village headmen, civic leaders, head of government department, religious ministries and church leaders, teachers and learners. However, none of the secondary schools in the study indicated to have involved politicians in strategic planning.

Stakeholders' involvement in strategic planning was an integral component of school improvement in the sense that in the development of education systems, no matter where they operated, the area of strategic planning was critical. This finding is in line with Ishumi (1984) who explains that, strategic planning or any other form of planning in education for all education systems but particularly so for education systems in developing contexts, progressed toward improvement in the provision of an acceptable quality of education was a continuous and relentless struggle. The views of Ishumi is supported by Chang (2008) who adds that any education institution or system that fails to undertake educational planning in all seriousness, responding effectively to the manifold demands arising from the expectations of various stakeholders in current time. In this regard, consultations with and encouraging the participation of all key stakeholders seemed a productive approach that the community was involved in strategic planning.

Consequently, the key stakeholders who were involved in strategic planning were a representative of the wide section of the community and society at large so that everyone is involved and took a stake in the implementation of strategic planning in a secondary school. Involving various stakeholders in strategic planning was commended by participants in this study that it promoted participatory planning in secondary schools. This finding is in tandem with Teasdale (2005) who argues that, a legitimate aspect of school management, and one that could enlist community involvement successfully. Stakeholders' involvement was significant in strategic planning in meeting varying demands and contributing to school effectiveness and improvement. Therefore, the preliminary Strategic planning was an individual's work but demanded a combined effort of various school stakeholders comprising school's administration (top management of the school), teaching and non-teaching staff, pupils, Ministry of Education officials, sponsors and all educational stakeholders. Involving a wide range of stakeholders enabled the systematic built up of goals, aims, vision and objectives of strategic planning. This is supported by Igor (1918) in his Igor Ansoff theory where he explored strategic planning issues, and built up a systematic approach to strategy formulation

and strategic decision-making through a framework of theories, techniques and models. This finding is also supported by Navarro and Gallardo (2003) who viewed that, strategic planning must reflect the thoughts, feelings ideas and wants to developers and mould them along with the school's purpose, mission and regulation into an integrated document. Hence, Strategic planning helped secondary schools in establishing priorities, ways and methods of accomplishing needs of the administration and stakeholders.

Strategic planning entails the determination by leaders and all the educational stakeholders to draw a picture of what they would like the school to become, perform an environmental scan on the recourses it had or acquired to become what they wanted to be, formulate strategy and implement the strategy. From the findings of the study, it was clearly noted that, strategic planning was fundamentally a statement of belief that an institution shaped its own destiny by controlling the changes it encounters daily (Fox, 2002). It was established from the findings of the study that the key component of strategic planning was its laying out of priority areas. These priority areas fell into four broad categories determined by Ministry of General Education as: Learning and Teaching; Community Partnership; Leadership and Management; Infrastructure Development. The study showed that within these categories, individual schools determined the specific areas to be concentrated on for school improvement. For each of the priority areas the goals and objectives were articulated, providing the reference points against which the performance of the plan was later ascertained. Strategies for achieving these goals and objectives were specified and performance indicators spelled out.

In addition, in the implementation of strategic planning resources, time frame and people responsible for various activities were assigned. This finding is in line with the recommendations of Ministry of General Education (2010) that all schools prepared a four-year strategic plan, which included priority areas needing attention and action over the four-year period. Strategic Planning became useful in influencing educational development and improvement at the school level. Instead of doing things on an ad hoc basis, school strategic planning provided a blueprint and a clear focus in promoting children's education at each school. As earlier mentioned in the review of literature in chapter two, strategic planning was considered as a sound way to plan for educational development at the school level. The key theme that emanated was the need for adequate consultation with and participation of relevant stakeholders in the planning process. The introduction of school strategic planning, therefore, gave an opportunity for grass-roots participation in educational planning, which hitherto was

conspicuously lacking. Above all, the literature illustrated that school effectiveness and improvement enhanced when schools executed well thought-out strategic planning together with its school stakeholders.

