

**PUPILS' PERCEPTIONS TOWARDS GRADE RETENTION AND
ITS EFFECTS ON ACADEMIC PERFORMANCE IN SELECTED
GRANT-AIDED SECONDARY SCHOOLS IN CENTRAL
PROVINCE, ZAMBIA**

BY

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A Dissertation submitted to the University of Zambia in partial fulfilment of the requirements
for the award of the degree of Master of Education in Educational Psychology

THE UNIVERSITY OF ZAMBIA

LUSAKA

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DECLARATION

I William Phiri hereby declare that this research has been the outcome of my own effort and that its content has never been presented elsewhere. I further declare that the narratives, figures, tables or statistics contained in the report were generated by me except for those whose origin has been acknowledged. I furthermore declare that the views and opinions contained in this report do not in any way represent those of the University of Zambia (UNZA).

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CERTIFICATE OF APPROVAL

This dissertation of William Phiri is approved as fulfilling part of the requirements of the award of the degree of Master of Education in Educational Psychology by the University of Zambia.

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ABSTRACT

The purpose of the study was to establish pupils' perceptions towards grade retention and its effects on academic performance in selected grant-aided secondary schools in Central province of Zambia.

The study used a case study research design which combined qualitative and quantitative techniques of data collection and analysis. The target population comprised all pupils, guidance and counselling teachers and deputy head teachers from selected grant-aided secondary schools. The data were collected through questionnaires, interview schedules and analysis of pupil's progress record cards. Qualitative data were analysed thematically through identification of themes that emerged from data. The Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS 20.0) was used to generate descriptive statistics such as frequencies, percentages or tables

The study revealed that most of the pupils in grant-aided secondary schools perceive grade retention as something that is good. The positive perception can mainly be attributed to the high levels of awareness among pupils about the existence of the policy, parental involvement and vigorous counselling programmes among other factors. The findings also showed that the policy has positive effects on pupils' academic performance because in most instances, it has caused their academic performances to improve. The study further revealed that these schools have successfully implemented the policy of grade retention. Based on the findings, the following recommendations emerged: 1. School authorities should encourage teachers to enhance studying of pupils in mixed ability-groups as a strategy to foster sharing of knowledge. 2. Teachers should offer individualised attention to pupils earmarked for grade retention so that they can improve their academic performance. 3. Schools should introduce

weekend learning so as to help those pupils who have been earmarked for grade retention. 4. Extra time should be provided by the school authorities at the end of the school terms especially terms 1 and 2 to those pupils whose academic performance shows weakness during the term. 5. Grant-aided secondary schools should promote the use of ICTs to help pupils improve in their academic performance thereby getting rid of grade retention. 6. Grant-aided secondary schools should implement grade retention policy in conformity with the Examination Council of Zambia policy on examination numbers.

DEDICATION

I dedicate this dissertation to my God, my entire family, lecturers at the University of Zambia School of education and department of Educational Psychology, Sociology and Special Education, and friends for their timely and relentlessly encouragement and support throughout my studies.

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LIST OF ACRONMYS

CI	Confidence Interval
CPD	Continuous Professional Development
CSO	Central Statistical Office
Dr	Doctor (Academic)
EOF	Educating Our Future
HOD	Head of Department
MED	Masters of Education
MESVTE	Ministry of Education, Science, Vocational Training and Early Education
NASP	National Association of School Psychologists
NAE	National Academy Education
NCE	National Centre for Education
NGO	Non-Governmental Organisation
PTA	Parents Teacher's Association
SPSS	Statistical Package for Social Sciences
UNZA	University of Zambia
WWW	World Wide Web
ZEC	Zambia Episcopal Conference

CHAPTER ONE

INTRODUCTION

1.0 Overview

This chapter presents the background of the study, statement of the problem, purpose of the study, research objectives and questions, scope of the study, limitations and operational definition of terms.

1.1 Background to the study

Pupils' academic performance during the final national examinations has been a source of concern not only to government but also to other stake holders such as parents and teachers (Ministry of Education Science, Vocational Training and Early Education, 2012). Although the Zambian government through the Ministry of Education, Science, Vocational Training and Early Education (MESVTE) has instituted several interventions such as the provision of learning and teaching materials, improving salaries and conditions of service for teachers among others, the general academic performance by pupils especially in government-run secondary schools has been poor (Malambo, 2012). For instance, the pass rate for the grade 12 general certificate results dropped from 60.1 per cent in 2013 to 55.87 percent in 2014 (MESVTE, 2015).

Even though there has been a general low academic performance by pupils being recorded at national level, grant-aided secondary schools on the other hand, have been performing exceptionally well as compared to government secondary schools (Zambia Episcopal Conference, 2014; Malambo, 2012, MOE, 2010). According to the MOE (2003) a grant-aided secondary school receives a grant of 75% of the capital costs and paying salaries of teachers

and other established supporting staff by government. The partnership between government and grant-aided learning institutions dates far back to the coming of Christian Missionaries into Southern Rhodesia (now Zimbabwe), Northern Rhodesia (now Zambia) and Nyasaland (now Malawi). The partnership further became stronger after Zambia's attainment of independence in 1964. Carmody (2003) argues that Catholic secondary schools in the early 1960s never numbered more than thirty, in a country that currently has more than 256, and with the rise of basic schools, the partnership has become even more strengthened. Malambo (2012:12) further observes: "...to-date, religious bodies make a significant contribution to educational provisions in Zambia through their grant-aided schools and colleges." For instance, grant-aided secondary institutions account for 15% of the total secondary enrolment in the whole country (MOE, 1996).

What have contributed to the prominence of these grant-aided schools are their strict policies in terms of pupil discipline. In addition, these institutions' academic programmes merited repeated acclaim from government (especially the Catholic-run schools). They became much sought after by parents and students, both Catholic and non-Catholic due to their policies of academic excellence. This is because the Catholic Church-run Schools and other schools belonging to other church mother bodies, commonly referred to as grant-aided schools enjoy the autonomy of putting their own policies which has been granted through the Education Act of 1993. For example, the new regulations governing grant-aided institutions provide for the establishment of autonomous boards of management at each school. These boards exercise extensive control over every aspect of educational provision including formulation of local school policies such as grade retention. Such policy is however not a directive from government.

St Pauls Mulungushi Boys Secondary school in Kapiri Mposhi district, Angelina Tembo Girls Secondary school in Kabwe district and Chipembi Girls Secondary school in Chisamba district are good examples of grant-aided secondary schools in Central province of Zambia. These institutions formulate and implement grade retention policy as one of the measures aimed to help pupils who perform unsatisfactorily in their academic performance.

St Pauls Mulungushi Boys Secondary school opened its doors to the public in 1960 under the Marist Brothers of the Catholic Church. It is located about thirty-five kilometres North-East of Kabwe town along the Mukonchi-Mkushi feeder road. Until 1990, St Pauls Mulungushi was part of Kabwe rural but was later changed to be part of Kapiri Mposhi district (CSO, 2004). The congregation was founded by Marcellin Champagnat of France in 1789. The school is known for the quality education it provides to the public and it has produced people like Dr. P.C. Manchishi, Dr. A. Chiyeka and Professor C.P. Chishimba, all of them senior lecturers at the University of Zambia who have contributed greatly to the development of this nation, Zambia.

