

**FACTORS CAUSING LOW ACADEMIC PERFORMANCE OF GRADE NINE (9)  
LEARNERS IN ENGLISH COMPOSITION WRITING IN SELECTED PUBLIC  
SECONDARY SCHOOLS IN MULOBEZI DISTRICT OF WESTERN PROVINCE**

**BY**

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Master of Education in Educational Management**

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## **AUTHOR'S DECLARATION**

I, Libuku Ilubala, do hereby declare that this dissertation is my work and that the works of other people have been appropriately acknowledged. I further declare that this work has never in part or whole, been submitted to the University of Zambia or any other institution for the award of any academic qualification.

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## **CERTIFICATE OF APPROVAL**

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## **DEDICATION**

This work is dedicated to the Almighty God who has enabled me to complete this course successfully. It is further dedicated to my wife, children and colleagues in Educational Management whose contributions and support enhanced the quality and success of this work to its present level.

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I wish to thank the Lord Almighty who has enabled me to complete this course. It was not an easy task to conduct this research. Therefore, my heartfelt gratitude goes to my supervisor, Dr. Dennis Banda for his invaluable guidance, criticism and promptness in attending to my need during the research period. Indeed, his contributions toward the successful completion of this academic work will remain memorable. His comments were always straight to the point and useful in steering the work in the right direction despite distance challenges.

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## ABSTRACT

In today's global world and with the help of modern technology, English has become the most common and dominant language spoken and used both at the national and international levels. It has been playing a major role in many sectors such as medicine, engineering, politics, economics, international relations and education. The good academic performance of learners in most cases depends on the dynamics of inspiration such as reliable teaching staff, sufficient teaching/learning aids, sufficient teachers and a positive attitude towards the education of learners. One prominent factor that leads to low academic performance in the English Language by learners can be attributed to one macro aspect of the language which is composition writing. This is so because at grade nine level, English composition writing takes 40% of the final examination. This implies that failure in this component translates into a huge gap to cover from other components of English language subject. For a country like Zambia where the English Language is used as a medium of instruction in schools, it becomes more important for learners to have good command in composition writing as almost all other subjects will require the skill of composition writing to answer them satisfactorily. This study examined the low academic performance of grade nine learners in selected Public Secondary Schools in Mulobezi District of Western Province of Zambia in the English Language, composition as a focal point, and how it affects learners' overall performance. A sample of forty-five (45) respondents was purposively and randomly selected and interviewed. The study was qualitative and used interview guides for data collection. Schools were selected using a non-probability technique which was a convenience method. Respondents such as teachers and Head-teachers were selected using purposive sampling and only students were selected randomly. The data collected was coded and common phrases and word count were used to analyze data. The findings of the study revealed that the low academic performance in English Language composition writing of grade nine learners in Public Secondary Schools was due to several contributing factors. Some of these included: insufficient teaching and learning materials, lack of academic activities that support composition writing such as Debates, Writing Competitions, Reading Competitions and Journalism clubs.

**Key Words:** *Performance, Learners, Mock Examinations, Final Examinations, Journalism Club.*

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## **ACRONYMS AND ABBREVIATIONS**

<b>DEBS</b>	District Education Board Secretary
<b>ECZ</b>	Examination Council of Zambia
<b>ESO</b>	Education Standards Officer
<b>MESTVEE</b>	Ministry of Education, Science, Vocational Training and Early Education
<b>SITE</b>	Step into English
<b>TOP</b>	Theory of Performance

## CHAPTER ONE: INTRODUCTION

### 1.0 Background

Given the importance of the English Language as a subject, it is advisable and perhaps, demanding that secondary school learners perform well in it. The fact that the English Language is the language of instruction in the Secondary School Curriculum in Zambia necessitates the need to assess the factors that affect the low performance by Grade nine learners in the subject.

Oluwole (2008) asserts that the English Language as a subject, is important and as such, students are required to perform well in it. However, statistics of results from National Examination Analysis for Mulobezi District reveal that year in year out, only fewer than thirty percent of candidates who sit for the English Language in this very important examination, pass with a credit or a distinction.

Thought (2011), states that some students buy their books but do not make effective use of them. He adds that most parents and teachers of other subjects who are seen as models by students often discuss with them the wrong English. He also states that there are cases of teachers who commit unpardonable errors when they are teaching. Some of the parents who are university graduates make such mistakes as “**stop making noise**” “**off the light**” “**so, therefore**” when interacting with their children and hence learners generally take such wrong expressions for correct ones and they go a long way to affect their performance in their English language examination (Holec 1981).

According to Tami-Martin (2004), to be able to get good and excellent results from the national examination, grade nine learners must be exposed to the English language at the early stage and regular intervals of their educational setup. Miroslava (2011) added that the English language serves as a unifying force amongst Zambians. He adds that English is the language of the press and the professionals and as such, English helps people to travel all around the world without any difficulty of interaction.

However, Fema (2003) pointed out that the English language of learning has been a problem in many countries especially those that use other languages other than English as the official one. Spira and others (2008) further pointed out that, a tautly large proportion of discussion on educational issues in Zambia is focused on the problem of failing students in the

performance of the secondary schools and country on the problem of falling standards. They contend that this is a result of the inability to read and follow simple instructions due to the weak/ poor performance of learners in English language.

It is stated in the national policy on Education that English is the medium of instruction throughout secondary school. However, this is not the case at the primary level. Primary is considered to be a foundation of education and as such, if the foundation is poorly constructed, then it's very difficult for learners to catch up when they graduate from grade four (4) to five (5) where English is adopted as a medium of instruction. The difficulties in most cases continue even when they graduate from primary to secondary level hence; this largely affects the performance of learners in English and other associated subjects (Mbozi 2008). Associated with students' poor performance from various school areas, Ellis (1994), posits that students in secondary school may have difficulties in using the language with adequate performance of the Secondary Schools.

The general performance of learners has received attention from various researchers but little is done in terms of singling out subjects in question. Even though English is singled out, much of the research is done in the general contexts of the subject. The big chunk that consists of English paper, composition writing has received no particular attention on the research part hence the gap.

### **1.1 Statement of the Problem**

Nyambe (2019) conducted a study on the general low academic performance of learners in some schools in various places in Southern province. Mbozi, (2008) also did carry out a study of classroom factors that affect the academic performance of learners. The studies were conducted on selected Primary and Secondary Schools in Southern and Western Provinces respectively. However, there is seemingly a gap that needs to be filled up especially concerning the low academic performance of Grade nine learners in English Language composition writing. Reviewing academic periods from 2016 to 2019, examination analysis shows a low pass rate in the district in English. This is evidenced by the Mock Examination Results Analysis and National Examination Results Analysis of the Grade nine learners of sampled Public Secondary Schools in Mulobezi District. Learners still exhibit poor writing skills especially when it comes to self-expression in English through writing. Indeed learners find it a challenge to express themselves effectively well even in other subjects which require

them to write essays and other related academic tasks. This has negatively affected their performance not only in the English Language but also in other subjects (Harmer, 2004).

Indeed, there is a need to study the factors that affect the low academic performance of Grade nine learners in the English language. For instance, after analyzing the Grade nine repeaters who sit for English examination, the situation proved to be more prevalent than in any other subject. In 2019 alone, the district had an increase in external examination candidates' registration. Out of the total candidates, 75% were sitting for English. The high number of repeaters in the English language subject is indicative that there is a need to study the issues affecting the high number of non-first examination candidates. This is so because 40% of the English examination comes from composition writing. It is, therefore, necessary to study this component as it represents the highest chunk of the paper.

## **1.2 Purpose**

It was hoped that the study would generate the information on the unsatisfactory academic performance of Grade nine learners in the English Language as indicated on the Examination Results Analysis for the district. The findings of the study might also help in bringing about improvement on efficiency and effectiveness in the management of institutions of learning for promotion of better performance of Grade nine (9) learners in the English Language in Public Secondary Schools of Mulobezi District. It might also add value to the existing literature on educational administration, decision-makers, researchers, the Examination Council of Zambia (ECZ), and other stakeholders with regards to the low academic performance of Grade 9 learners not only in Mulobezi but perhaps, in other districts and provinces of Zambia.

## **1.3 Main Objective**

The general objective of the study is to investigate the causes of low academic performance in English language composition writing among Secondary School Grade 9 - learners in Mulobezi District.

## **1.4 Specific Objectives:**

1. Ascertain the extents of Grade nine learners' performance in the English language and how it affects other subjects.

2. Ascertain the extent to which Grade nine learners' performance in the English language affects the general performance of learners in Grade 9 promotion examination.
3. To determine the factors responsible for poor performance in the English language among Secondary School Grade 9 students in Mulobezi District.
4. To determine measures that will reduce Grade 9 students' poor performance in the English Language in Mulobezi District.

### **1.5 Research Questions**

The study seeks to answer the following questions:

1. What are the pass rates of Grade 9 students in the English Language in Mulobezi District?
2. What are the factors responsible for the poor performance of Grade 9 students in the English language in Mulobezi District?
3. What are the possible measures for reducing students' poor performance in the English Language in Mulobezi District?
4. Is the experience of the teacher of English a factor in the performance of learners?

### **1.6 Theoretical Framework**

This study was guided by one framework of Performance theory propounded by a scholar called Cain. Cain and Cain (1997) explained that the Theory of Performance (TOP) develops and relates six foundational concepts to form a framework that can be used to explain performance as well as performance improvements. The two scholars stipulated that to perform is to produce valued results. They also observed that a performer can be an individual or a group of people engaging in a collaborative effort. Developing performance is a journey, and the level of performance describes the location in the journey. Henceforth, this theory could rightly be applied to this study to find other alternatives which might help in exploring some interventions to the low academic performance of Grade nine learners in English Language composition writing and other related areas of academic writing in selected Public Secondary Schools of Mulobezi District in Western Province of Zambia.

In light of the above explanation, the study utilized the performance theory. This is so because this theory urges learners to explore the possibilities of performance for creating,

knowing and staking claims to the world. Cain and Cain (1997) add that performance consists of both behavioral and outcome-based aspects. The current level of performance holistically depends on 6 components: context, level of knowledge, level of skills, level of identity, personal factors and fixed factors. For the current level of performance to improve, three axioms are proposed; these involve a performer's mindset, immersion in an enriching environment and engagement in reflective practice. The six (6) components are described below in the table:

<b>Component</b>	<b>Description</b>
<b>Level of Identity</b>	As individuals mature in a discipline, they take on the shared identity of the professional community while elevating their uniqueness.
<b>Levels of Skills</b>	Skills describe specific actions that are used by individuals, groups or organizations in multiple types of performances.
<b>Level of Knowledge</b>	Knowledge involves facts, information, concepts, theories, or principles acquired by a person or group through experience or education.
<b>Context of Performance</b>	This component includes variables associated with the situation that the individual or organization performs in.
<b>Personal Factors</b>	This component includes variables associated with the personal situation of an individual.
<b>Fixed Factors</b>	This component includes variables unique to an individual that cannot be altered.

### **Performer's Mindset**

Performer's mindset includes actions that engage positive emotions. Examples include setting challenging goals, allowing failure as a natural part of attaining high performance and providing conditions in which the performer feels the right amount of safety.

## **Immersion**

Immersion in a physical, social and intellectual environment can elevate performance and stimulate personal as well as professional development. Elements include social interactions, disciplinary knowledge, active learning, emotions (both positive and negative), and spiritual alignment. The section on ***Creating Quality Learning Environments*** outlines strategies for fostering immersion.