### **5.2.1 Policy and Consultations in Strategic Planning**

Reporting on the situation in traditional planning and strategic planning processes, the study pointed out that in most cases relevant stakeholders were not consulted in the traditional planning process and this was a serious limitation. Little involvement of some stakeholders; for instance, little or none involvement of learners in the implementation stage of strategic planning discouraged them from a sense of ownership of the plan, which adversely affected strategic planning implementation. This finding is supported by Puamau (2005) who observed that ‘Participation in and ownership of the planning process are important for the success of strategic planning implementation’. Likewise, Puamau (2005) adds that consultation is highly important, as the recognition of all stakeholders and the valuing of their contributions ensures that they will have a strong sense of ownership of the principle accountability areas of strategic planning, particularly important when they are the ones who were involved with its implementation. This showed that strategic planning success was dependent upon the actions of key stakeholders’ participation and consultation. Stakeholders were more likely to support and contribute to strategic planning implementation if they were involved. This finding is in tandem with Tokai (2005) who views that there are benefits to be achieved, school leaders should take note of the suggestions to advance stakeholder participation and consultation when undertaking school strategic planning exercise.

Moreover, Bozeman and Addair (2010) acknowledged Strategic planning as the only roadmap with timelines to make improvement in the areas that needs to be improved upon. They also add that the whole process of strategic planning is not about planning, change, setting of goals, objectives, strategies and evaluation but it is more about relationships and team building among the members of the organisation, by harnessing individual talents, skills and intellects and providing leadership to an integrated population within the communities they are found.

This section showed that strategic planning projects aims and objectives of the schools were set goals, vision and mission which were to be achieved for school improvement. Therefore,

the strategic planning was a participatory approach that involved all stakeholders in planning for school in a quest to bring about school improvement.

### **5.3. The Strategic Planning and School Improvement**

The strategic planning for school improvement encompassed the need for careful planning not only at the ministerial level but also at the school level and this made it more efficient and effective and at the same time to meet the new demands of the 21st century. Findings of the study showed that schools indicated improvements in certain area such as academic and infrastructure development in selected secondary schools. It is however evident that improvement indicators that selected secondary schools were making was steady improvements as a result of the strategic planning. Steady improvements included improved pass rate in school academics and school infrastructure. Therefore, the influence of strategic planning was based on the attainment of key school improvement indicators in secondary schools.

It was therefore noted that the concept of strategic planning implementation was a well-established buzzword in the education system as like in the business world, with enough success stories to its credit to legitimise application of the concept in education and other sectors of the economy as well. This is supported by McNamara (2003) who stressed that the implementation of strategic planning comprise a list of actions ordered so as to attain over a particular time period, certain desired objectives derived from a careful analysis of the internal and external factors likely to affect the organization, which will move the organization from where it is now to where it wants to be. Correspondingly the study findings showed that through the strategic planning process, secondary schools focused more sharply on their choice of goals, objectives and strategies for accomplishing those goals, helping to move the institution in an appropriate direction in terms of school improvement. Secondary schools indicated the availability of strategic planning implementation especially that the Ministry of General Education monitored the implementation process of strategic planning in their routine monitoring visits to secondary schools in the district. In the implementation process it was noted that secondary schools involved stakeholders from the conception phase of the process. This is in line with Bell (2002) who argues that a key aspect of strategic planning for schools is the opportunity afforded for grass-roots level engagement of stakeholders through consultation and participation in the planning process.

In the implementation of strategic planning, schools involved all individuals to function as a whole or the strategic plan would collapse. The findings of the study indicated that Strategic Planning in secondary schools involved outcomes that involved aims to build more desirable upcoming results by either adjusting current programmes or proceedings so as to have more favorable outcomes in their school improvement. This finding is in tandem with Armstrong (2001) who argues that, the implementation of strategic audit planning recognised superior strategies based on measurable criteria. Managing better organisational performance to a sustainable level through implementation of strategic planning were effectively attained through various ways, some of them being management by objectives, strategic management and management control system.

The implementation of strategic planning in secondary schools put the individual schools at the centre of planning for their own local needs and available resources. With the educational system in constant search of ways to improve the provision of education through reforms, it became imperative for secondary schools to implement strategic planning so as to determine the effectiveness of the principle accountability areas introduced. To ensure the achievement of school strategic planning implementation schools were mandated to furnish their plans with the Ministry of General Education. This is why school administrators were central in any educational reform. However, in this study the responses to the open-ended questions from the headteachers indicated the need for school administrators to be better prepared for work required in school strategic planning. This showed the need for more professional development that ensured that school administrators are knowledgeable and at the same time competent in carrying out the process of strategic planning for schools. This finding is in line with Pallotta and Lingam (2012) who observed that lack of training is doubtless a contributing factor in the dismal performance of the school heads, because they appeared to know little about strategic planning. If this is so, the final product, the plan, runs the risk of becoming just another educational fad.