The school currently enrolls more than one thousand three hundred pupils and it is one of the grant-aided secondary schools that has been providing quality education and has been topping central province in terms of pupils' academic performance. For instance, in 2014 general grade twelve certificate examinations, the school scored 100% pass rate and was ranked first in central province (MESVTE, 2015). Like many other grant-aided secondary schools in Central province, St Pauls has grade retention policy as one of the interventional measures to help pupils who struggle academically.

Chipembi Girls Secondary school is run by the United Church of Zambia which is one of the earliest organisations to establish schools in Northern Rhodesia (now Zambia). The school was founded in 1962 by Reverend Douglas Gray of the Methodist church and it became the first girl's boarding school in Zambia. It is delightful to note that after its founding, the school went on to become Zambia's premier educational establishment for girls. Its graduates were the first to go to Universities in then, Southern Rhodesia (now Zimbabwe) and Britain, returning to take their places as key figures in the newly independent Zambia. To date, the school is still ranked as one of the best girls' school in the republic of Zambia and its passing rate for general certificate at grade twelve levels ranging from 98.44% in 2010 to 100% in 2013 and 2014 respectively (MESVTE, 2015). Like St Pauls Secondary school, Chipembi too has a grade retention policy that is being vigorously implemented. Angelina Tembo Girls Secondary is yet another grant-aided school that has embraced grade retention policy meant to help pupils who show weaknesses in their academic performance. The school is run by the Roman Catholic sisters who have endeavoured over the years to provide quality girls education in Kabwe district of Central province Zambia.

The MESVTE (2012) attests that it was saddened that most government schools were underperforming compared to mission (grant-aided) schools in the country. As already noted above, some of the factors attributed to good academic performance in grant-aided secondary schools are adequate learning and teaching materials, high teacher morale, high level of pupil discipline, controlled enrolment levels, close supervision of teachers and pupils and strong school academic policies (Kakupa, 2014; Malambo, 2012).

Among the strong school academic policies that grant-aided secondary schools have been implementing in the quest to improve and maintain pupils' good academic performance is

grade retention (ZEC, 2014). According to Jere (2006:6) grade retention “...occurs when students are held back in the same grade for an extra year rather than being promoted to a higher grade along with their age peers”. In other words, grade retention is where a pupil begins a new school year in the same grade as the previous year, instead of moving to a higher grade. The national Association of School Psychologists (2003) refers grade retention to ‘being held back’ in the same school year. The decision to retain pupils takes five major forms depending on the reason and source for the decision.

Firstly, one of such forms is voluntary grade retention where pupils themselves or parents acting on their behalf initiate the decision. The second form occurs when pupils want to continue schooling but they do not have access to a school that offers the next grade. This kind of grade retention is common in remotest parts of developing countries where some schools only teach up to a certain grade and thereafter the pupils have to access school places elsewhere (Jere, 2006). The third form is where parents initiate the decision based on the perception that much was not learned in the previous year. This form of grade retention is equally common in developing countries where attendance is sporadic because the pupils spend much time working at home than attending school. This form is common in areas where the language used at school differs from the language that many pupils speak at home. Therefore, early grade retention may enable these pupils to gain fluency in the language of instruction so that they begin to learn efficiently. The fourth form occurs at higher grade level where pupils are required to pass an examination in order for them to qualify for post-secondary education. The last form is involuntary grade retention imposed by the school rather than pupils or parents.

Grant-aided secondary schools in Zambia have been implementing the fifth form of grade retention which is involuntary. This is because they have written grade retention policy which is communicated to all parents and prospective pupils who apply and enrol in such secondary schools. For instance, St Pauls Secondary School of Kapiri Mposhi district, Angelina Tembo Secondary School of Kabwe district and Chipembi Girls Secondary School of Chisamba district, all of central province, have written grade retention policy which every pupil who enrolls in such schools have to comply and failure to which they are either expelled or sent to government-run schools. This shows how serious grant-aided secondary schools in central province implement grade retention as one of the educational interventions in order to improve and maintain good academic performance and standards.

As already pointed out grade retention is one of the interventional strategies that grant aided secondary schools have been implementing in order to maintain good academic performance (ZEC, 2014). This scenario is not peculiar to grant aided secondary schools in Zambia but world over. For example, it is estimated that over 2.4 million (5-10%) students are retained every year in the United States (Anderson, Jimerson and Whipple, 2002). The percentage of pupils retained has shown a steady increase over the last 25 years to about 40% (Rafoth and Knickelbein, 2008). On the rise for the past twenty-five years, grade retention today is estimated to cost over 14 billion dollars per year to pay for the extra year of schooling (Kathleen, 2012).

A study by Jere (2006) which was conducted in many developing African countries, further reveals that grade retention is more common in developing countries than in developed countries and it is especially common in remote rural areas. In the case of Zambia, it is typical for grant-aided secondary schools to operate in remotest parts of the nation. Another study by

Eisenmon (1997) reported high rates of grade retention in developing countries. The study furthermore revealed that the highest rates were found in the Sub-Saharan African countries where each year, about 22% of primary pupils and 21% of secondary pupils were retained. These figures are statistically large enough to suggest that grade retention, as an interventional measure for pupils' academic performance, is a growing concern that requires urgent attention.

However, other studies such as the one done by Range, Hult, Pijanowski and Young (2012) indicated that educators and principals differed in their views on grade retention. The study revealed that for those who supported grade retention, the two most common reasons were that it prevents future failure and maintains standards. Few other studies further did not underscore grade retention as a bad practice (Hong and Yu, 2008; Gleason, Kwok and Hughes, 2007). However, NASP (2003) argues that such studies failed to look at grade retention over time and did not substantiate the benefit of grade retention as the gains tend to be lost over the years. The study further indicated that effects of grade retention on academic performance were negative. In the same study, the 6th grade pupils for example, found grade retention to be the third most stressful event after losing a parent and going blind.

Furthermore, the study by Anderson et al, (2002) found grade retention to be the 10th most stressful life event to the 1st grade pupils. Third graders found it to be the 5th most stressful and sixth graders found it to be the most stressful life event even worse than losing a parent or going blind. The study by Jere (2006) equally indicated and singled out grade retention as one of the major causes of dropping out of school, depression, low self-esteem and suicide committed by adolescent pupils in secondary schools. Jimerson (2001) observes in his study that by practicing grade retention, a heavy amount of stress is put on pupils for a

practice that has an 80% non success rate. Another study by Ferguson, Jimerson and Dalton (2001) further revealed that older retained pupils who showed early personal deficits were especially harmed by grade retention. Furthermore, the study indicated that pupils with low parental value of education were also especially harmed by retention. The study therefore recommended that something different must be done to head off educational problems. The study brought to light that grade retention has been overwhelmingly shown to be an ineffective practice. The national academy of Education (1991: 53) put it this way: “Research conducted in recent years on grade retention has led educators to make the connection that holding young people back in schools holds them back in life”. It is clear that the outcome of these studies paint a gloomy picture about grade retention as they all point to the fact that grade retention is a bad educational intervention practice that should be abandoned.