## **Reflective Practice**

Reflective practice involves actions that help people pay attention to and learn from experiences. Examples include observing the present level of performance, noting accomplishments, analyzing strengths and areas for improvements, analyzing and developing an identity, and improving levels of knowledge. The section on ***Assessment*** offers a variety of strategies for cultivating reflective practice.

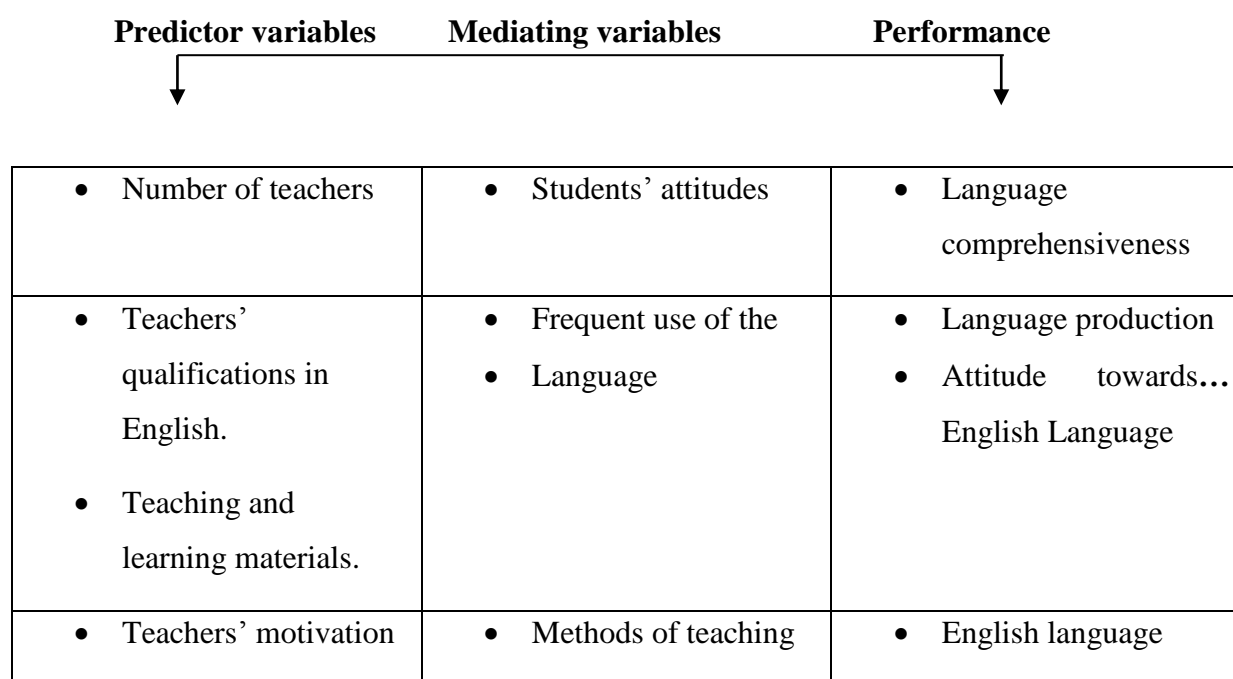
Conditions for optimal performance and improvements in performance can be synthesized in three axioms: ***Axiom 1***—engages the performer in an optimal emotional state (*performer's mindset*). ***Axiom 2***—*immerses* the performer in an enriching environment. ***Axiom 3***—engages the performer in *reflective practice*. It is, therefore, a suitable theory to be applied to the study of the performance of learners in English composition writing as all the components and axioms can be applied to the learners, if factors that affect low performance in the mentioned subject are to be identified.

## **1.7 Conceptual Framework**

Miles and Huberman (2008) referred to the term conceptual framework as a plan that shows or explains either diagrammatically or in narrative form, the main things to be studied. Therefore, the conceptual framework of this study would spell out the key factors or concepts to be used and the presumed relationship among them. Henceforth, the conceptual framework for this study was formulated from the literature which was reviewed and the concepts used in the theoretical framework.

The conceptual framework in this study is based on Roger's (1981) model of evaluation because of its suitability in the process of language learning and teaching. This is so because it was useful in examining the interdependence of variables, teaching, and learning process to

students' performance in the English Language. The model consists of three items. These include predictor variables, mediating variables and performance. According to Roger (1981), predictor variables and mediating variables influence greatly students' performance. The model summarizes the idea contained in the model that if the predictor variables and mediating variables are of high quality, then the teaching and learning process would produce a good performance in language comprehension and attitudes towards English.



The above model examines the relationship between variables of teaching and learning process with performance in the English language. It was anticipated that if there were enough and well-qualified teachers to teach English Language and availability of teaching and learning materials, then they would perform better. Besides, if they had the motivation to teach the language, then students would perform better because teachers were the ones who determined students' success. The study also assumed that if the school environment especially classroom and home environment were conducive to students' learning, then they would contribute to high performance not only in English but also in other subjects taught in English hence high performance.

Roger (1981) asserts that performance in the English Language refers to a level of mastery in terms of comprehension, production and attitudes towards the subjects. On one hand, it was anticipated that when predictor variables and mediating variables were favorable, then the level of performance would be high while on the other hand, when they were of low quality, then performance would suffer.

Cohen (1998) argues that it was expected that students' attitudes towards the language they learn, could predict their academic performance. He also adds that students' frequent use of the language inside and outside classrooms would influence the level of performance in the language they learn.

### **1.8 Delimitations**

This study was conducted within the District of Mulobezi, Western Province, Zambia.

### **1.9 Limitations**

The study was conducted only in few selected Public Secondary Schools of Mulobezi District. As such, the findings of the study may not be representative of the province or the nation as a whole. This is so because the findings of the study may not be generalized to Western Province and perhaps, Zambia at large.

### **1.10 summary**

The chapter presented the background of the study, statement of the problem, purpose, specific objectives, research questions, theoretical framework, conceptual framework, delimitations and limitations of the study respectively. The next chapter presents Literature Review for the study.

## **CHAPTER TWO: LITERATURE REVIEW**

### **2.0 Overview**

This chapter presents the objective reviewing the literature related to the topic of factors causing low academic performance of grade nine (9) learners in English Composition Writing in selected public secondary schools. Additionally, the chapter reviews the causes of low academic performance of learners and achievement from other written sources and studies conducted by other scholars within and outside Zambia. This concept of review of related literature has been defined as follows. Creswell (2012) defines the review of related literature as a scholarly paper which includes the current knowledge, substantive findings, theoretical and methodological contributions to a particular topic. Additionally, Thought (2011) explains that a review of related literature is a type of review article mainly associated with academic oriented literature. Henceforth, literature in this study has been discussed in line with contributing factors to low academic performance of grade nine learners in English language in public schools and strategies that help to improve the learner academic performance.

Chapter two reviewed what other researchers have argued on the factors that lead to the low academic performance of learners in the English Language; in the macro aspect of writing and when it is a second language. The literature review was carried out to cover all literature regarding the English language. To capture the current state of research, various articles were reviewed as written by different scholars (Legotho, et al., 2004). To make sure all relevant studies were located, the researcher searched for the use of the various derivatives of Low academic performance in the subject, title, keywords or abstract. Having eliminated articles within which “low academic performance” was discussed, but the English language was not the focal subject, 64 articles were found.

Further elimination was done in the literature where composition writing was not the study topic in the 64 papers bringing the number to 26 papers. The kinds of literature picked had a wide view of the world, Africa, and narrowed down to Zambia. Most papers that had extensively researched on the low performance of learners in English with composition as a component were from outside Zambia. Further, very few papers were found that had studied on the low performance of learners in English composition writing. Additionally, out of seven (7) papers that were found in Zambia, only two (2) were conducted on the junior secondary school learners. The arguments discussed centered on the objective proposed

which is: factors that cause the low academic performance of Grade nine learners in English Language composition writing. It narrowed the discussion to the study area which in this case is Mulobezi.

Through the reading of different materials, the low performance of English seems to be associated with low teaching and learning motivation. Low motivation in English acquisition can be derived from the fact that out of the classroom, English serves no purpose as the community around the school environment does not use English Danladi (2013). Therefore, the motivation for English acquisition is low. This can snowball to other effects causing low confidence in the use of English among teachers and the students themselves Danladi (2013). Family's financial and educational background is also an issue worth considering. Compared to urban parents, parents in Mulobezi have the low financial ability as almost all of them work primarily as farmers. Excluding financial help from various governmental agencies and support, parents in these areas do not have the means to support their children. This can be translated into not being able to support their children in buying extra learning materials that can help learners in the English language and hence improve in their writing skills compared to parents from the urban schools.

Besides that, parents' low educational attainment implies that they also cannot support their children in learning from home, Kelly et al (2000). Therefore, learning is relegated to teachers and that can only happen in schools. Lastly, the teacher factor also plays an important role. In Zambia, teacher turnover is high. Experienced teachers often transfer back to urban areas thus taking their precious experience of teaching English to another school. To counter that, new teachers are posted in rural areas but they don't have the experience to teach English effectively. Some teachers are also lowly motivated when they are posted to these rural schools and that can be carried into the classroom, rendering the teaching and learning process of English ineffective.

In addition to the above literature, other scholars also talked about factors considered to be contributing toward poor performance in the English Language among secondary school learners. Among contributing factors to poor performance according to some scholars were reviewed as follows:

## **2.1 Dominance of mother tongue**

Oluwole (2008) was of the view that students are surrounded by complex linguistic situations that force them to learn their first indigenous language and they are required to have a good command of the English Language. He further argued that the policy on education stressed the use of the immediate language of the community instruction at the lower level of primary education and the combination of English and language of the immediate community at the upper part of primary education. In other words, the policy recommended the use of the mother tongue in teaching a primary level. This situation contributes immensely to poor learning of the English Language right from primary school and it extends to secondary school.

Fema (2003) was of the view that the major cause of the errors in English can be attributed to the interference of the mother tongue with the English language. He added that students often use the Native language or mother tongue in all their interactions and English is used within the four walls of the classroom and ends there henceforth the above situation clearly shows the dominance of the mother tongue and its effects on the performance of pupils in the English language with focus on composition writing.

## **2.2 Inadequate Qualified Teachers of English**

Adedokun (2011) also asserts that inadequate qualified teachers cause poor performance in the English language in our secondary schools. Due to the above-mentioned cause in some schools, other subject teachers are forced to teach the English language and some who even read it, exhibit poor abilities in oral and written expression of it. He added that with this kind of situation, teachers can never effectively teach and as such, have poor performance from their products. He was of the view that poorly trained and untrained teachers of English were employed to teach and prepare secondary school students for the school certificate examination in the English language. On his claims, this situation contributed immensely to poor performance in the English language among secondary school students and it is clear that inadequate qualified teachers in our secondary schools, leads to poor performance in the English language. Indeed this seems to be the case of some selected public secondary schools in Mulobezi District.

### **2.3 Inadequate Infrastructural facilities and Instructional media**

Roger (1981) asserts that inadequate infrastructural facilities and instructional media are regarded as another cause of poor performance in the English language in our secondary schools. He was of the view that structural material and facilities are an important part of the process of learning as they provide practice and feedback in the learning track. According to him, in our present-day secondary schools, particularly public ones, students are in most cases sitting on the floor and window-seals during lessons. In some cases, students are learning under trees or dilapidated classrooms. In addition to that, even where there are enough classes, they are overcrowded and language laboratories are lacking. All these cannot allow for proper learning of the English language and other subjects hence lead to poor performance.

Miroslava (2011) was of the view that teaching and learning take place effectively when classes, are moderated, but the present-day mulobezi classes are overpopulated with students over 40 and this cannot allow for proper teaching and learning. On the other hand, in the area of instructional resources or media, there is the dominance of textbooks, dictionaries, workbooks and posters in the teaching of the English language in a secondary school in Zambia. He added that modern media such as audio, videotapes, language laboratories, programmed texts, flashcards, computers, magazines and newspapers are rarely used.