### **5.3.1 Achievements of Strategic Planning**

Strategic Planning was important in secondary schools for it gave direction on what was to be achieved, how to achieve it and when to achieve it. The participants in the study indicated that Strategic planning contributed to proper utilization of schools' resources. This entails that, strategic planning process made the use of different views from all Strategic educational stakeholders for improvement of the school both physically and academically. Strategic

planning ensured achievement of schools plans and needs. The study showed that through Strategic planning secondary schools reduced the chances of misappropriation of school's finances and other resources. Strategic planning also helped secondary schools to reduce the chances of diverting of school's projects. Additionally, Strategic planning promoted the spirit of co-ordination and ownership of the school as a whole. Through Strategic planning process, it was possible to realize gaps, weaknesses, opportunities and threats in order to do focus planning. Strategic planning accommodates better transition from one administration to another in case of transfers or movement of officials. Strategic planning reduced chances of skipping important strategic planning processes. Well formulated strategic plans were completed fully and in time. Strategic planning generally improved the schools' performance.

Strategic planning in secondary schools was noted to play a role of providing an awareness campaign to sensitize all key stakeholders on how to mobilize resources well, co-operate with other stakeholders and prioritised development plans using the available resources. Through this, stakeholders took the role model by making follow ups on any strategic plan implementation and remained steadfast to full implementation. To actively involve school management committee, always operated under the guidelines of the minutes of the strategic plans made during meetings so as to ensure accountability and transparency in the process. Strategic planning made stakeholders to accept changes and learn from other people particularly professionals in this area by attending seminars and workshops where strategic planning lessons are taught. Having regular meetings with all stakeholders promoted the shared ideas with the entire school management and also involved the management committees in the formulation of the plans. This confirms the argument by Cook (1995) that institutions need to make decisions about the future forces in the decisions or renders any decision irrelevant by not involving all stakeholders in strategic planning.

### **5.3.2 Effectiveness of Strategic Planning in Schools**

Strategic planning is a key to success in School improvement. A well implemented Strategic planning makes secondary schools have a focused and well understood future by all the stakeholders in the school. In this study it was found that Strategic planning enabled the secondary schools to do activities in an organised manner and this led to proper utilisation of resources, and achievement of school goals and objectives. Schools made targets range from 75% to 85% pass rate at all levels which most secondary schools achieved. Besides programmes were developed towards raising funds through local revenue initiatives such as

parental contributions towards pupil levies. These local endeavors led to the schools' improvement. An effective implementation of Strategic planning promoted the school's mission and vision plans to be well understood and helped the schools see their day to day activities done in a uniform manner in a directed direction. The study findings showed that secondary schools in Solwezi district were running well because the expectations of the schools were well understood by everyone in the school and all stakeholders were geared towards that.

The study also found that effective implementation of strategic planning indicated a number of benefits to secondary schools. The benefits cited were that through strategic planning secondary schools focused and understood the future of the schools in terms of school improvement, organised activities done in a well-directed manner, proper utilisation of goals and objectives leading to systematic school improvement. The finding is in line with Swarbrooke (2001) who outlines that effective strategic planning approach brings about the effective allocation of resources and providing managers with a much needed rationale for evaluating competing budget, requests for investment capital and new staff, identify threats and opportunities, strengths and weaknesses through enhancing management and alertness to the winds of change, new opportunities and threatening developments, forcing organizations to clarify their missions and look to the future. Swarbrooke further pointed out that, strategic planning provides better guidance to the entire organisation on the crucial point of just what it is organisations are trying to do and to achieve, creating a proactive management and counteracting any tendencies for decisions, be mostly reactive and defensive. Therefore, effective strategic planning ensured that methods of evaluating performance were developed and helped to unite numerous school plans.

It was noted in this section of the study that strategic planning strategies-related decisions by stakeholders in secondary schools improved by allocating responsibilities to individual members of staff, making sure stakeholders consider their role in the implementation of strategic planning guided day to day school programmes and activities. Also, it showed that strategic planning was an interactive process and there was no definitive strategy point that secondary schools work from their situation, needs and available resources.