However, one may ask a question, despite such empirical evidence about the bad effects of grade retention on pupils’ social, economic and academic performance, why is it that these grant-aided secondary schools in Zambia still insist on implementing such a policy? Is it working for them? If it is working for them, how differently are they implementing grade retention policy? Moreover, government discourages grade retention instead it encourages automatic grade promotion in all its secondary schools (MOE, 1996). Further, the Examination Council of Zambia, a body mandated by government through the Act of parliament to administer examinations in schools, provides examination numbers that expires after three years. The implication of such is that those pupils who face grade retention are likely to have their examination numbers expired by the time they reach grade twelve. Despite such challenges and conflicts with the established government policy, grant-aided secondary schools seem adamant to abandon grade retention. Why? Are there positive lessons that government and other stake holders in the education sector can learn from grant-aided

secondary schools on how grade retention is being practiced? Does grade retention contribute to the much talked about and acknowledged by Ministry of Education (2012) quality education and good academic performance being recorded in grant-aided secondary schools?

These and many more questions require a systematic study that may generate dependable answers. Further, this is not an issue that should just be let go without an investigation because grant aided secondary schools serve a bigger percentage of rural population. For example, the Catholic Church runs the largest number of grant-aided schools in Zambia and its contribution to the education sector is immense. The church has three teacher training colleges, 38 grant-aided secondary schools, nine special schools for children with various disabilities, more than 100 nursery and community schools, numerous primary and secondary schools that are privately owned and fully run by different missionary congregation. These figures do not take into consideration Universities, nursing schools, vocational training centres and schools such as carpentry, secretarial, home craft centres, hotel and catering schools as well as parish adult literacy centres (ZEC, 2014). Apart from the Catholic Church there are also other church mother bodies such as the United Church of Zambia, Seventh Day Adventist, Salvation Army and the Anglican Church to mention but a few that provide education to pupils and in most of these schools being managed by such congregations practice grade retention.

Despite practicing grade retention which most studies (Jere, 2006; Jimerson, 2001; NASP, 2003) point to the fact that the practice is bad, grant-aided secondary schools on the contrary are among the notable institutions that offer quality education in Zambia. It is not uncommon for parents wanting to send their children to grant-aided schools especially those run by Catholic Church (Malambo, 2013; ZEC, 2014). This contradiction leaves one with a lot of

questions to be answered, where on one hand, government discourages grade retention because it wants more school going children to access school places as much as possible while on the other hand it acknowledges and praises grant-aided schools for providing quality education and good pupils' academic performance. Furthermore, many studies both locally and abroad, have been conducted on teachers' and parents' perceptions towards grade retention in non grant-aided schools (Ganser and Dixon, 2013; Terry, 2011; Jere, 2006; Viland, 2001). However, very little research has been done on pupils' perceptions towards grade retention in grant-aided secondary schools in Zambia particularly in Central province, hence the present study.

1.2 Statement of the problem

There is overwhelming evidence from research studies that pupils' academic performance from grant-aided secondary schools is better than those from government schools (ZEC, 2014; Malambo, 2012; Jere, 2006). Among many measures that grant-aided secondary schools have put in place to improve pupils' academic performance is by implementing strong school academic policies (Kakupa, 2014). Grade retention is one of the academic policies being practiced in grant-aided secondary schools aimed at improving academic performance of pupils. In developing countries and Zambia inclusive for instance up to 21% and 22% of primary and secondary school pupils face grade retention respectively (Jere, 2006). These figures are statistically large enough to confirm that grade retention, especially in grant aided secondary schools, is a growing practice which warrants research. Moreover, most studies both local and international that have been done, dwelled much on exploring teachers', parents' and school administrators' perceptions towards grade retention (Range, Pijanowski, Holt and Young, 2012; DelConte, 2011; Lipscomb and Cannon, 2010; Jere, 2006; Viland; 2001). One may ask a question, what about the pupils themselves who are the

major stakeholders in the learning process, how do they perceive grade retention? Therefore, the overall research problem that was addressed in this study was that despite grant-aided secondary schools implementing grade retention, pupils' perceptions towards grade retention and its effects on academic performance in Central Province have remained unknown, hence the need for this study.

1.3 Purpose of the study

The purpose of the study was to establish pupils' perceptions towards grade retention and its effects on academic performance in selected grant aided secondary schools in Central province.

1.4 Research study objectives

This study was guided by the following objectives:

1.4.1 General objective

To establish pupils' perceptions towards grade retention and its effects on academic performance in selected grant aided secondary schools in Central province.

1.4.2 Specific Objectives

1. To establish pupils' perceptions towards grade retention in grant aided secondary schools in Central province.
2. To determine the effects of grade retention on pupils' academic performance in grant aided secondary schools in Central province.
3. To assess the extent to which grant-aided secondary schools implement and make suggestions on the implementation of grade retention policy in Central province.

1.5 Research questions

The following research questions guided the study:

1.5.1 Grand research question

What are the perceptions of pupils towards grade retention and its effects on academic performance in selected grant aided secondary schools in Central province?

1.5.2 Specific research questions

1. What are the perceptions of pupils towards grade retention in grant aided secondary schools in Central province?
2. What are the effects of grade retention on pupils' academic performance in grant aided secondary schools in Central province?
3. To what extent do grant-aided secondary schools implement and make suggestions on the implementation of grade retention policy in Central province?

1.6 Significance of study

The study has generated information on pupils' perception towards grade retention and its effects on academic performance in grant aided secondary schools in Central province of Zambia. Further the findings of this study may help grant-aided secondary schools adopt best practices of implementing grade retention policy such as the inclusion of ICTs in the whole process of executing the policy. Policy makers, ministry of education and other educational organisations such as UNICEF may benefit from the outcome of this study by adopting interventional measures such as grade retention to help improve academic performance of pupils whose learning outcomes are usually below average. The outcome of the study may

trigger further research on grade retention thereby providing more insights on the implementation of the policy which is aimed at enhancing the academic performance of learners in grant aided learning institutions. The findings and recommendations may be replicated by non grant-aided schools in order to help struggling pupils improve in their academic achievement.

1.7 Scope of the study

The study was restricted only to the grant-aided secondary schools of Central province. This restriction was mainly due to the fact that unlike in government-run schools, grade retention policy is promoted in grant aided secondary schools. The specific grant aided secondary schools which participated in the study were St Pauls Secondary School (Kapiri Mposhi District), Agelina Tembo Girls Secondary school (Kabwe District) and Chipembi Girls Secondary School (Chisamba District). These schools were chosen because they implement grade retention and they are also managed by different church mother bodies despite all of them being grant-aided schools. The focus of the study was on grade retention and its effects on pupils' academic performance in grant aided secondary schools only.

1.8 Limitations of the study

Unlike delimitation factors over which the researcher does have some degree of control, limitations are potential weaknesses of a study which the study may not have control over and how they influence the outcome of the research (Kasonde-Ng'andu, 2013). In this study lack of adequate local literature on grade retention policy was a major limitation. Reviewing much local literature is recommended because it helps shape best practices and improves the phenomenon being researched. Despite grade retention being practiced in grant-aided secondary schools for a very long time and for some as old as the schools themselves, there was a serious knowledge gap in literature which posed a challenge to find studies that have

been done locally. However, the limited local literature was supplemented by studies that were conducted in other countries with similar learning environmental conditions as Zambia. One such study was conducted by Jere (2006) which examined perceptions towards grade retention in several developing African countries.