Mohammad (2002) observed that the teaching of the English language is believed with many problems such as inadequate periods of teaching, lack of adequate teaching methods and lack of adequate and useful resources. He added that it is clear to us that, those inadequate infrastructural facilities leading to large class sizes and inadequate, as well as obsolete latching resources or media, lead to poor performance in the English language in our secondary schools.

### **2.4 Teachers' Attitude Toward Technology and use of Instructional media**

Mulopo, (2010) assets that most of the secondary school teachers of the English language fail to take into account the dynamic nature of English Curriculum but they continued to bore students with definitions and drills in grammar, vocabulary and speech work. The traditional content knowledge-oriented teaching is still very much practised by them.

Knowles, et al (2015) was of the opinion that teachers mostly prefer to use traditional ways of teaching which they have been familiar with or as they were taught, which do not

necessarily aid poor learning. He categorically said that successful achievement of stated objectives in teaching and learning is always associated with using the right technique. He asserts that it is clear to us that the poor attitude of teachers toward innovation and the use of instructional media or materials in teaching the English language leads to poor performance among secondary schools.

## **2.5 Negative Attitude of Learners Toward English Language.**

Spira, et al (2008) points out that students, particularly in secondary and primary schools, mostly show a negative attitude toward learning of the English language because they consider it foreign or not theirs. He added that most students put a land of negative attitude in learning and use of the English language as well as making teachers' task a difficult one indeed. According to them, it is obvious that for any student to be proficient in the English language, mastering of skills of listening, speaking, reading and writing is necessary, and it requires hardworking and dedication from the students. Therefore, it is clear that the negative attitude of students toward learning the English language is one of the causes of poor performance in the English language.

## **2.6 Improper use of Teaching Methods**

Legotho, et al (2004) asserts that it is obvious that successful teaching and learning take place when right teaching methods are used by the teachers. He was of the view that successful achievement of stated objectives in teaching and learning is always associated with using the right method. Sometimes teachers of the English language do not consider the learner's age, the topic, the time and background of the learner in choosing the method to be used in teaching and this affects the level of learning of the students. Therefore, it is clear that a teacher's inability to use proper teaching methods contributes to poor learning of English language among secondary students.

## **2.7 English Language Learning and Teaching in the Classroom**

Berliner, (2005) in his view asserts that the teaching and learning process involves two active participants in the classroom, the teacher and learner, and that language learning does not fall entirely on the teacher. He gave an instance quoting Uuzo (2010) "it is through interactions with each other that teachers and students work together to create intellectual and practical activities that shape both the form and the content of the target subject. However, such a

situation is not commonly found in secondary schools in all subjects due to the fact that the lecture method dominates the teaching and learning process which leads to passive learning. He further stated “when I hear, I forget. When I see, I remember and when I do, I learn.” According to him, learning in which students are interactive, produces a little more effective participation in a class. This means that the effectiveness of English language learning and teaching in the classroom will depend upon the educational report and performance of the teacher. This idea concurs with Berliner, (2005) in that successful teaching and quality of student learning is closely related to the teacher’s knowledge and understanding of the English language.

Muchimba, (2010) asserts that the teachers of the English language are a figure in the language course and literature indicates clearly that it is the teacher who sets the tone for learning activities. Cookson, (1998) asserts that sign to teach is to communicate competence. He also adds that a teacher must be knowledgeable in English itself so that he/she can make a useful decision regarding what should be taught, to whom and how the teaching should be done. According to him, among the factors that lead to students’ poor performance, are qualities of teachers. He adds that empirical studies show that if early years at the school fail to provide the right foundation for learning, then no amount of special provision at later stages will be able to achieve the full potential of the child in terms of how he will proceed, and how beneficial his attitude towards his future life and learning will be.

According to Berliner (2005), teaching material is very important in the whole process of teaching and learning to any subject. This is so because they make learning more pleasant to the students as they offer a reality of experience, which stimulates self-activity and imagination on the part of the students. Mbozi, (2008) noted that authentic materials enable the student to explore the language used in day to day life and which is tailored to their needs and interests.

Jarvis, (2011) reported that the provision of teaching and learning materials especially books is an effective way of improving results, and reveals out that in many countries, conditions are difficult, whether they relate to the physical states of schools or the changing characteristics of the students' population.

## **2.8 Attitude of Language Learning**

Brown (2000) acclaims that attitude refers to the sets of beliefs that the learner holds towards members of the target group and also towards his own culture. To him, English language

attitude is an important concept because it plays a key role in language learning, as researchers assert about attitudes and motivation as determinant factors in English learning.

Kombo and Tromp (2006) generally agreed that positive attitudes facilitate the learning process, though attitude does not determine the behavior. According to them, in education, attitude is considered both as input and output. Attitudes have a positive correlation with success in learning the second language because they facilitate learner's motivation to learn the language. They added that individual attitudes towards the language that they learn, meet important needs as they satisfy certain functions such as achieving high grades in English Language Examination.

## **2.9 Motivation and Language Learning**

Malambo (2012) states that motivation is the most used concept for explaining failure or success of a learner. He adds that motivation has been regarded as one of the factors that influence performance of students in English language, for instance, Malambo (2012) reported: "students with higher levels of motivation will do better than the students with lower levels." He further added that "if one is motivated, he/she has reasons (motives) for engaging in the relevant activities.

In other development, Leedy and Ormrod (2009) see motivation as an integral state that arouses to action, pushes us in particular directions, and keeps us engaged in certain activities.

They added that learning and motivation are equally essential for performance and they enable us to acquire new knowledge and skills. Furthermore, motivation provides the impetus for showing what we have learned, and that more motivated people achieve higher levels. However, Harmer (2004) cautioned that motivation that brings students to the task of learning English could be affected and influenced by the attitude of a number of people.

Malambo (2012) asserts that in teaching, motivation is one of the factors that influence success or failure in learning a language, particularly a second language or foreign language. In the same light, he argued that if students do not want to learn, their learning efficiency will be shown such that they may learn virtually nothing, and if you know how to motivate students, you can highly increase their learning.

Miroslava, (2011) in his claim apart from motivation and attitudes, says researches show clearly that the home environment has a part to play in student's poor performance in the English language.

## **2.10 Summary**

The researcher reviewed the literature of this study under the following aspects: conceptual framework, Bloom's model of Evaluation in English language learning, the theoretical framework under Steven Krashen's theory of second language acquisition. However, the concept of the English language in Zambia and Mulobezi, in particular, was reviewed with cognizance of the role of the English language in Zambia. In the same vein, the concept of attitude was also reviewed paying attention to most scholars' views on attitudes. Finally, Bloom's model of the evaluation was used because of its suitability in the process of language learning.

## **CHAPTER THREE: METHODOLOGY**

### **3.0 Overview**

The methods that were used were divided into the following sub-sections: the first section describes the Research design, Study site, Study population, Study sample, sampling technique and Research instrument while the last one focuses on data collection procedure, data analysis, ethical considerations and research plan. This is a very important section as it attempts to clarify the research methods chosen and how they intend to address the research questions. It also explains why some methods were preferred to others.

### **3.1 Research Design**

A research design is a structure of the study that holds together all-important elements of the research. In this study, the researcher used a qualitative methodology. Being an exploratory study that aims at gathering primary information that could be used in subsequent researches, and arising from the need to describe the phenomenon of “low academic performance of grade nine learners in the English Language during examinations at national level” in a detailed and holistic manner, the descriptive case study design was the most preferred in achieving the set goals (MOE, 2009).

The stated descriptive research design was chosen because it is considered to be appropriate in analyzing descriptive data. MOE, (2009) noted that descriptive methods become effective when it comes to describing situations. Descriptive methods are ideal for collecting rich information to understand the prevailing situations and help make interpretations. Three main types of descriptive methods are observational methods, case-study methods and survey methods. Out of the three descriptive methods, this study settled for survey methods due to the use of the interview guides.

### **3.2 Study Site**

The study was conducted in the District of Mulobezi in Western Province and this included selected Public Secondary Schools only.

### 3.3 Population

The concentration of this study was targeted at some stakeholders such as Headteachers of Public Secondary Schools, Guidance and Counselling teachers as well as Grade nine teachers of the English Language. Others who were targeted are parents/ guardians of the grade nine learners as well as pupils in the selected Public Secondary Schools of Mulobezi District. The Education Standards Officer (ESO) - General Inspection at the District Education Board Secretary's Office was also part of the study.

### 3.4 Sample Size

Oppong, (2013) refers to the sample as the total number of subjects selected to participate in a given study. Usually, researchers are made to select a "sample" that is considered to be representative of people to whom results will be generalized or transferred. This study, therefore, covered the following: Four (4) public Secondary Schools which were purposively sampled from Mulobezi District. The schools were distributed as follows: two (2) Rural Public Secondary Schools and two (2) Remote Public Secondary Schools. Also, one (1) staff officer who happened to be the Education Standards Officer- General Inspection from District Education Board Secretary (DEBS)' office, two (2) Guidance and Counselling teachers from each selected public Secondary School which brings the total to eight (8) and eight (8) Grade nine teachers of English Language were sampled from the four selected Public Secondary Schools and at least a total number of sixteen (16) pupils participated in this study. Eight (8) parents/guardians of grade nine learners from both rural and remote selected public Secondary Schools were also involved to represent other members. Four (4) Headteachers were chosen thus, one from each selected school. The total number of participants in this study was forty-five (45).

**Summary of sample size is as indicated below:**

<b>TITLE</b>	<b>NUMBER OF PARTICIPANTS</b>
Head Teachers	4
Guidance and Counselling Teachers	8
Teachers of English Language	8
Pupils	16
Parents and Guardians	8
ESO-General Inspection from DEBS' Office	1
<b>Total</b>	<b>45</b>

### **3.5 Sampling Technique**

The sampling techniques which were used in this research were convenience sampling, purposive sampling and systematic sampling. These techniques were used to select the four Public Secondary Schools in Mulobezi District. Mugenda (2003) defines convenience sampling as a technique where the researcher selects particular items according to his/her convenience. The schools were conveniently sampled. The officials from DEBS' office and Schools were selected purposively. Additionally, Malambo, (2012) defines purposive sampling as a non-probability sampling technique in which the researcher chooses the sample based on his or her judgment about some appropriate characteristics of the sample members.

Furthermore, the Education Standards Officer- General Inspection was chosen not only as one of the supervisors of the school administration and someone in charge of the monitoring and implementation of education policy but also as someone in charge of Examinations and Education Standards respectively. Parents and guardians were selected based on their availability and willingness to be part of respondents visited in their respective localities so that the grade nine drop-outs could also add value to the study.

In terms of staff and teachers' experience, the study established that respondents represented three experience status that included 1-5 years, 6-10 years, and 11 years and above. As shown in figure 4.3, 6-10 years of experience constituted 52% of the respondents, 29% of 1-5 years, and 19% of 11years and above. Therefore, it indicates that the majority of the respondents were those that have been in service for more than 6 years but below or equal to 10 years.

### **3.6 Data Collection Instruments**

In this research, the information was gathered from a range of sources such as self-administered semi-structured individual interviews, focus group interviews and observations. A voice recorder was used during oral interviews to supplement effectively data capturing. The study also explored data collection through review and analysis of documents and records (MOE, 2015).

### **3.7 Validity and Reliability**

For efficiency, the researcher was always evaluating the measures which were in qualitative research. The criteria such as trustworthiness and authenticity were developed as viable

standards for measuring validity and reliability by qualitative method design researchers. Creswell (2012) observed that in qualitative research, the researcher is the data gathering instrument.