#### **5.4 Challenges of Strategic Planning Implementation**

During strategic planning the stakeholders of sampled secondary schools in Solwezi district were conducting SWOT and PESTLE analysis of the schools to sought ways of capitalising

on their Strength, address the Weaknesses, maximize on the available Opportunities in their environment and confronted the impending Threats (SWOT). The PESTLE analysis was all about considering the organisational standing Politically, Economically, Socially, Technologically, Legally and Environmentally (PESTLE) within its operating environment. In so doing the key stakeholders of the school were able to relook the mission and vision of the organization and provided a direction that was followed in order for the organisation to gain competitive advantage over their competitors. However, in all the endeavors in the implementation of strategic planning in secondary schools some challenges were encountered. The study findings showed certain factors that influenced achievements of objectives in the strategic plan. The study findings attributed things that contributed to hindering achievement of objectives in strategic plan to lack of stakeholders' participation, sensitisation, competing leadership interests and lack of resources.

#### **5.4.1 Active Stakeholders' Participation**

As earlier mentioned within this chapter that strategic planning in secondary schools was not a one-person task but a task that involved various stakeholders in school. The finding of the study showed that secondary schools in Solwezi district emulated the participation of key stakeholders in strategic planning. This was seen as vital as it contributed to a sense of ownership between the schools and their stakeholders. This finding was in agreement with Bozeman and Addair (2010) who observed that, involvement of all stakeholders in the process of planning right from conducting needs assessment to the development of improvement strategies and the generation of possible solutions with their feasibility in a given time frame is paramount as it creates a sense of ownership for the document by all the stakeholders. This is also envisaged by Zhang (2014) who also says that, the formulation of a strategic plan is a form of democracy and also a process that unifies thinking and achieves consensus.

#### **5.4.2 Lack of Local Stakeholders' Sensitisation**

Comments accompanying the school key stakeholders' experience in school strategic planning revealed that there were little to none sensitisation of stakeholders in the areas of strategic planning in selected secondary schools. Key school stakeholders commented that secondary schools would do better but needed training programmes' in the area of strategic planning. Participation from everyone enhanced cooperation and ownership of the plan by all.



This study showed that sentiment about lack of participation by some stakeholders was repeated among almost all the respondents. This was attributed to lack of knowledge in strategic planning which contributed to low morale among key stakeholders in participating in strategic planning. This finding showed that secondary schools needed to do more on stakeholders' sensitisation to enhance awareness in future strategic planning exercises in situational analysis. This finding is in line with Wirth (2010) who argued that strategic planning is the process by which the guiding members of an organization envision its future and develop the necessary procedures and operations to achieve that future. He further notes that in the strategic planning process there is need of a planning consultant whose roles as a trainer range from being an outsider expert on planning to being actively involved with the planning results. He also adds that the critical point is that the roles be clearly defined upfront so as not to cause any organizational confusion during the planning period. Wirth further suggests that if necessary the roles can shift as different needs arise during planning process. He adds that ideally, the outsider consultant can team with someone inside the organization to guide the planning team through the process together. He further suggests that the possible roles of a planning consultant are: Trainer to explain the process, facilitator, to provide assistance in moving through difficult phase, coach, to provide active direction through the process, strategist, to actively help set strategy, Advocate to actively pursue certain ideas and stakeholder with vested interest in results.

Strategic planning contributed to proper utilization of schools' resources. The study showed that strategic planning process made use of different views from all educational stakeholders for improvement of the school both physically and academically. Strategic planning ensured achievement of schools plans and needs reduced the chances of misappropriation of school's finances and other resources. Strategic planning also reduced the chances of diverting of school's projects but promoted the spirit of co-ordination and ownership of the school as a single whole. Strategic planning process made it possible to realize gaps, weaknesses, opportunities and threats in order to do focused planning. Strategic planning accommodated better transition from one administration to another in case of transfers or movement of officials and reduced chances of skipping important strategic planning processes. Well formulated strategic planning was completed fully and in time and generally improved the schools' performance. This finding is supported by Okumbe (1998) who argued that leadership is the process of encouraging and helping others to work enthusiastically towards objectives. It involved developing a vision for the organization that encouraged employees to

work with a passion. The management in secondary schools emphasised teamwork and collaboration which were essential components in provision of quality education.

The study established that good administrators of strategic planning employed principles of management which brought about continuous improvement and which guided students, teachers and stakeholders in working towards the achievement of organization's objectives. Successful planning efforts produced many benefits; focused and well understood future, well directed and organised activities, proper utilization of resources, achievement of goals and objectives and school's improvement and development.