The other limitation was that the outcomes of this study are likely not to be generalized to other provinces of Zambia. The fact that the study confined itself to grant-aided secondary schools only from three districts namely St Pauls Secondary School (Kapiri Mposhi District), Agelina Tembo Girls Secondary school (Kabwe District) and Chipembi Girls Secondary School (Chisamba District) all of Central province, it therefore implies that the results cannot be generalised to non grant-aided secondary schools both within and outside Central province. Nevertheless, if such generalisations are made to other provinces, they should be done with caution. However, generalisations of the study results may still apply to central province and grant-aided secondary schools only because such schools have similar learning and teaching characteristics.

The use of purposive sampling technique in this study to select guidance teachers and deputy head teachers who provided valuable information about grade retention made it difficult for the findings to be generalised to other grant aided secondary schools in other districts facing similar challenges of grade retention and its effects on pupils' academic performance. Phiri (2006) in Kasonde-Ng'andu (2013:21) attests "the purposive sampling procedure decreases the generalisability of findings". However, in order to overcome this limitation, the study employed simple random sampling techniques to select pupils as respondents. Further the fact that this study employed both qualitative and quantitative methods, it followed that the qualitative methods complemented quantitative techniques and vice versa.

Additionally, inaccessibility to data was another setback the study encountered. This was mainly due to the unwillingness by some administrators to allow pupils and the teaching staff to participate in the study. In order to counter this challenge, the researcher clearly assured respondents and participants that the information sought was for academic use only and it was going to be treated with highest levels of confidentiality. The other limitation encountered was the use of questionnaires as instruments for data collection which did not bring out underlined meaning of the respondents' responses. Nevertheless, scheduled interviews and analysis of documents such as the pupils' progress record cards were used to overcome the shortcomings that could have been experienced from questionnaires.

1.9 Operational definition of terms

Effects:	Change which is a result of an action or actual achievement of a final result
Grant-aided school:	A school owned and managed by church organizations in partnership with the government. The government provides grants to these institutions in the form of funds and pays the teachers.
Secondary school:	A school with grades eight to twelve.
Academic performance:	A pupil's involvement in the learning process and the application of his and her cognitive faculty i.e., reading, writing and general performance in school assignments.
Non-grant-aided school:	These are schools owned and run by the government.

Grade retention: A process of a pupil being held back in his or her current grade level again the following year.

Perceptions: Subjective interpretation of sensations in the light of experience, motivation and emotion and contextual factors.

1.10 Summary

This chapter presented the background of the study, statement of the problem, purpose of the study, research objective and questions, significance of the study, theoretical framework, and scope of the study, limitations and operational definition of terms. In the background of the study, it emerged that grade retention as an interventional measure for pupils who perform poorly in their academic achievement was a growing practice in grant-aided schools yet little was known on how pupils perceived the policy. Therefore, the main objective of the study was to establish pupils' perception towards the policy and its effects on academic performance. This section has also highlighted that policy makers, ministry of education and other agencies such as UNICEF may benefit from the outcome of the study by replicating the policy to non grant-aided schools in order to improve pupils' academic performance. Lastly, lack of locally researched studies on grade retention emerged as a major limitation. However this study overcame the above challenge by reviewing relevant literature from African countries with similar learning conditions as Zambia. The chapter that follows is literature review.

CHAPTER TWO

LITERATURE REVIEW

2.0 Overview

In this chapter, the theoretical framework is presented first. Thereafter the chapter presents relevant literature on the research title “pupils’ perception towards grade retention and its effects on academic performance in selected grant-aided secondary schools of Central province Zambia. The reviewed literature has been discussed under the following themes most of which were derived from research objectives:

- Perceptions and grade retention from global perspective
- Grade retention from regional and local perspective
- Pupils’ perceptions towards grade retention
- Effects of grade retention on pupils’ academic performance
- Other strategies that can further enhance grade retention policy
- Summary

2.1 Theoretical framework

The study was guided by Hebb’s theory of perception. Omari (2011) defines a theory as thought processes and thinking system or schemes for explaining and predicting a set of happening or natural phenomenon such as behavioural changes. It may be argued based on the definition above that theories have a great inspiration powers to human thought which should be promoted and these include but not limited to hypothetical thinking, imagination, creativity and probabilistic thinking. Theoretical framework according to Kombo and Tromp (2006: 56) therefore is defined as “...a collection of interrelated ideas based on theories. It is a reasoned set of prepositions, which are derived from and supported by data or evidence”. The

importance of theory in any research cannot be overemphasised as Kwame Nkrumah of Ghana correctly observed that *‘theory without practice is hollow; and practice without theory is blind’*. It therefore follows that *theory illuminates practice and practice illuminates theory* (Omari, 2011). This to a larger extent justifies the decision to adopt Hebb’s theory on perception to guide this study.

Hebb was a Canadian Psychologist who did a lot of work on the understanding of perception. His work was mainly reconciliation between the extremist positions taken by behaviourists and Gestalt theorists as regards to formation of perceptions in people. Kuppuswamy (2012: 168) writes:

Behaviourists have been placing importance on learning while Gestalt psychologists have left very little to be contributed by learning...Hebb came to a conclusion that although certain characteristics are innately determined there are however certain other characteristics that can be proved to be the result of learning and long periods of practice...

It may be argued from the above that perceptions are developed not only from long periods of learning but also as a result of long periods of practice. Grant aided secondary schools have been in existence since the coming of the missionaries. It therefore follows that grade retention has been in place since the establishment of grant-aided secondary schools in Zambia. It may further be argued that pupils who access their secondary education from grant-aided schools are likely to develop certain perceptions due to long periods and experiences on how grade retention is been implemented. Perhaps the definition of perception by Malim and Birch (1998: 150) would further amplify the just stated argument above that “perception is the process whereby the brain makes sense of the information received from

senses.” In other words perception is the subjective interpretation of sensations in the light of experience, motivation and emotion and contextual factors (Ibid).

Further, perception is not simply determined by stimulus patterns but rather it is a dynamic searching for the best interpretation of the available data as suggested by Gregory (1996). Hence the need to conduct this study which explored pupils’ perceptions towards grade retention unlike depending on the outcomes based on studies that only investigated parents’ and teachers’ perceptions towards the policy.

In his theory, Hebb was able to separate the effects of learning from that of innate ability. Therefore his theory as already pointed out is more or less a compromise between behaviouristic and gestalt theories of perception. The pupils in grant-aided secondary schools may not all of them necessarily have been retained but because it is a policy and it is being practiced they are able to remember through imagination, observation and experiences thereby developing perceptions about grade retention policy. Kuppuswamy (2012) further attests that an individual maintains his/her contact with the outside world through perception. Once having perceived a phenomenon (in this case grade retention) one tends to retain the impression over a period of time and at any future time he/she can recall the experience through the process of remembering which (remembering) is carried out by means of memory images.