### **3.8 Data Collection Procedure**

In this study, the data-collection techniques are methods that allowed the researcher to systematically collect information about objects of study. These included: people, objects, phenomena, and about the setting in which they occur. Leedy and Ormrod (2009) assert that data in a qualitative study takes a great deal of time. As such, the researcher would record any potentially useful data thoroughly, accurately, and systematically using field notes, audiotapes, sketches, photographs, or any other suitable means. Triangulation strategy was used to overcome challenges of validity and biases in the selected two (2) rural and two (2) remote Public Secondary Schools in the District of Mulobezi.

As a qualitative researcher, there was a need to jot down notes about the initial interpretations of what one would be seeing and hearing to collect data. As such, different techniques were used for this study. Kombo and Tromp (2006) explained that the use of different techniques in exploring a research question is called triangulation. The basic idea of triangulation was to allow data to be obtained from a wide range of different and multiple sources, using a variety of methods. Kombo and Tromp (2006) noted that triangulation is a strategy that is used to overcome problems of validity and biases.

In this study, the researcher used three types of data collection techniques. These included: one-to-one interviews, focus group interviews and document analysis. The interviews assisted the researcher in understanding the perceptions which the interviewees have on the professional relationship between school managers and other stakeholders regarding the low academic performance of grade nine learners in the English Language and other related areas of academic writing in selected Public Secondary Schools of Mulobezi District. Furthermore, focus group interviews also assisted the researcher in collaborating ideas that were expressed in one-to-one interviews in that the respondents were given that opportunity to agree and disagree on how the relationship between school managers and grade nine teachers of English Language affects the low academic performance of grade nine learners in the English Language. In this respect, the researcher facilitated the discussion (MOE, 2010).

A researcher in this study administered a semi-structured interview guide to the school managers, guidance and counseling teachers, and parents and selected grade nine teachers of English Language in some selected Public Secondary Schools. The Education Standards Officer- General Inspection was also administered with a semi-structured interview guide. Interviews with school managers and grade nine teachers of English Language were recorded on a voice recorder and transcribed after the interview.

### **3.9 Data Analysis**

In this study, qualitative data were analyzed using inductive approaches. In Inductive approaches, the research methods are used to analyze an observed event. Tables were produced for a more comprehensive presentation. Therefore, the researcher grouped data, presented data, and categorized; with each category being explained as a qualitative narrative. The final stage was the interpretation of data and linking the findings of the research to the literature and from the researcher's interpretation mainly based on the data collected (Kolo, 1992).

The stage at which information is processed is called data analysis. This simply means that the information that was collected in the form of raw was processed so that it could make sense. Tabachnick and Fidell (2007) noted that analysis of data is a process of inspecting, cleansing, transforming, and modeling data to highlight useful information, suggesting conclusions and supporting decision making. Data analysis has multiple facets and approaches, encompassing diverse techniques under a variety of names.

In processing the data of this study, a unidirectional approach was used. Since the study is qualitative, the analysis was also positioned heavily on the qualitative approach. As such, a thematic analysis was employed to analyze the collected data set. Kombo and Tromp (2006), state that thematic analysis involves identifying major concepts or variables usually from the questions or objectives. As such, the bulk chunk of the gathered qualitative data was placed and analyzed under the identified themes and was appropriately coded to help develop summary reports according to the frequency with which the issues have emerged. Therefore, for reporting purposes, simple tables were produced. To aid the analysis, Microsoft excel and statistical package for social sciences (SPSS) were used.

In answering the research question posed, the data collected were analyzed using frequency tables and percentages (%).

Decision Rule: if any of the items are up to 50% and above, they would be accepted as a positive response, but below would not be accepted.

### **3.10 Ethical Consideration**

Kombo and Tromp (2006) state “the researchers whose subjects are people or animals must consider the conduct of their research, and give attention to the ethical issues.” Therefore, this research upheld the following ethical standards such as Respect for Persons where each participant was accorded maximum respect as they were treated as an autonomous agent. This entails that each participant was treated with the utmost confidentiality (Brown, 1988).

In this respect, the names of participants were kept anonymous and therefore, were not revealed under any circumstances. The decision to participate was voluntary and that participants had the right to withdraw from taking part in the research at any time they felt like. This was explained to each participant before each interview was conducted.

Further, Beneficence is also an ethical standard that was considered by the researcher to ensure that persons are not only treated ethically by respecting their decisions and protecting them from harm but also by making efforts to secure their well-being. It may be worth noting that such treatment falls under the principle of beneficence. The term “beneficence” is there to cover acts of kindness or charity that go beyond strict obligation. In this study, beneficence is understood in a stronger sense, as an obligation. This implies that the researcher ensured that the conduct of the research was not prejudicial to the interest of the participant.

The researcher was responsible for his work and his contribution to the whole study. The researcher was also accountable for the conduct of the research and as far as foreseeable, the consequences of the research in this study. Therefore, this is also an ethical consideration that was taken note of.

Informed consent is another ethical standard that was put into consideration. In this regard, the researcher ensured that participants were provided with sufficient information on the objectives and procedures of the research to enable them to give their informed consent to participate. Information was given in the language generally used and understood by the

participants in the area. In this light, all participants were expected to complete a consent form (Kombo and Orodho, 2002).

Additionally, another ethical consideration is Justice. In line with justice, the researcher ensured that participants' human rights were well respected, and where entitlements accrued, were distributed fairly. Acknowledgment of sources is also another ethical standard that was considered in this research. The researcher ensured that the information derived from secondary sources were appropriately quoted and acknowledged to avoid the element of plagiarism. Further, the researcher was open and honest in dealing with other researchers and research subjects. By implication, this entails that the researcher did not exploit subjects by changing agreements made with them. The researcher also fully explained the research in advance and debriefed those who would be involved in the study afterward. Although it has been noted that full explanation before the survey/experiments is essential to gaining informed consent, it is, on the contrary, a common practice for researchers to finalize their research without informing the subjects involved in anything about the results (Kombo and Tromp, 2006).

### **3.11 summary**

Chapter three presented overview, research design, study site, population, sample size, sample technique, data collection instruments, validity and reliability, data collection procedure, data analysis and ethical consideration in research. The next chapter focuses on presentation of findings of the study.

## CHAPTER FOUR: PRESENTATION OF FINDINGS

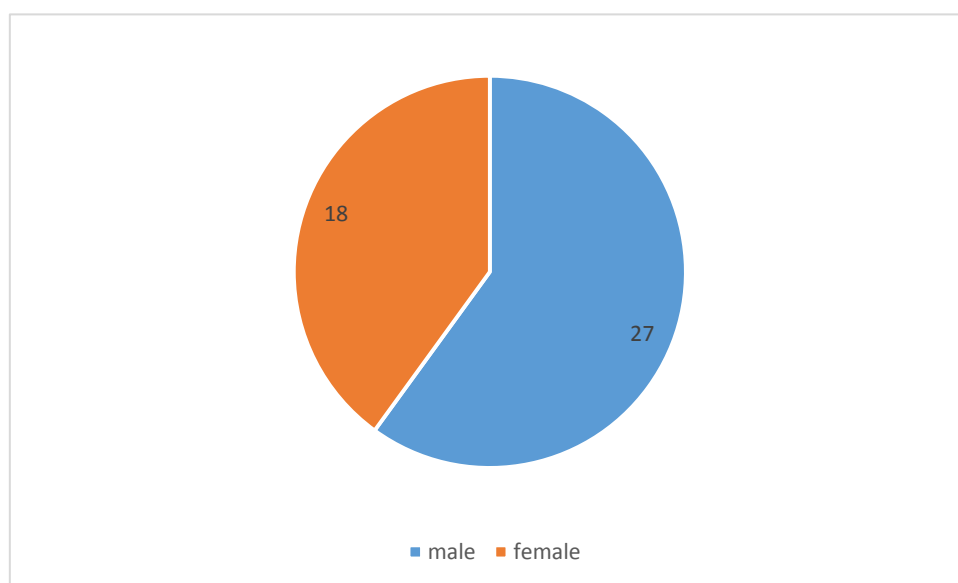
### 4.0 Overview

This section presents the findings of the study. It presents data as collected from selected public secondary schools in Mulobezi district to assess the factors that cause the low academic performance of Grade nine (9) learners in English language composition writing at grade nine examination level. The data was collected through interview guides which were guided by the research objectives and questions. The findings in this chapter were categorized based on the following research questions:

- a) What is the pass rate by Grade nine learners in the English language, in the district of Mulobezi?
- b) What led to the low academic performance of Grade nine (9) learners in the English language in the district of Mulobezi?
- c) What can be done to mitigate the low academic performance in the English language at Grade nine (9) level in the district of Mulobezi?
- d) How does the low performance in the English language affect the overall academic performance of Grade nine learners in Mulobezi District?

### 4.1 Gender of Respondents

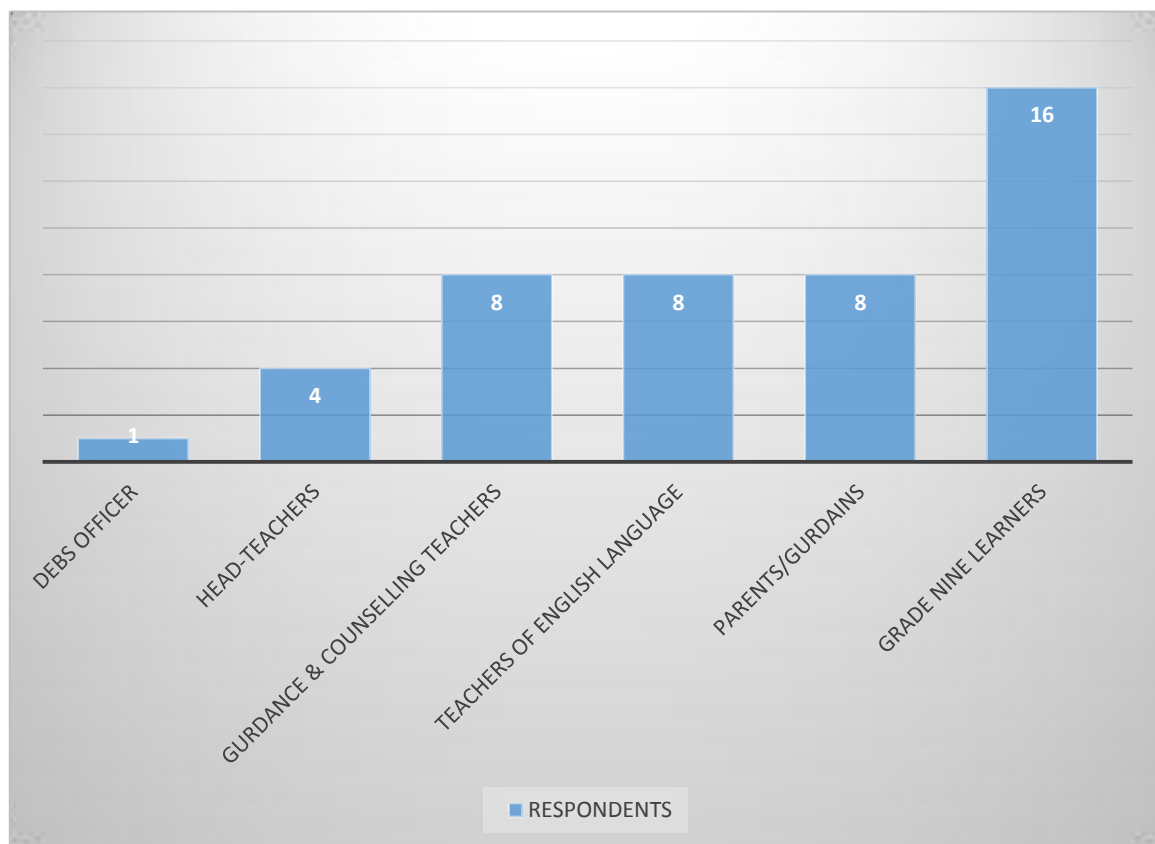
*Figure 1: Gender*



The study targeted several stakeholders, who included both males and females as shown in figure 1. The number of male grade nine learners was eight (8) and eight (8) female grade nine learners representing a balanced frequency. School staff and teachers that participated in the study comprised four (4) Headteachers, eight (8) teachers of English language, and eight (8) Guidance and Counselling teachers. Further, one (1) officer from the District Education Board and eight (8) parents and guardians took part in the study.