#### **5.4.4 Influence of Resources on Strategic Planning**

A resource is anything that an organizational manager utilises in order to achieve their set organizational goals (KESI, 2011). Resources in this study were taken to mean; time, financial, human resource, land and physical facilities. The resources in an organization had a big contribution towards the achievement of the organizational goals. When effectively allocated, resources optimized and led to greater productivity. This finding was in line with Zhang (2014) who argued that a scientific and rational plan can promote rapid development while unscientific and irrational plan is a plan that cannot be put into practice or that which results in wastages of resources and leads to missed opportunities for development. People (human resource) were key factor in realising the implementation of strategic goals and as part of the resource needed to be protected. Resources in an organisation were always limited thus the need to plan well on how to prudently manage the available resources and mobilise for more in order to achieve the goals projected in the strategic plan. In the process of making a strategic plan, an analysis was done to assess the strengths and weaknesses within the internal environment of the organization and also to look at the opportunities and threats found in the external environment. Resources were mobilised and effectively allocated for the intended purpose in order to obtain optimal benefit from the resource which in turn resulted in improved performance of the secondary schools. This finding is supported by Wanjala and Rarieya (2014) who identified limited school budgets as a major challenge to the improvement of school facilities. They argued that leaders had to think of strategic ways of generating financial resources.

The findings of the study indicated that resources played a key role in the level of performance of strategic planning in secondary schools. Most respondents attributed the lack of resources to failure of achieving the objectives set out in the strategic planning. Resources

in schools enhanced performance as they enabled the staff within the schools to meet the set objectives effectively and efficiently within the required time frame. Resources also enabled the schools to be able to develop the physical facilities which in turn attracted students to the school. This is supported by Zhang (2014) who argues that the process of attracting and procuring external resources together with the allocation and integration of internal resources should be aligned with the strategic goals. He adds that there should be a linkage between strategic plans, finance and resources through the development of annual plans and financial budgets. Ndegwah (2014) in his study “Factors Affecting the Implementation of Strategic Plans in Public Secondary Schools in Nyeri County, Kenya”, also identified the gaps that would need further research and among them was to determine how resource allocation influence the implementation of strategic plans in public secondary schools. This is the reason the researcher sought to investigate the role of strategic planning in school improvement in secondary schools.

## CHAPTER SIX

### CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

#### 6.1 Overview

This chapter is a synthesis of the entire study and contains summary of research findings, exposition of findings, commensurate with the objectives, conclusions and recommendations based thereon. The research questions “How is Strategic Planning carried out in selected secondary schools in Solwezi district?, How does Strategic Planning influence the way things are done in selected secondary schools in Solwezi district?, What are the major constraints in the implementation of Strategic Planning in selected secondary schools in Solwezi district? ” were the focus of the research study. The conclusions to the research are reported here as a set of key answers provided to the research topic and research questions through interpretation of data and the generation of the assertions provide in the conclusions.

#### 6.2 Conclusions

Based on “How is Strategic Planning carried out in selected secondary schools in Solwezi district?” The study concludes that what was significant in how strategic planning was carried out is an aspect of participation of key stakeholders who were the custodians of strategies for school improvement. The study found that participation in carrying out strategic planning involving key school stakeholders who included parents, teachers, learners, clergy and civic leaders among other school stakeholders played a core role in strategic planning for school improvement. The study concluded that participatory work in strategic planning contributed to stakeholders’ confidence that given an opportunity to freely interact was a factor to carrying out school strategic planning with ease for enhanced school improvement. This entails that a participatory way in carrying out strategic planning accorded every school stakeholder in selected secondary schools a chance to contribute to school improvement. The study further concluded that participatory manner in strategic planning provokes strategic thinking, acting and learning on an ongoing basis among school stakeholders a thing that was useful for secondary schools improvement. This way of carrying out strategic planning enables stakeholders in selected secondary school to conduct both internal and external analysis of the strategies necessary for school improvement. It is through participatory manner in carrying out strategic planning that the secondary schools were able to identify the desired outcomes and formulate strategies to achieve them.