While it may be important to seek teachers’ and parents’ perceptions towards grade retention, it is rather even more important to involve the pupils themselves about how they perceive grade retention as this could have been built over the years of their experience. Therefore,

Hebb's theory best fits into this study because it is the pupils themselves who experience the effects of grade retention policy which could either have been learned or observed.

Malim and Birch (1998) correctly point out that past experience plays an important role in perception formation. He further observes that under the characteristics of perception, familiarity and past experience of an individual are important factors in what and how one perceives. For example, an individual who has been involved in a car accident will perceive heavy traffic apprehensively for some time at least. A burnt child perceives fire with fear. Similarly, pupils who attend education from grant aided secondary schools where grade retention is being practiced are likely to develop some kind of perception which may be positive or negative depending on their experiences, observations and how the policy is being implemented.

As furthermore pointed out by Kuppaswamy (2012) perception is selective, one may agree that if the influence of social learning on perception is accepted then the natural conclusion is that perception is selective. For instance, every moment in people's lives they are presented with a multitude of situations but a little analysis will make it clear that they do not perceive all of them. This is the reason why pupils themselves should be involved in determining their perceptions towards grade retention and how it affects their academic performance in grant-aided secondary schools.

Hebb's theory also suggests that the immediate attitude is important in determining the nature of perception. For example false perceptions are very common in case of intense needs. This is key in that the way grade retention policy is implemented in grant aided secondary schools

may influence pupils to develop false perceptions. In other words, the momentary need and attitude play an important role as determinants of perception. Additionally formation of social stereotypes is another evidence of the attitude affecting people's perception. In this case it is the social perception that is being influenced. The perception of certain undesirable traits in a particular community can easily be proved to be the result of certain attitudes that have been developed towards a particular group of individuals. Therefore people may ignore a great deal of reality and allow their perceptions to be coloured with the stereotypes that are told (Hebb, 1949; Gregory, 1996; Malim and Birch, 1998).

One may argue that perceptions being selective and largely determined by condition of sense-organs and the nervous system, past experience, immediate attitude and formation of stereotypes entail that pupils themselves should be involved to ascertain their own perception towards grade retention unlike depending on perceptions from teachers and parents on how the policy affects pupils' academic performance in grant aided secondary schools in Central province, hence, the choice of Hebb's theory on perception in this study.

2.2 Perceptions and grade retention from global perspective

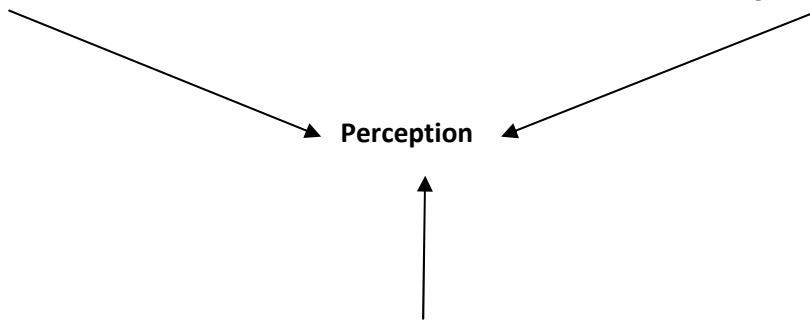
Cole (2005) defines perception as the process of organising, interpreting external stimuli received through the senses. In other words, perception is the mental process involved in identifying and subjectivity interpreting objects, concepts, behaviour and the attainment of awareness, insight and understanding. Some of the factors that influence perception according to Nzuve (1999: 1) are summarised below:

Factors in the perceiver

- Attitudes
- Novelty
- Experience
- Interest
- Expectations

Factors in the target

- Motives
- Sounds
- Size
- Background
- Proximity
- Similarity

**Factors in the situation**

- Social setting
- Working setting
- Time

Source: Nzuve, 1999

Perception is taken to be one of the most important aspects of human behaviour. It can be argued that depending on how people perceive things they may see the glass either as half-empty or half full. The issue of grade retention has generated a lot of studies of which some are in favour of the policy while other studies have concluded that it is a bad practice. However, despite such debates, one thing can be established that the more positively one perceives situations and circumstances the more efficiently he or she is able to avert a crisis. What about pupils, how do they perceive this kind of policy? In order to fully comprehend this question, there is need first of all to look at factors that influence perception. Grade retention in grant-aided secondary schools has become almost a tradition in grant-aided schools which may prompt pupils in such learning institutions develop certain perceptions towards the policy. Some of these factors are reviewed and discussed hereunder:

2.2.1 Factors in the perceiver and their influence on perception

As already noted above, in a study conducted by Nzuve (1999), it was established that one's attitudes, experience, interest and expectations play a role in the perceptual process. For example, how do attitudes influence perception? Although there is enormous literature on attitudes, there seems to be a strong correlation between attitudes and perception. A study by Reibstein, Lovelock and Dobson (1980) indicated that attitudes influenced perception. They argued that attitudes are formed through cognitions (beliefs), affect (feelings) and conation (behavioural intentions) which later on influence how people form perception. Omari (2011: 284) has made related arguments "...attitudes are a learned predisposition to respond either positively or negatively, to persons, situations, or things". It is clear from the above definition that attitudes carry a strong emotional component and can never be neutral. Omari (2011) further advances that when a negative attitude is generalized to include an entire group of people, then it becomes stereotype. This is not only destructive to the holder of a stereotype but also to the whole group about which it is held. In other words, stereotype can be especially destructive to the self-image of the minority group thereby affecting how one perceives.

In agreement to the above, Shepard & Smith (1988) confirm that attitudes are formed by people in several different ways and they furthermore assert two types of knowledge that influence peoples' attitudes namely propositional and practical knowledge. Propositional knowledge is knowledge of research findings, while practical knowledge is knowledge gained from personal experiences. Commenting on how attitudes influence perception, Munroe (2012) laments that attitudes determine ones' limitations and it is a product of beliefs. He further advocates that people are a victim of their beliefs. In this regard, pupils' belief system in grant-aided learning institutions about grade retention policy is likely to influence their perception toward the practice.

Mullins (1998) presented data to support his argument that the past has a tremendous impact on what people perceive. He illustrated that perceptions are affected by all events in one's life. In his study, he claimed that every single person has a unique perception. In other words people's thinking largely depends on those experiences. It can be deduced therefore that perception is always experiential. One may conclude that pupils' perceptions toward the policy of grade retention would be determined by their real life experiences from these grant-aided secondary schools. Burgoon (1994) adds that past experiences often combine one or a few senses, and are closely associated with one's everyday life. He further contends that past experiences with positive or negative reinforcement in similar situations may generate strong biases which influence one's current perceptions.

At this point one may argue that those studies (Ganser and Dixon, 2013; DelConte, 2011; Jere, 2006) that have come out vigorously claiming that pupils perceive grade retention negatively could be difficult to generalise because such perceptions are dependent on one's past experiences. That is why there was need in this study to explore the experiences pupils from grant-aided schools have had and later on establish their perception towards the policy. As correctly pointed out by Mullins (1998) perception is always experiential, therefore it may not be right to apply the principle of 'one size fits them all'. This is why Burgoon (1994) concludes that perception is the process of making sense out of an experience as well as the imputing of meaning to experience. She further advocates that our past experience plays a vital role in perception.