## 4.2 Respondents

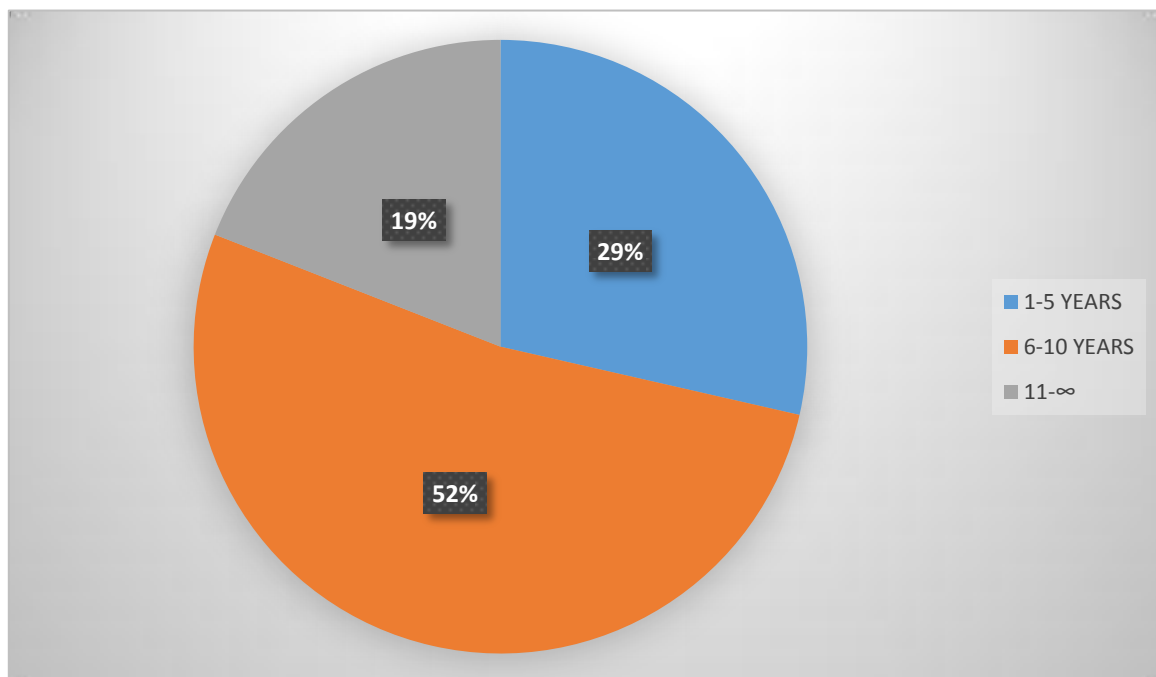
*Figure 2: Respondents*



The respondents were grouped in status cohorts to ascertain their representativeness across the school structure as shown in figure 2 above. 35% of the respondents were grade nine learners from the selected public secondary schools. Parents/guardians, Guidance and Counselling teachers, and teachers of English language represent, 18% each of the total sample sizes. DEBS' Officer and Headteachers, both had 02% and 08% respectively.

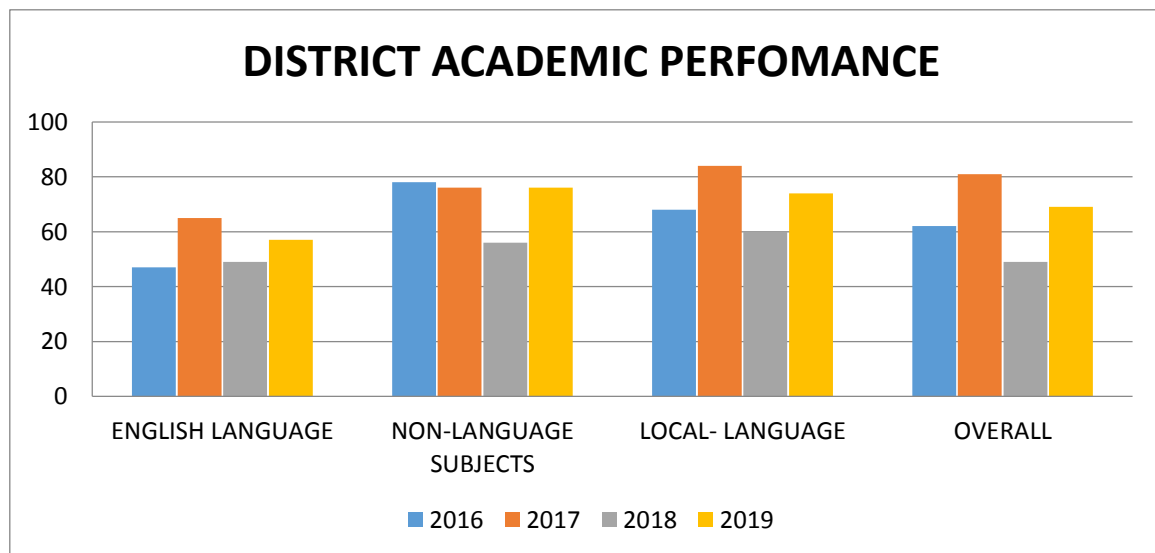
### 4.3 Years of Experience

*Figure 3: Experience*



### 4.4 District overall performance

*Figure 4: Overall Performance*



As shown in figure 4 above, the Overall District Academic Performance in the English language is lowest showing the lowest in 2016. Then followed by English related subjects, those subjects where English is used as the medium of instruction. Local language subjects

have been stable and consistent in terms of overall performance even recording the highest in 2017.

Low academic performance in the English language showed spill over in other subjects where instructions are given in the English language. This is so because the pass rate for other subjects was similar to the pass rate in the English language. This is with emphasis on Mathematics which requires someone to understand the instructions to effectively answer the questions. Below is the picture that shows the result analysis per subject.

**MULOBEZI SECONDARY SCHOOL**  
**2017 GRADE 9 MOCK EXAMS ANALYSIS PER SUBJECT**

SUBJECT	TOTAL SAT			ABSENT			TOTAL PASSED			GRADES												QNTY PASS %		
	B	G	T	B	G	T	B	G	T	'1			'2			'3			'4			B	G	T
MATHS	10	16	26	0	0	0	2	6	8	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	1	2	5	7	20	37.5	30.8
ENGLISH	10	16	26	0	0	0	3	9	12	0	0	0	0	1	1	0	3	3	3	5	8	30	56.3	46.2
INT.SCIENCE	10	16	26	0	0	0	3	4	7	0	0	0	1	0	1	0	1	1	2	3	5	30	25	26.9
S.STUDIES	10	16	26	0	0	0	3	9	12	0	0	0	1	0	1	0	3	3	2	6	8	30	56.3	46.2
B.STUDIES	10	16	0	0	0	0	2	7	9	0	0	0	1	1	2	1	2	3	0	4	4	20	43.8	34.6
R.E	9	16	25	1	0	1	9	16	25	0	1	1	3	8	11	4	4	8	3	1	4	100	100	100
C.STUDIES	10	16	26	0	0	0	5	9	14	0	0	0	2	0	2	1	2	3	2	7	9	50	56.3	53.8
H.E	4	7	11	0	0	0	4	7	11	0	3	3	1	3	4	3	0	3	0	1	1	100	100	100
SILLOZI	9	16	25	1	0	1	8	12	20	0	2	2	3	9	12	4	0	4	1	1	2	88.9	75	80

The above picture was the nature of the result analysis that was obtained from the selected schools. The importance of English was evident as there was a correlation in terms of performance in other subjects. This is as reflected in the above result analysis where for instance, Silozi and Home Economics recorded the highest pass rates. Home economics with 100% and Silozi with 80% pass rates whereas the English Language remained below average.

#### 4.5 Final Examination vs Mock Examination

*Figure 5: Final Examination vs Mock Examination*

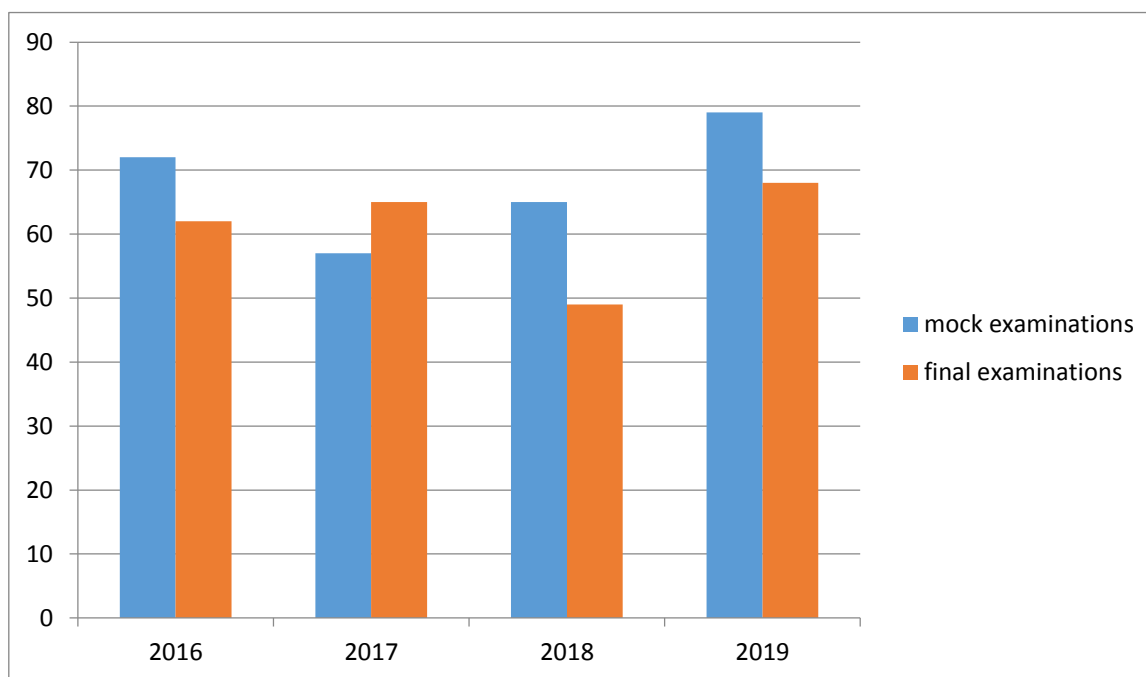


Figure 5 shows the deviation of district performance during the mock and final examinations. It is evident that during the Mock Examination, the district shows some good academic performance but when it comes to the National Examination, it performs poorly. This is with the exception in 2017 when the National Examination Percentage surpassed the Mock Examination Pass Rate.