Based on ‘how strategic planning influenced the way things were done in selected secondary schools in Solwezi district’ , the study concludes that strategic planning developed a collegial working relationship between the selected secondary schools and their key stakeholders in the way strategic planning was implemented to enhance school improvement. The study also concludes that strategic planning influenced participatory decision making processes that focused on regular teaching-staff meetings, consultation with implementation committees and heads of departments and regular dialogue with teachers and learners. This showed that strategic planning played a role in selected secondary schools in matching up of what was available in terms of what was needed to reflect in strategic planning and to be implemented for school improvement. The study further concluded that strategic planning influenced decentralization in school planning at local level as the Ministry of General Education distanced itself from the full authority of school strategic planning and individual secondary schools were given the mandate to develop and implement their own strategic planning. Furthermore, strategic planning influenced collective resolution of activities of undertaking based on experiences on local needs and lessons learnt. This also influenced transparency, accountability in providing school goals and inspired vision so as to make strategic decisions understood by all and to instill values that guided all key school stakeholders towards selected secondary schools’ improvement.

On “what are the major constraints in the implementation of Strategic Planning in selected secondary schools in Solwezi district?” The study concludes with no doubt that low funding and resourcing was a stumbling block to efforts to improve the teaching and learning environment and enhancing academic achievement for school improvement in selected secondary schools. However, the effective implementation of strategic planning by financially disadvantaged selected schools in Solwezi District, who equally grappled with huge academics problems such as lack of text books and other essential teaching and learning materials, even without a retinue of trained teachers succeeded in not only improving the learning environment in their schools but they even sustained top achievement of their learners; because they knew how to improve, effectively and efficiently use the limited realised resources through their local efforts.

### **6.3 Recommendations**

From the findings and discussion from chapters four and five respectively, this study recommends the following;

- i. The Ministry of General Education should ensure that all secondary schools develop strategic planning based on the local needs and within their available materials/resources for efficiency and effectiveness.
- ii. The Ministry of General Education should regularly visit secondary schools to monitor and evaluate the implementation of strategic planning to render possible assistance to address failures in areas that need help.
- iii. All key stakeholders should be involved in the strategic planning process as important educational stakeholders. Head teachers should make sure that during the strategic planning process every stakeholder's opinion, view and thought is integrated in strategic planning.
- iv. The Ministry of General Education should encourage strategic planning which is within available resources to avoid incomplete projects and the strategic planning process should be adhered to. Issues of misappropriation of schools finances and diverting of finances should be zero rated. The spirit of transparency and accountability should be seen in both stakeholders and school administrators.
- v. Implementation of plans should be done as planned. Monitoring and evaluation of plans should be done regularly. Quarterly monitoring and evaluation should be done by the top management of the schools. Schools should also have school monitoring committees to assess implementation of strategic plans in their schools.

#### **6.4 Suggestions for Possible Further Studies**

1. Further studies can be conducted on the effect of strategic leadership on the performance of secondary schools.
2. Also, how managers' gender influences the effectiveness of strategic planning and barriers to strategic planning in schools.

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## APPENDICES

### Appendix A: Interview Guide for Head Teachers

**THE UNIVERSITY OF ZAMBIA**

SCHOOL OF EDUCATION

**Dear Respondent,**

You have purposively been selected to take part in this study because you are directly involved in the implementation of strategic planning. Be as free and truthful as you respond to the questions.

Date of Interview: .....

Gender of Respondent .....

#### **QUESTION ITEMS**

- 1 Who is involved in the implementation of the strategic planning in your school?
- 2 Why is it important to involve stakeholders in the implementation of a strategic planning?
- 3 What are the effects of strategic planning towards school improvement in your school?
- 4 What are the indicators of strategic planning outcomes in your school?
- 5 What challenges are faced by your school in implementing the school strategic plan for school improvement?
- 6 What possible measures could help to mitigate the challenges encountered in the implementation of the strategic planning?

THANK YOU VERY MUCH FOR YOUR RESPONSES

**Appendix B:** Interview Guide for School Deputy Head Teachers

**THE UNIVERSITY OF ZAMBIA**

**SCHOOL OF EDUCATION**

**Dear Respondent,**

You have purposively been selected to take part in this study because you are directly involved in the implementation of strategic planning. Be as free and truthful as you respond to the questions.

Date of Interview: .....

Gender of Respondent .....