In agreement to the above, Nzuve (1999) confirms that learning from previous experiences has a critical effect throughout all the stages of the perceptual process. Burgoon (1998) has made related arguments, as have many others that one's past experiences affects the stimulus perceived in the first instance and then the ways in which that stimulus is understood and processed and final response. In other words, pupils in grant-aided schools where grade retention policy is in force will respond to that stimulus because of past experiences and thereafter pick out what will be perceived.

As regards interest and expectations, the processes of perception routinely alter what humans see. When people view something with a preconceived concept about it, they tend to take those concepts and see them whether or not they are there. This problem stems from the fact that humans are unable to understand new information, without the inherent bias of their previous knowledge. A person's knowledge creates his or her reality as much as the truth, because the human mind can only contemplate that which it has been exposed to. When objects are viewed without understanding, the mind will try to reach for something that it already recognizes, in order to process what it is viewing. That which most closely relates to unfamiliar perception from our past experiences, makes up what we see when we look at things that we do not comprehend. It is clear therefore that one's' culture, past experience and history play a role in the formation of perception. It can be argued therefore that grade retention being a policy and mandatory in grant-aided secondary schools coupled with the social situations and its targets will affect how pupils perceive the practice.

2.2.2 Factors in the target and their influence on perception

As observed by Nzuve (1999) perception is a process by which individuals organise and interpret their sensory perceives in order to give meaning to their environment. It is clear from the above

observation that what one perceives can be substantially different from objective reality. This is because people's behaviour is based on their perception of what reality is, not on reality itself. One may deduce that perception largely depends not only on the physical stimuli, but also on the stimuli's relation to the surrounding field and conditions within the individual. The main point here is that perception can vary widely among individuals exposed to the same reality. For example one teacher might perceive a fast-taking pupil as aggressive and disrespectful, while another teacher may take that as a sign of intelligence, cleverness and self-assertiveness. Therefore, it is imperative to consider various conditions and situations under which grade retention is being practiced before jumping into conclusion that the policy is an unproductive educational intervention for pupils whose academic performance is poor.

In this regard, characteristics of target being observed equally affect what is perceived. For instance, loud and extroverted pupils in a school set up are likely to be noticed than the quiet ones. This could be attributed to the targets not being looked at in isolation, as does our tendency to group close things and similar things together (Mullins, 1998). For example, a shrill voice is never perceived to be one of authority. All these examples point to one thing that perceptions differ from one person to another according to prevailing situations at that particular period of time.

2.2.3 Factors in situation and their influence on perception

Lessons from different studies (Nzuvu, 1999; Mullins, 1998) have been learnt so far that the context in which grade retention is being practiced is important. For example, the time at which an event occurs can influence attention, as can location, light, heat, or any number of situational factors.

Perhaps, the observation made by Range et al; (2012) would help in concluding this matter. Firstly they argued that analysing the success of a practice is a noble professional duty. They further contend that despite our feelings toward any issue, grade retention is an emotionally charged issue; we must turn to the body of research to guide how we work with children. We would not expect our doctors and cancer research experts for example to rely on their feelings but we depend on them to rely on research. It is true that almost anyone will find exception to the rule. This includes testimonies of “it worked for these people I know”. Our practice toward grade retention must reflect research done on many children, while still keeping in account individual differences.

At global level, educators and policy makers have been debating on the subject of grade retention for pupils who perform poorly academically. The heated argument has been that pupils who fail to perform satisfactorily in a particular grade level, how then, will they perform in a higher grade if promoted to another level. While others hold the view that retaining a pupil in his or her current grade level would help that particular learner to obtain sufficient concepts and skills to do better in the subsequent grade level. However, others have counteracted that the academic success a pupil achieves after being retained would be for a short term hence discouraging the practice.

Although the first critical review of grade retention was carried out in 1975 by Jackson, studies however have shown that grade retention was first investigated before 1930 (Jimerson, Woehr and Kaufman, 2004; Stapleton and Robles-Pina, 2006). After his study, Jackson concluded that most of the research conducted prior to his critical review was limited and lacked significant results. Since then, the subject on grade retention has attracted greater attention globally. For instance, the National Centre for Education (2006) estimated that 10 to 20 percent of pupils are retained at least

once in their school career globally. Further research (Homes, 2006) revealed that underdeveloped countries were more prone to grade retention as compared to developed countries. The study furthermore indicated that the United States grade retention rate stood at about 15% as compared to Chad, Togo and Congo whose grade retention rates are as high as 53%. In addition, countries like Norway, Japan and Sweden had zero percent (0%) grade retention rates (Homes, 2006). Although grade retention is more pronounced in underdeveloped countries compared to developed states, it is however evident that the problem of grade retention exists globally (Jimerson et al, 2006; Homes, 1989; Rodrick, 1994; Rumberger, 1995; Shepard and Smith, 1990).

The above can be confirmed by research statistics that nearly three million pupils are retained each year in the United States (Jimerson, 2006). The U.S. Department of Education (2008) further stated that globally, males were more likely to face grade retention than females. It should be acknowledged that published research on grade retention at global level is vast. David (2014) contends that hundreds of studies globally have been conducted during the last century. He further observed that such research studies focused much on lower (elementary) grades. David furthermore noted that such studies asked different questions, looked at different aspects and above all, it was concluded that they were faced with methodological problems. This is the gap this study endeavoured to close by conducting a research that focused on grade retention at higher grades (i.e. secondary school level) and addressing some of the methodological gaps.

2.3 Grade retention from regional and local perspective

Jere (2006) concluded in his study that grade retention represents inefficiency and wastage of resources for society, but its voluntary forms may be beneficial to pupils in certain circumstances.

The study argued that grade retention had for some time been analysed both as a macro-level (societal problem) and also as a micro-level (individual option). The study furthermore contends that from a social economic perspective, schooling is most efficient if every pupil moves up a grade every year. The findings indicated that each child who is held back has the economic effect of adding a new pupil at that grade and subsequent grades. It was further argued that grade retention translates into larger class sizes and the need for additional desks and supplies. This eventually negatively affected the academic performance of pupils. Hence the conclusion is that the more pupils are held back each year, the more teachers and classrooms the school system would need (Corman, 2003).

Although the study by Jere (2006) showed similar trends with those done by Jimerson, Cartson, Robert, Egeland and Scrute (1997) which highlighted much on the downside of grade retention, it did not however explore the circumstances that can make grade retention a beneficial practice. Maybe the circumstances mentioned could be the ones grant-aided secondary schools have capitalised on to make the practice benefit the pupils and improve on pupils' academic performance coupled with the overall quality education which is being offered in grant-aided learning institutions.

The study by Jere (2006) further brought to light that most research studies on grade retention and its effects on educational outcomes have been done in developed countries. As such the findings may not generalise well to developing countries, where grade retention occurs more frequently and is more likely to be initiated or at least accepted by the family rather than imposed by the school. If this was the case, why then do grant-aided secondary schools especially in Zambia and Central province in particular have in place written policy on grade retention? By virtue of having

a policy, does it not mean that grade retention in grant-aided secondary schools is mandatory? While it may be agreed that the outcomes of studies conducted from developed nations could be difficult to generalise to developing countries, but do the factors that differentiate the two environments being explored? These and many questions remain unanswered which this study aimed to address.