**Table 1: Adequate facilities that support reading and writing**

INFRASTRUCTURE	YES	NO	% FREQUENCY
Library	2	2	50
Text Books	4	0	100
Classrooms	1	3	25
Study Halls	0	4	0
Learning Lounge	0	4	0
Language Room	0	4	0

Table 1 above shows the availability of facilities and infrastructure that support English language learning and which have a high impact on the academic performance of the learners.

#### 4.6 Intervention programmes and Strategies Implementation

*Figure 6: Strategies.*

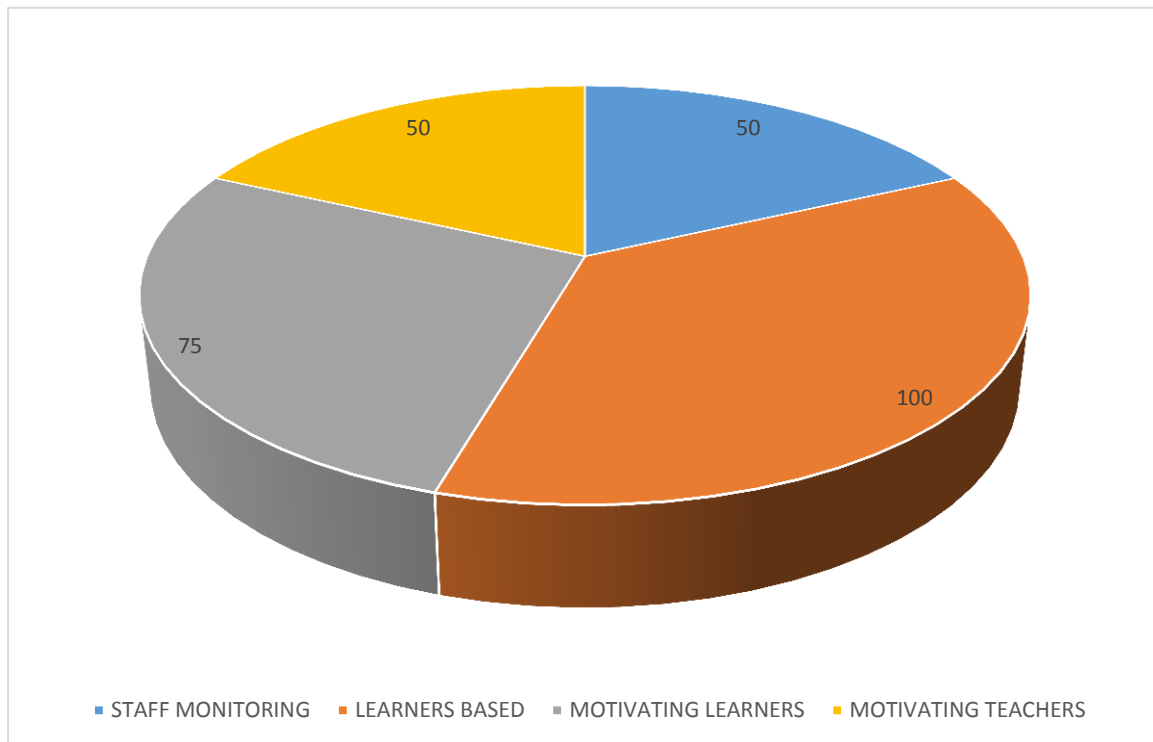


Figure 6 above shows the respondents who said the school has embarked on some intervention programmes and strategies to curb the low academic performances. 50% reported that learning interventions based programmes are employed and followed at their school. 56% reported that teachers' motivation programmes are implemented at their school and 78 % reported that learners' motivation programmes are employed at their school. More than 75% of schools implemented these programmes this year and 25% reported having the programmes running for over 3 years. Even though the strategies are not applied to teachers of English specifically, it is to be noted that teachers are no exception to the impact that the mentioned staff monitoring, motivation of teachers, and other programmes aimed at improving learners' overall performance. Hence, worth mentioning those programmes to be a factor and highlight them as such.

#### 4.7 Methods of teaching

*Figure 7: Methodology*

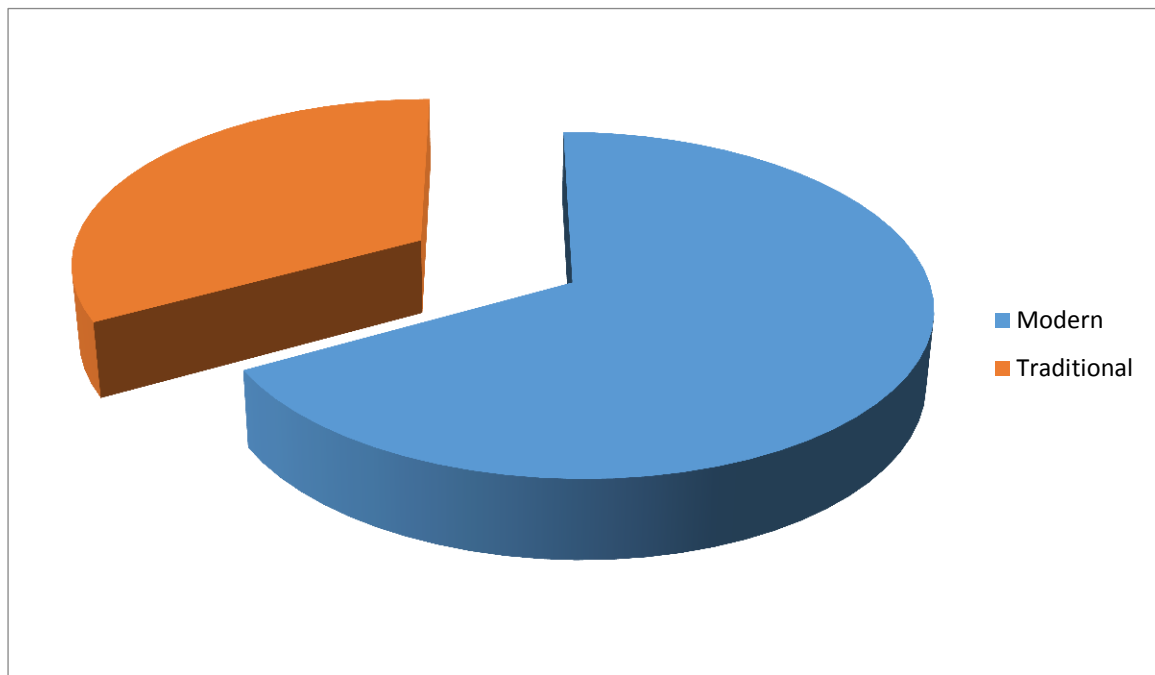


Figure 7 shows the respondents of school staffs who support the implementation of modern teaching methods and traditional teaching methods. 67% of respondents feel that modern methods have the capacity to transform the overall performance technology such as writing pads, while 33% feel that the traditional method is still the best method of teaching and learning. The use of modern technology and teaching aids is also another aspect that is reflected in the figure above, as 78% reported not to be able to use technology in class. The technology can excite learners and motivate them into learning and improve the writing skills.

## 4.8 Reading and writing culture

*Figure 8: Academic Clubs*

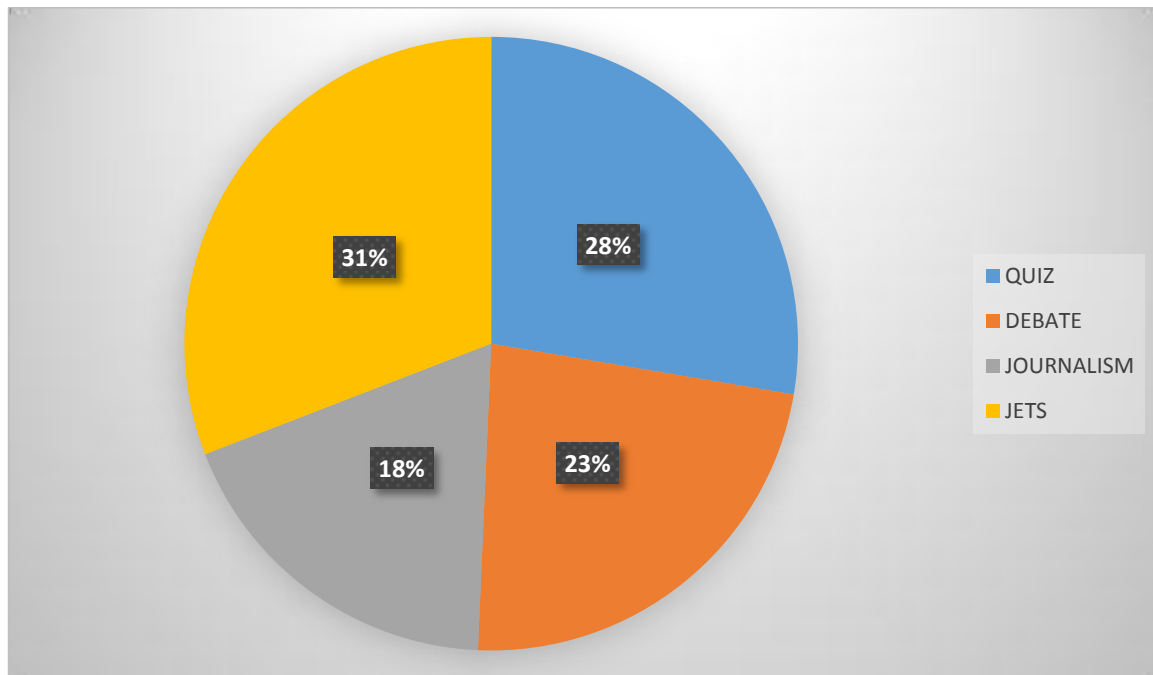


Figure 8 shows the percentages of grade nine learners who take part in various academic clubs and feel the clubs have a positive impact on their academic performances. The majority of respondents reported to be taking part in JETS with 31%, Quiz club came second with 28%, Debate and Journalism clubs came in third and fourth positions, each getting 23% and 18% respectively. Students who took part in the debate mostly showed a good command in the English language by answering interview questions and the report forms showed that they performed well in the English language composition writing.

## 4.9 summary

Chapter four covered presentation of findings under the following sub-headings: overview, gender of respondents, respondents, years of experience, district overall performance, final examinations versus mock examinations, intervention programmes and strategies implementation, methods of teaching as well as reading and writing culture. The next chapter looks at discussion of findings.

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

### **5.0 Overview**

This section presents the discussion of findings of the study from the data collected from the selected public secondary schools in Mulobezi district. The discussion will be based on the data presented in the previous chapter. The discussion will also refer to the information reviewed by the study from data collected through documents and interviews which was guided by the research objectives and questions. The research had five (5) objectives:

1. The importance of the English language.
2. Role that experience of teachers plays on academic performance.
3. The impact that exposure to national marking keys has on academic performance.
4. The role that reading and writing programmes play toward academic performance.
5. The importance of teachers' and learners' motivation.

### **5.1 Importance of English Language**

English as Language is nothing but a systematic means of communication through the use of words, symbols and sounds. In today's interconnected and globalized world, learning the English language has been a very important factor. It is one of the most widely spoken languages. It is considered to be the common international language when it comes to the field of education, business, trade and commerce. If one does not know how to speak in English, then he or she will surely fail to keep the pace of the progressive force of the world. Knowing English will certainly pave the way to better employment opportunities in today's competitive and changing world.

Imparting proficiency in the English language composition writing should begin right from the school level. As it is being said that the English language is being accepted worldwide, the students need to master this particular language. In a typical classroom especially in a non-native country, what happens is that the teacher takes lectures of classes on the vocabulary, grammar, tenses, and all such technicalities with their dull and dry drills. However, at the end of the day when it comes to write the language for real, the students may fail to even write the correct spelling of a word. The crux of this problem lies under the fact that it is to be understood that English is not just a subject; it is a skill subject and as such, it

should be learned in a different way to master it. The teachers must make it to a point to enlighten the learners' minds with the right way of learning the language.