**QUESTION ITEMS**

- 1 Who is involved in the implementation of the strategic planning in your school?
- 2 Why is it important to involve stakeholders in the implementation of a strategic planning?
- 3 What are the effects of strategic planning towards school improvement in your school?
- 4 What are the indicators of strategic planning outcomes in your school?
- 5 What challenges are faced by your school in implementing the school strategic plan for school improvement?
- 6 What possible measures could help mitigate the challenges encountered in the implementation of the strategic planning

**THANK YOU VERY MUCH FOR YOUR RESPONSES**

**Appendix C: Interview Guide for Board Chairpersons**

**THE UNIVERSITY OF ZAMBIA**

**SCHOOL OF EDUCATION**

**Dear Respondent,**

You have purposively been selected to take part in this study because you are directly involved in the implementation of strategic planning. Be as free and truthful as you respond to the questions.

Date of Interview: .....

Gender of Respondent .....

**QUESTION ITEMS**

- 1 Who is involved in the implementation of the strategic planning in your school?
- 2 Why is it important to involve stakeholders in the implementation of a strategic planning?
- 3 What are the effects of strategic planning towards school improvement in your school?
- 4 What are the indicators of strategic planning outcomes in your school?
- 5 What challenges are faced by your school in implementing the school strategic plan for school improvement?
- 6 What possible measures could help mitigate the challenges encountered in the implementation of the strategic planning?

**THANK YOU VERY MUCH FOR YOUR RESPONSES**

## Appendix D: Informed Consent Form

This informed consent form is for the Teachers, Headteachers and Education Board chairpersons in Solwezi District. I am inviting you to participate in the academic research, **“The Role of Strategic Planning in School Improvement: Evidence from Selected Secondary Schools in Solwezi District, Zambia”**.

[Name of Principle Investigator] .....

[Name of Organization] .....

[Name of Sponsor] .....

**[Name of Project and Version]** “THE ROLE OF STRATEGIC PLANNING IN SCHOOL IMPROVEMENT: EVIDENCE FROM SELECTED SECONDARY SCHOOLS IN SOLWEZI DISTRICT, ZAMBIA”

### **This Informed Consent Form has two parts:**

- Information Sheet (to share information about the study with you)
- Certificate of Consent (for signatures if you choose to participate)

You will be given a copy of the full Informed Consent Form

### **Part I: Information Sheet**

#### **Introduction**

I am Evans Nkumbwa, a student doing master’s degree programme at The University of Zambia. I am doing a research on **“The Role of Strategic Planning in School Improvement: Evidence from Selected Secondary Schools in Solwezi District, Zambia”**. I am going to give you information and invite you to be part of this research. You do not have to decide today whether or not you will participate in the research. This consent form may contain words that you do not understand. Please ask me to stop as we go through the information and I will take time to explain. If you have questions later, you should feel free to ask them.

### **Purpose of the Research**

With the global challenges and technological advancements in education systems provision, planning in education systems appears central on the agenda of institutions of learning to engage in strategic planning. Therefore, it was critical to gather evidence for or against the assumed important role played by strategic planning in school improvement. In line with the information given, this study becomes more and more relevant to critically investigate **“The Role of Strategic Planning in School Improvement: Evidence from Selected Secondary Schools in Solwezi District, Zambia”**, particularly in Solwezi District.

### **Type of Research Intervention**

This research will involve your participation in an interview that will take about 30 minutes.

### **Participant Selection**

You are being invited to take part in this research because I feel that your experience and the knowledge teacher /headteacher/ Education Board chairpersons is likely to help in investigating the contribution of in-service teacher qualification in primary schools.

- Do you know why I am asking you to take part in this study?
- Do you know what the study is about?



### **Voluntary Participation**

Your participation in this research is entirely voluntary. It is your choice whether to participate or not. If you choose not to participate, its fine and nothing will change. You are free to decide.

- If you decide not to take part in this research study, do you know what your options are?
- Do you know that you do not have to take part in this research study, if you do not wish to?
- Do you have any questions?

### **Procedures**

I am here to assess the implementation of Strategic Planning in selected secondary schools in Solwezi district; determine the influence of Strategic Planning on school improvement in selected secondary schools; and establish the major constraints encountered in implementing Strategic Planning in selected secondary schools in Solwezi district. I am inviting you to take part in this research project. If you accept, you will be asked to give me the details on how your experience with the role of strategic planning in schools.

*(For semi guided interviews)*

I would you to participate in an interview with me. During the interview, I will sit down with you in a comfortable place or under the tree. If it is better for you, the interview can take place in your home or a friend's home. If you do not wish to answer any of the questions during the interview, you may say so and the interviewer will move on to the next question. No one else but the interviewer will be present unless you would like someone else to be there. The tapes will be destroyed immediately within a month after the interview.