Studies done in Burundi and Kenya where grade retention is prevalent showed that grade retention was associated with low academic achievement (Eisenomon and Schwille, 1991). Although the outcome of such researches could be welcomed, their justification however may be questioned. For example, grade retention that occurs in such countries takes place in the last year of the pupils' primary or junior or secondary cycle as a way of preparing them to compete for limited places at high secondary schools or university. Additionally this practice mainly happens in government run schools where the pupil is left to go through all grades until and only made to repeat in the examination grade after attempting and failing an examination. Contrary to government policy of automatic grade promotion (Educating Our Future, 2006), grant-aided secondary schools retain all those pupils who fail to meet minimum grade level skills regardless of the grade.

In Jere's (2006) study, it was established that some forms of voluntary grade retention appeared productive under certain conditions but long-run goals should include improving these conditions and eliminate grade retention. He further argued that any conclusions about policies relating to grade retention in developing countries must be tentative because of limited research base and differentiated because of different forms of grade retention that had been reported. This shows that there is need to do more research on grade retention. Therefore, it may be incorrect to generalise that grade retention is a bad practice because the conditions under which the policy is

applied remain varied. This could partly explain why despite other studies reporting negatively about retention policy, grant-aided secondary schools seem to favour the practice. This study therefore addressed such a concern.

Other studies by Beebe-Frankenberger, Bocian, MacMillan and Gresham (2004); Corman (2003); Martin, Foels, Clanton and Moon (2004) and Jimerson, Cartson, Robert, Egeland and Scroute (1997) indicated that much of grade retention in developed countries is imposed by schools on low-achieving pupils who have made poor progress, despite regular attendance. The studies further pointed out that the affected pupils were those who came from families that were ranked lower on measures of socioeconomic status and they were more likely to be males than females. The parents of such pupils were less likely to be involved in the school activities. The retention of such pupils depended mostly on recommendations based on teacher's assessments of intellectual and social maturity.

In a similar manner, questions could be raised such as do we know the bases on which pupils are retained in grant-aided secondary schools? If it is based on low academic achievement, who then is involved in determine pupils' intellectual capabilities or intelligence? Omari (2011: 306) asserts the following about intelligence:

...From Wechsler's global capacity of the individual to act purposefully, to think rationally, and to deal effectively with his environment to E.G Boring's positivistic definition of intelligence as simply that which an intelligence test measures. The problem with intelligence as a concept is that it cannot be directly observed. It must be inferred from behaviour.

Rather than being intelligently. As a hypothetical construct, intelligence has come to mean higher-level thought processes, or intellectual abilities, as opposed to Francis Galton's original notion of acute sensory powers. Statistical studies of intelligence utilize the concept of measured intelligence, which is the score received on a standardized intelligence test.

It may be argued therefore that intelligence is a relative term and also cultural specific. Based on these, are the results from intelligence test correctly interpreted and applied to determine who should be retained? If the conditions under which grade retention in developed countries also apply to those from grant-aided secondary schools in Zambia, why then do such schools insist on retaining pupils? These questions demand for dependable answers which this study tried to establish.

2.4 Pupils' perceptions towards grade retention

As already noted, most studies (Viland, 2001; Terry, 2011; Cannon and Lipscomb, 2011) have been conducted to examine teachers' and parents' perceptions towards grade retention but very little is known about pupils' perceptions towards grade retention especially in grant aided secondary schools in Central province of Zambia. Cannon and Lipscomb (2011: 1) writes: "when a student fails to master academic material, educators face a range of choices. They can provide extra tutoring, place the student in a summer school, or, as a last resort, hold the student back for a year. The last option (grade retention) often proves to be a difficult and contentious issue both to schools and parents". This shows that most studies conducted concentrated on parents' and teachers' perceptions towards grade retention. Yet the pupils who are at the centre of the learning process are usually left out. There is therefore, need to investigate pupils' perceptions towards grade retention as well (www.ppic.org).

In a study conducted by Holmes and Mathews (1984) at the University of Georgia, it was established that retained pupils found grade retention to be negative than positive. Some of the common negative responses that imaged from the study were among others 'being laughed' and 'teased by their friends'. This made the retained students lose concentration during the learning process thereby causing their academic performance to continue being poor despite being retained. The study by Homes and Mathews focused on pupils' perceptions towards school after being retained and not pupils' perceptions towards grade retention. In other words, the perceptions of pupils which were being investigated were not directly towards grade retention but towards school.

Other studies carried out in Minnesota by Byrnes (1986) and Viland, (2001) investigated how pupils perceived being retained, 84% indicated that it was a sad, bad and upset experience. It was further revealed that 76% of the students perceived grade retention negatively because they had fear of their parents reacting badly. For example, in the same study by Viland (2001) when non-promoted students were asked how parents would react about their repeating a grade, 46% replied 'mad', 28% 'sad' and 8% felt their parents would not care. It may be argued from the above statistics that pupils developed negative perceptions towards grade retention because of fear of parents' bad reaction. Further, the studies by Byrnes and Viland dwelled much on pupils' attitudes and not perceptions towards grade retention.

Holmes and Mathews (1984) conducted another meta-data analysis which reviewed eight studies measuring pupils' perceptions that confirmed that retained children found grade retention to be a negative experience. However, it should be mentioned that the validity and reliability of the findings may still be questioned on grounds that the meta-analysis did not

directly look at pupils' perceptions towards grade retention but how pupils viewed school after being retained.

Although the studies (Byrnes, 1986 and Viland, 2001) used the concepts 'perceptions' and 'attitudes' interchangeably, the two were however different. Attitudes are learned predisposition to respond positively or negatively to situations or persons and attitudes usually carry a strong emotional component (Omari, 2011). On the other hand, perception is peoples' sensory experience of the world around them and involves both the recognition of environmental stimuli and actions in response to these stimuli. Through the perceptual process, people gain information about properties and elements of the environment that are critical to their survival. Perceptions do not only create experiences of the world around individuals, it also allows people to act within their environment (Cherry, 2014). Based on these grounds and the fact that most studies were conducted from non-grant aided schools, it was important to have conducted a further inquiry that would put and apply different terminologies such as perceptions and attitudes into perspective.

The research design employed in most of the studies (Byrnes, 1986; Viland, 2001; Cannon and Lipscomb, 2011) to investigate pupils' perceptions towards grade retention was descriptive. The choosing of a research design is critical to any successful research undertaking. In agreement to the above, Patton (1990) confirms that a research design is a plan of scientific research or a programme designed in all stages from data collection to analysis. Therefore, an important study like this one that centres on pupils' perceptions towards grade retention, requires a researcher to carefully select an appropriate design.

Although descriptive research design has got its own strengths such as the opportunity it presents for a researcher to fuse both quantitative and qualitative data, descriptive research design however presents the possibility for error and subjectivity. For example, the study may contain errors, as the researcher may record what he/she wants to hear and ignore data that does not conform to the research project's hypothesis. Murphy (2014) argues that overcoming a research bias is an extreme difficulty for descriptive research practitioners and those who choose to use a descriptive research approach must be aware of biasness in research. Hence, considering the nature of the present study on 'pupils' perceptions towards grade retention and its effects on academic performance', there was need, to reconsider and employ alternative research design such as survey or case study design in order to increase the validity, reliability and in-depth understanding of research findings.