The language could be better learned only if the students learn it right from their elementary classes. It is only then that a definite sequential pattern could be followed thereby which their communication skills could be improved. Hence, that is why it is said that the English language should be mandatorily taught right from the primary classes in school. A good foundation will certainly help the students to carve themselves into a person with better proficiency in the language in today's world.

It is very essential to lay a strong foundation as in most of the syllabi, the lessons in many subjects, are being written in the English language and henceforth the students need to understand the lessons clearly. In light of this, the overall performance of grade nine learners during national examination is mainly dependent on a good understanding of English as a language. The general aim of teaching English in schools is to develop various abilities among the students like understanding what is heard, understanding what is read, expressing ideas in speech correctly and expressing them in writing as well. Once a student can excel in these abilities, it could be understood that he or she will be in a state to communicate and write effectively.

Good English learning at the school level will help in making the students competent in this era of globalization. It will certainly help to bridge the communication gap between people of various countries and thereby bringing the whole world under one roof. It is high time that innovative and new breakthrough strategies for improving language learning methods are adopted by schools. Altogether it will help the students to speak the English language just like any other native speaker.

## **5.2 Comparison of Performance Per Subject**

From section A of this chapter, it was evident that in Mulobezi district, English over the years is still a challenge for grade nine learners. This was indicated by the percentage pass rates that were obtained in the English language compared to Local language subjects (Silozi). Local language performance during examination showed that every year, learners performed better in the local language with a consistent pass rate of over 50% and 2018 with an 82.5

pass rate. This is as opposed to the English language which proved below 50% at some shows.

### **5.3 Role that experience of teachers plays on student academic performance**

Another proposition of the research was the experience of teachers of English and other school staff and teachers. From the research, it was evident that the majority of respondents had more than 5-year experience. Only 29% of the respondents reported with less than 5 years' experience of teaching the English language as the subject. Further, 71% were staff members who have more experience. However, despite recording a good number of experienced staff members and teachers in the district, academic performance is low.

### **5.4 Exposure to national marking key**

The other proposition of the research was the lack of teachers' exposure to national marking keys in the district. This emerged as another leading factor to low academic performance. The proposition was supported by the research in figure 5 where it was evident by the deviation in performance during the mock and final examinations. The mock examination pass rates were always higher than during national examinations. This deviation can be partly connected to the lack of exposure to national marking keys because more than 50% of respondents reported having less to no experience of national marking programme by the Examination Council of Zambia. Hence, they fail to teach learners based on the national marking keys and in turn, expose learners to the national standard ways expected to answer examination questions. This, in turn, led to the low academic performance of learners during the final examinations. The low exposure to marking key was not only reported among teachers of English but also among other staff members. In this respect, Guidance and counseling teachers pointed the need to expose teachers to national marking keys to familiarise the learners with the standard ways of writing compositions.

The other concern came from the monitoring and inspection of teachers by both local School administrators and District officers. All the four schools selected in the district reported about the rare inspection by the District Education Officers to nearly once a year. Further, a good number of the respondents reported at least once per term of local school administrators' inspections. Inspection by both the district and local school administrators is vital in ensuring that teachers are using appropriate methodologies and implementing standards of teaching

and learning for effective outcomes. Low inspection leads to poor learners' performance in the district.

### **5.5 Reading and Writing Programmes**

Table 4.1 provided data that showed the availabilities of facilities that support reading and writing programmes. From the selected public secondary schools, 50% had library facilities and 50% reported having no library facilities. Textbooks for English were reported to be there, though not adequate for learning and reading purposes. 65 % of teachers reported that the new books that are being used in schools are full of grammatical errors and other errors which led to difficulties in learning and teaching. 75% of school staff and teachers reported a shortage of classroom blocks which led to over-enrolment in classes to accommodate huge numbers of pupils in the few available classes. Over enrolments is another factor that has a positive correlation with performance in that, 75% of teachers reported on difficulties in paying attention to the individual needs of learners which affects the performance of slow learners.

From the selected schools, none of them had the following facilities: study halls, learning lounge and language room. This is because of the inadequacy of classrooms. Study hall is a term for a place and/or time during the school day where students are assigned to study when they are not scheduled for an academic class. They can be used during prep times and other various activities by learners. Learning lounge refers to places where learners can interact with teachers and other learners on various academic aspects. They are effective in one-on-one interaction between learners and teachers, for clarifications on the part of learners and teachers to get a deeper understanding of learners' needs. Languages rooms are dedicated places where the language is learned not as a subject but as a skill for learners. They help learners to approach language in a friendly manner. Therefore, the absence of these facilities greatly affects the performance of learners not only in the English language but also in other subjects as the correlation between English and other subjects was already alluded to earlier.

The other concern was the lack of implementation of preps, journalism, debate, JETs and other academic clubs. 75% of selected schools have just recently implemented the introduction of the mentioned clubs this year and are working hard to intensify on the participation by learners in these clubs. From the data collected, a large number of learner respondents reported shunning away from journalism and debate club participation. They do

that without knowing that these are two clubs that promote reading and writing skills. Hence this shows that the negative attitude by learners towards the mentioned clubs has a positive correlation with low academic performance in the English language.

## **5.6 Teachers' and Learners' Motivation**

Another proposition was teachers' motivation; it was found in the literature review chapter that; learners' performance depends on the performance of teachers. Hence it is vital to assess the correlation of teachers' motivation and student performance. Motivation is defined as the experience of desire or aversion that you want something or you want to avoid or escape from something. As such, motivation has both an objective aspect, a goal, and thing you aspire to – and an internal or subjective aspect that is the personal desire to act in a certain way. The subjective aspect is the most important and this is derived by the desire by teachers to work hard and achieve good academic performance. This internal aspect is activated when the external factors are met. Hence, motivation comes in two forms which are intrinsic and non-intrinsic values. Teachers' motivation was reported to be low, as 80% of the respondents, reported having no motivation due to lack of intrinsic motivation factors. More than 50% of teachers live outside school compounds and they are forced to rent houses in nearby neighborhoods. Out of the total respondents, 35% reported to be walking a long distance to and from school, and this has an impact on the delivery of lessons. The low motivation is a general factor as it does not only apply to teachers of English only but even teachers of other subjects.

Also, about 40%, of respondents, have diplomas but are teaching at secondary school; hence they are entitled to responsibility allowances. Unfortunately, 100% of the teachers who are entitled to that allowance reported having not been receiving the allowance for months now. This also plays a major role in the motivation of teachers.

Another demotivation factor is the learners' attitudes toward school and the English language as a subject. Teachers of the English language reported a negative attitude by learners toward the English language. This was blamed mainly of the primary level teachers who fail to prepare learners for the second language. This is mainly due to the government policy which directs teachers to use more local language for a primary grade when teaching.

From the selected schools, only 25% reported having a programme to appreciate a teacher who produces good results and award them. Awarding of teachers is one of the motivating factors that were cited in the literature review chapter. Hence, the absence of this programme creates room for demotivation.

In this respect, not only do teachers need motivation but also learners. For instance, at a school level, 75% of respondents reported that in the past they never had motivation programmes for learners. Of the four (4) selected schools, all reported to have started implementing the programme last year and plan to intensify on the programmes such as career talks, award ceremonies and giving scholarships to best performers each term.

## **5.7 summary**

This chapter discussed findings of the study from the data collected from selected public secondary schools of Mulobezi district under the following sub-headings: overview, importance of English language, comparison of performance per subject, role that experience of teachers plays on student academic performance, exposure to national marking key, reading and writing programmes and above all, teachers and learners' motivation. The next chapter presents conclusions and recommendations of the study.

## **CHAPTER SIX: CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS**

### **6.0 Overview**

This chapter contains the conclusions and recommendations of the study. The chapter starts with the conclusions and proceeds to the recommendations. Under recommendations are suggestions for teachers of English and suggestions for future research respectively.

### **6.1 Conclusions**

There are a good number of factors inside and outside school that contribute to the quality of academic performance of grade nine learners in the English language. This study only focused on some of the factors within a school that influence the students' achievement scores in English composition writing. The key aspect for the educators is to educate their students effectively so that they may be able to show quality performance in their academics. To achieve this objective, educators must understand better the factors that may contribute to the academic success of grade nine learners in the English language. Given its importance to other subjects, teachers of the English Language must pay particular attention to the key factors that affect the academic performance of learners. The following, therefore, are the findings that the researcher made of this study: The first is that insufficient teaching and learning resources, non-availability of libraries, textbooks for English, and low staffing of teachers of English, adversely affected the quality of teaching and learning in public secondary schools.

The second is that insufficient and delayed funding contributed to the non-availability of the necessary infrastructure and school requisites to facilitate effective teaching and learning in public secondary schools. Besides, the low academic performance of learners in public secondary schools is a result of the kind of management and leadership styles that are practised in the ministry.

### **6.2 Recommendations**

To determine all the influencing factors in a single attempt is a complex and difficult task. It requires a lot of resources and time for an educator to identify all these factors first and then plan the classroom activities and strategies of teaching and learning. It also requires proper training, organizational planning and skills to conduct such studies or determining the

contributing factors inside and outside school. This process of identification of variables must be given full attention and priority so that the teachers may be able to develop instructional strategies for making sure that all the children are provided with the opportunities to arrive at their fullest potential in learning and performance.

In line with the findings, the following recommendations are made for the attention of Policymakers, Education officers and School managers:

### **6.2.3. Suggestions for teachers of English**

- i. Intensify on Reading and Writing Competitions to improve reading and writing skills of learners for improved academic performance.
- ii. Intensify on Debate for improved public speaking skills which will translate into improved reading and writing skills for better academic performance.
- iii. Encouraging learners to speak the English Language in school for a better understanding of the language which will translate into better academic performance.
- iv. Intensify on Press (Journalism) Club Activities for improved Speaking, Reading and Writing levels amongst learners.
- v. Exposing learners to Composition Writing Competitions and other related activities.
- vi. Intensify on the use of Past Examination Question papers to expose learners to examination related questions as a way of revising.
- vii. Stand in when the other teacher is out which should be done systematically to avoid confusion.
- viii. Teachers to identify slow learners by giving them the task of composition writing as they report to know how to handle them during their learning process.
- ix. Give pupils Weekend Assignments and make follow-ups.
- x. Provide Hands-on Assignments; incorporating various learning styles to ensure that all learners are involved.
- xi. Focus on achievement by setting high standards of classroom assessments and challenging learners to meet the requirements.

#### **6.2.4. Suggestions for Future Research**

Further research is needed in other Public Secondary Schools situated in both urban and rural areas to compare the results on contributing factors to the low academic performance of grade nine learners in these public educational institutions. There is also a need to assess community involvement in the running of Public Secondary Schools. Further studies should concentrate on leadership styles that encourage and motivate teachers by both the District Education Officers and School Headteachers.

#### **6.3 summary**

This chapter covered the conclusions and recommendations of the study. Firstly, it focused on the conclusions which were then followed by the recommendations. Further, the aspects which were covered under recommendations included suggestions for teachers of English and suggestions for future research. It is indeed imperative for teachers of English to take keen interest in the teaching of the subject for the educational progress of learners. Further research is also called upon to investigate measures that would help mitigate challenges affecting the teaching and learning of English language and other subjects. This would in turn, enhance the educational development of not only the local communities but the nation at large for socio-economic advancement.