### **Duration**

The research takes place over \_\_4\_\_ weeks in total. During that time, we will visit you once or twice in case there is something I need you to clarify more and each interview will last for about 20 minutes each. The interview will be held once and will take about 30 minutes.

- If you decide to take part in the study, do you know how much time will the interview take?
- Where will it take place?
- If you agree to take part, do you know if you can stop participating?
- Do you know that you may not respond to the questions that you do not wish to respond to?
- Do you have any more questions?

### **Risks**

There is a risk that you may share some personal or confidential information by chance, or that you may feel uncomfortable talking about some of the experiences and challenges you encounter with the role of Strategic Planning in secondary schools. However, I do not wish for this to happen. You do not have to answer any question or take part in the interview if you feel the question(s) are too personal or if talking about them makes you uncomfortable.

### **Benefits**

There will be no direct benefit to you, but your participation is likely to help us find out more about the role of Strategic Planning in School Improvement in Secondary Schools in Solwezi District, Zambia”.

### **Reimbursements**

You will not be provided with any incentive to take part in the research because this is purely

an academic research intended for academic purposes.

- Can you tell me if you have understood correctly the benefits that you will have if you take part in the study?

**Confidentiality**

The research being done in Solwezi district may draw attention and if you participate you may be asked questions by other people in the community. I will not be sharing information about you to anyone. The information that I am collecting from this research project will be kept private. Any information about you will have a number on it instead of your name. It is only me who will have this information. It will not be shared with or given to anyone.

- Did you understand the procedures that i will be using to make sure that any information that we as researchers collect about you will remain confidential?
- Do you understand that the i cannot guarantee complete confidentiality of information that you share with us in a group discussion
- Do you have any more questions?

**Sharing the Results**

Nothing that you tell us today will be shared with anybody outside the research apart from being published in the dissertation and nothing will be attributed to you by name. No information will be shared as this is a purely academic research.

**Right to Refuse or Withdraw**

You do not have to take part in this research if you do not wish to do so, and choosing to participate will not affect your learning at school in any way. You may stop participating in the interview at any time that you wish without.

**Who to Contact**

Provide the name and contact information of someone who is involved, informed and accessible

This proposal has been reviewed and approved by [.....], which is a committee whose task it is to make sure that research participants are protected from harm. If you wish to find about more about the IRB, contact

[.....]  
.....] It has also been reviewed by the Ethics Review Committee of the World Health Organization (WHO), which is funding/sponsoring/supporting the study.

Do you know that you do not have to take part in this study if you do not wish to? You can say No if you wish to? Do you know that you can ask me questions later, if you wish to? Do you know that I have given the contact details of the person who can give you more information about the study?

You can ask me any more questions about any part of the research study, if you wish to. Do you have any questions?

**Part II: Certificate of Consent**

I have been invited to participate in research about the role of Strategic Planning in secondary schools.

**(This section is mandatory)**

**I have read the foregoing information, or it has been read to me. I have had the opportunity to ask questions about it and any questions I have been asked have been answered to my satisfaction. I consent voluntarily to be a participant in this study**

Print Name of Participant \_\_\_\_\_

Signature of Participant \_\_\_\_\_

Date \_\_\_\_\_

Day/month/year

***If illiterate***<sup>1</sup>

I have witnessed the accurate reading of the consent form to the potential participant, and the individual has had the opportunity to ask questions. I confirm that the individual has given consent freely.

Print name of witness \_\_\_\_\_

Thumb print of participant

Signature of witness \_\_\_\_\_

Date \_\_\_\_\_

Day/month/year

**Statement by the researcher/person taking consent**

I have accurately read out the information sheet to the potential participant, and to the best of my ability made sure that the participant understands that the following will be done:

- 1.
- 2.
- 3.

I confirm that the participant was given an opportunity to ask questions about the study, and all the questions asked by the participant have been answered correctly and to the best of my ability. I confirm that the individual has not been coerced into giving consent, and the consent has been given freely and voluntarily.

A copy of this ICF has been provided to the participant.

Print Name of Researcher/person taking the consent \_\_\_\_\_

Signature of Researcher /person taking the consent \_\_\_\_\_

Date \_\_\_\_\_

Day/month/year

<sup>1</sup> A literate witness must sign (if possible, this person should be selected by the participant and should have no connection to the research team). Participants who are illiterate should include their thumb print as well.

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