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## APPENDICES

### Appendix 1: An Interview Guide For The Headteachers (ADMINISTRATORS)

#### Introduction

School.....Date.....Sex.....

I am a postgraduate student from the University of Zambia (UNZA) currently studying for a Master of Education in Educational Management. I am researching on the factors that cause low academic performance in the English language composition writing and the effect of the result on the overall performance of grade nine learners in selected public secondary schools in Mulobezi District of Western province of Zambia. Whatever information that I shall collect will be treated with the highest level of confidentiality and for academic purposes only.

1. How many teachers of the English language do you have in your school?
2. How many of these teachers, are degree, diploma, and certificate holders?
3. Do you feel that you have adequate infrastructure in your school?
4. How do you rate the relationship with your grade nine teachers of English Language?
5. When you look at the analysis of the results of your pupils, how would you describe their general performance?
6. Based on the past performance of the grade nine learners in English Language, what are some of the factors that led to the results obtained?
7. How often do you monitor the grade nine teachers, especially those who teach English Language?
8. Are the teaching and learning materials in your school sufficient?
9. Are there some pupils who are frequently absent from school? If so, what are the main reasons that they give?
10. How do you rate the academic performance of Grade nine teachers of English Language?
11. What reasons can you give for the academic performance of your Grade nine teachers of English Language?
12. How often do you receive funding?
13. Do you find the funding adequate or inadequate and if not, why?
14. Have you been trained in administration or managerial skills?

## **Appendix 2: An Interview Guide For The Grade Nine Class Teacher/S Of English Language**

### **Introduction**

**School.....Date.....Sex.....**

I am a postgraduate student from the University of Zambia (UNZA) currently studying for a Master of Education in Educational Management. I am researching on the factors that cause low academic performance in the English language composition writing and the effect of the result on the overall performance of grade nine learners in selected public secondary schools in Mulobezi District of Western province of Zambia. Whatever information that I shall collect will be treated with the highest level of confidentiality and for academic purposes only.

1. How many years have you been teaching at this school?
2. How can you describe your relationship with the school manager?
3. Does your relationship with your school manager affect the teaching and learning of grade nine learners?
4. What reasons can you give for your answer?
5. How can you describe your future interpersonal relationship with your Headteacher?
6. Do you always receive adequate teaching materials and support from the Headteacher?
7. What has contributed to this situation?
8. Who supplies your materials for teaching and learning for grade nine classes, (is it free or you buy)?
9. Do you receive materials that are recommended by the Ministry of General Education?
10. What is the general reading and writing level of the grade nine classes?
11. Are there any problems that are affecting the teaching and learning of grade nine classes, in English Language including composition writing to be precise?
12. What things would you have wanted your Headteacher to do to enhance the teaching and learning to the grade nine learners at this school?
13. How many times has the school Headteacher, Deputy Headteacher, Head of Department, or Zonal inset coordinator (ZIC) visited you to observe any of your lessons?

### **Appendix 3: Discussion Questions For The Focus Group**

#### **AN INTERVIEW GUIDE FOR THE FOCUS GROUP WITH SELECTED GUIDANCE AND TEACHERS OF ENGLISH**

##### **Introduction**

**School..... Date.....Sex.....**

I am a postgraduate student from the University of Zambia (UNZA) currently studying for a Master of Education in Educational Management. I am researching on the factors that cause low academic performance in the English language composition writing and the effect of the result on the overall performance of grade nine learners in selected public secondary schools in Mulobezi District of Western province of Zambia. Whatever information that I shall collect will be treated with the highest level of confidentiality and for academic purposes only.

1. What are the causes of low academic performance of Grade 9 learners in the English Language?
2. What teaching strategies do teachers use in the teaching of English Language with emphasis on composition writing in Grade 9?
3. Do teachers give any comments to guide learners after marking English Language examinations such as composition and other components of the paper? If yes, what kind of comments do they give to help learners?
4. What views do learners have on the teaching of English Language including composition in Grade nine (9)?
5. Do teachers use marking key to mark Grade 9 English Language paper 1 and paper 2? If yes, what kind of marking key do they use?
6. Are teachers usually exposed to marking of Grade nine (9) National Examinations including the English Language? If yes, how often are they usually exposed?
7. What are the classroom elements that may not promote the academic performance of the learners in grade nine classes?

8. Are there any administrative practices and procedures that may hinder teacher performance? If so, what are some of them?
9. How willing is the school manager to approve the budget for grade nine classes and ensure that the budgeted items are purchased?
10. What do you think could be some of the solutions to the challenges that you are facing as grade nine teachers of the English Language?

**THANK YOU VERY MUCH AND GOD BLESS!!**

## **Appendix 4: An Interview Guide For Guidance And Counselling Teacher**

### **Introduction**

**School.....Date.....Sex.....**

I am a postgraduate student from the University of Zambia (UNZA) currently studying for a Master of Education in Educational Management. I am researching on the factors that cause low academic performance in the English language composition writing and the effect of the result on the overall performance of grade nine learners in selected public secondary schools in Mulobezi District of Western province of Zambia. Whatever information that I shall collect will be treated with the highest level of confidentiality and for academic purposes only.

1. To what extent has your school achieved the highest academic performance at the grade nine level?

2. From the school examination analysis, what are the academic achievements at grade nine level that your school scored since 2016 by year including the English Language?

2016.....2017.....2018..... 2019.....

3. Does your school have a routine local policy of improving the low academic performance of grade nine learners especially in English Language?

4. Which year was the policy introduced to your school?

5. Are you involved in the routine local policy of improving the low academic performance of grade nine learners from the time it was introduced?

6. How do you, as Guidance and Counseling teacher, follow up or monitor cases of low academic performance of grade nine learners, with emphasis on the English language?

7. State, if any, the type of instruments or tools that the school or you, use in the process of implementing the local policy of improving the low academic performance of grade nine learners?

8. What are the follow-up challenges that you face as Guidance and Counseling teachers?

9. What do you think are the possible solutions to these follow-up challenges?

10. Finally, what recommendations would you make to the higher authority to improve the local policy for improving the grade nine results with special reference to the English Language?

**THANK YOU VERY MUCH AND GOD BLESS!**

## **Appendix 5: An Interview Guide For The Parent/s Or Guardian/s**

### **Introduction**

**School.....Date.....Sex.....**

I am a postgraduate student from the University of Zambia (UNZA) currently studying for a Master of Education in Educational Management. I am researching on the factors that cause low academic performance in the English language composition writing and the effect of the result on the overall performance of grade nine learners in selected public secondary schools in Mulobezi District of Western province of Zambia. Whatever information that I shall collect will be treated with the highest level of confidentiality and for academic purposes only.

1. What is the current grade of your child?
2. Why do you think school is important in your area?
3. As we discuss, where is your child?
4. Do the children/pupils in grade nine know how to read and write properly especially in English?
5. Explain what you do to support your child attend classes?
6. How do you collaborate with the school management regarding the education of your child?
7. Kindly explain briefly, how you as a parent/guardian follow up or monitor your child's learning progression?
8. What challenges do you face as a parent/ guardian in educating your child?
9. What do you think are the possible solutions to the low academic performance of grade nine learners in the District with special emphasis on the English Language?
10. Finally, what recommendations would you make to improve the low academic performance of grade nine learners?

**THANK YOU VERY MUCH AND GOD BLESS!!**

## **Appendix 6: An Interview Guide For The Education Standards Officer-General Inspection At DEBS' Office**

### **Introduction**

**District.....Date.....Sex.....**

I am a postgraduate student from the University of Zambia (UNZA) currently studying for a Master of Education in Educational Management. I am researching on the factors that cause low academic performance in the English language composition writing and the effect of the result on the overall performance of grade nine learners in selected public secondary schools in Mulobezi District of Western province of Zambia. Whatever information that I shall collect will be treated with the highest level of confidentiality and for academic purposes only.

1. To what extent do you appreciate the academic performance of grade nine learners in Mulobezi district especially in the English language?
2. From the District Examination Results Analysis, what has come out strongly about the academic performance of grade nine learners in the past five years?
3. What are the causes of the low academic performance of grade nine learners in your district concerning English Language?
4. Does the District Education Board Management have a routine policy of reducing the low academic performance of grade nine learners in your district?
5. In which year did your district record the lowest academic performance of grade nine learners?
6. How does the District Education Management team follow up or monitor the low academic performance of grade nine learners in English Language and other subjects?
7. State if any, the type of instruments or tools that the District Education Management uses to monitor or follow up the low academic performance of grade nine learners.
8. How do you collaborate with the District Management and other stakeholders regarding the low academic performance of grade nine learners in your district?
9. What are the challenges faced by the District Education Board Management in improving the academic performance of grade nine learners especially in English language?
10. What do you think would be the possible solutions to these challenges of low academic performance of grade nine learners in your district?

11. Finally, what recommendations would you make to improve the low academic performance of grade nine learners in your district with an emphasis on English Language?

**THANK YOU VERY MUCH AND GOD BLESS!!**

## Appendix 7: Discussion Questions For The Grade Nine Learners

### Introduction

School..... Date.....Sex.....

I am a postgraduate student from the University of Zambia (UNZA) currently studying for a Master of Education in Educational Management. I am researching on the factors that cause low academic performance in the English language composition writing and the effect of the result on the overall performance of grade nine learners in selected public secondary schools in Mulobezi District of Western province of Zambia. Whatever information that I shall collect will be treated with the highest level of confidentiality and for academic purposes only.

1. State your best and favorite subject, respectively?

Best..... Favorite.....

2. (A) If the English language is not stated above, why is English language not stated in any of the two?

(B) If English is stated best, what is the highest mark that you obtained thus far from grade eight?

3. Do teachers give any comments to guide you as learners, after marking English Language examinations such as composition and other components of the paper?

If yes, what kind of comments do they give to help you as learners?

4. How often do you receive feedback from teachers of English language on your performance?

5. How helpful is the feedback that you receive from teachers of English Language?

6. What views do you have as learners, on the teaching of English Language including composition in Grade nine (9)?

7. What do you think could be some of the classroom elements that may not promote your academic performance as learners in grade nine?

8. Do you have trouble in speaking English language?

9. Do you have trouble when writing in English language?

10. Are the levels of trouble that you face in speaking and writing English language, the same as in the local language?

11. What do you think could be some of the solutions to the challenges you are facing as grade nine learners of the English Language?
12. What is the primary language spoken in school?
13. What is the primary language spoken in your home?
14. Are you a member of any extra-curriculum clubs? Please tick where applicable
- A) JETS CLUB ☐
- B) DEBATE CLUB ☐
- C) JOURNALISM CLUB ☐
- D) MATHS CLUB ☐
- E) OTHERS, STATE.....
15. How can teachers of English help you in achieving your desired performance in the language?

**THANK YOU VERY MUCH AND GOD BLESS!!**

## **Appendix 8: Consent Form**

**I am a postgraduate student from the University of Zambia (UNZA) currently studying for a Master of Education in Educational Management. I am researching on the factors that cause low academic performance in the English language composition writing and the effect of the result on the overall performance of grade nine learners in selected public secondary schools in Mulobezi District of Western province of Zambia.**

**Whatever information that I shall collect will be treated with the highest level of confidentiality and for academic purposes only.**

**The office of the Provincial Education Officer and that of the District Education Board Secretary are both aware of this study.**

You are cordially requested to participate in this study by answering questions from the interview guides. Once again, please be assured that the information that you shall provide, will be kept and treated as confidential. Therefore, if you are willing to participate in this study, please write your name, other related details and sign in the spaces provided below.

### **Participant:**

Name.....

Signature.....

Place.....

Date.....

### **Researcher:**

Name.....

Signature.....

Place.....

Date.....