2.5 Effects of grade retention on academic performance

Research studies have demonstrated that although grade retention may impact positively on pupils' academic performance, the successes are short lived (Jere, 2006; Jimerson, 1999; Jimerson and Ferguson, 2007). The study outcomes indicate that grade retention in the long term offers very little academic achievement. For example, a study by Jimerson (1999) which compared the outcomes of retained students with a group of low achieving but promoted students on achievement test scores, the findings revealed that there was a significant difference between the two groups. The retained students had lower achievement scores than the equally low but promoted group.

Although the studies by Jimerson and Jimerson et al; (1999) gave a general picture that retained pupils performed poorly academically as compared to their counterparts the promoted, the studies failed to account for the level of emotional and academic support from

teachers, school administrators and parents each of the two groups received. Additionally, the learning environment in government secondary schools are in most cases different from grant aided schools. One may ask, is the pupil who is being held back in the same grade from grant-aided secondary school the same as his or her counterpart from non-grant aided secondary school? Do they receive the same emotional, academic and moral support from the significant others? These and many more are some of the questions the above studies (Jimerson, 1999; Jimerson and Ferguson, 2007) failed to address.

In another study conducted by Westbury (1994), only 14% of the findings showed positive effects of grade retention. Westburys' research consisted of two groups of students who were assessed in grades 1, 2, 3 and 6, with subject matter achievement tests. The study demonstrated short and long-term comparisons of randomly selected students who had been held back in one grade prior to the assessment in grade 6 and those who never experienced retention. The grade 3 tests indicated a significant difference in the academic performance favouring the continually promoted. Nevertheless, after analysing the grade 6 achievement test, there was no significant difference between retained students and continually promoted students (Kelly and Robles-Pina, 2010). Westbury claims that extra schooling should result in higher academic achievement. However, the results demonstrated the opposite effect. She therefore concluded that grade retention was not beneficial to the academic achievement of the pupils.

One may argue that Westbury (1994) study was conducted in non-grant aided schools that targeted lower grades (i.e. grades 1, 2, 3 and 6). Would the same study if conducted in grant-aided secondary schools targeting senior grades (i.e. grades 10-12) produce similar results? In

order to obtain reliable and valid results to such a question, there was need to institute further research, hence this study.

Further, Kelly and Robles-Pina (2010) reviewed seventeen studies, of which only one study looked at grade retention with a favourable response. Despite the study indicating positive effects of grade retention, it however failed to support grade retention as a proper academic intervention. In agreement with the above, Jimerson (2008) termed grade retention as ‘noxious’ and ineffective. While most studies (Westbury, 1994; Kelly and Robles-Pina, 2010 and Jimerson, 2007) have demonstrated that grade retention negatively affects pupils’ academic performance, still today, grade retention is being used frequently in not only Zambian grant-aided secondary schools but world over including developed nations. This left the researcher wondering as to why grade retention is still a preferred educationinterventional strategy for pupils who perform poorly academically in grant aided secondary schools despite its numerous negative effects on pupils’ academic performance. This called for further research, hence this study.

2.6Grade retention and other strategies and the extent to which they are implemented

Renaud (2013) conducted a literature review study which constantly agreed that both grade retention and social promotion should come to an end. The study recommended educators to focus on implementing other teaching practices that would prevent academic failure other than grade retention. Amongothereducationinterventional strategiesbeing advanced by other studies is developing pre-school interventional programmes. Renaud argues that such programs should target at risk children by assisting them develop social and cognitive skills.

It has been argued that targeting the skills at an early age can prevent grade retention (Barnett & Hustedt, 2005; Lincove & Painter, 2006).

Other studies such as those done by Bowman (2005) and Renaud (2013) showed that effective early reading programmes after school programs and professional development for teachers were critical education interventional strategies to grade retention. While Bowman (2005) claims that the above stated education interventional strategies to grade retention were effective, the study however overlooked the cost implications. For example, a country like Zambia which is economically poor, may find it a challenge to implement such options. For instance, most underdeveloped countries (Zambia inclusive) are already failing to effectively and efficiently run their respective education systems due to economic constraints. How then can such nations find resources to execute such expensive interventions? Further, most studies reviewed above targeted lower grades and little is known whether the suggested interventions would apply or work in grant aided secondary schools.

Protheroe (2007) argues that it is important to use interventions that accelerate the learning process. In his study, Protheroe recommended extended learning time that would allow the student more access to the curriculum as well as different instructional strategies to learn the information. Camody (2003) and Kakupa (2014) equally made similar claims that it was helpful to increase teacher effectiveness by providing professional development that would in turn help them to understand what approaches are most appropriate for their lowest performing pupils.

The education interventional strategies advanced by Protheroe (2007) seem not effective especially in Zambian grant-aided secondary schools. Despite such measures being already

implemented, the number of pupils in grant aided secondary schools being retained is still on the increase. For example, in the quest to improve academic performance and quality of education, the Zambian government introduced fast tract degree programmes in which during the initial stages of the programme, about 825 in-service teachers were enrolled in different universities including University of Zambia, Lusaka University and Zambian Open University (MOE, 2011). In addition, all secondary schools including grant-aided institutions were directed by Ministry of Education to actively implement continuous professional development (CPD) programmes as a way of enhancing professionalism among teachers so that in turn it would improve learners' academic performance.

Despite such interventions which are in agreement with what Protheroe (2007) suggested being implemented, the overall academic performance by pupils has continued being poor and a source of concern which eventually contribute to many pupils being retained especially in grant-aided secondary schools. One may argue that since parents' and teachers' perceptions have widely being sought especially in studies conducted abroad, maybe the effective education interventional strategies to grade retention and its effects on academic performance could be with the pupils themselves, hence the decision by this study to seek pupils' perceptions on the subject under review. Above all, the success or failure of any policy such as grade retention depends on how the implementation is executed.

One may argue therefore that generally, the implementation stage in a policy-cycle is very critical on the overall performance of policies. This is because policy implementation is a source of policy success or policy failure. That is, whether policies (such as grade retention policy) succeed or fail entirely depend on the model of policy implementation chosen by the implementing agency (in this case, grant-aided secondary schools). For the sake of this

research study, it is important to understand that there are different paradigms that have been used to explain how policy implementation can contribute to the success or failure of a given policy. These are the ‘top-down’; the ‘bottom-up’ and the intersection of the two, the ‘networks theorists’ (Hudson and Lowe, 2009). All these theorists (‘Top-down’; ‘Bottom-up’ and ‘Network’) argue that at the micro level of analysis, implementation is significant and thus, can be used to explain policy success or failure.

2.6.1 The Top-Down Approach as a strategy for policy implementation

The ‘top-down’ theorists (Pressman and Wildavsky, 1973) claim that there can be ‘perfect implementation’ if the teachers and pupils comply to what the managing agency stipulates as the steps to be followed in implementing a given policy (in this case grade retention). In other words, the managing agency or school board controls the whole programme to minimize conflict and deviation from the initial objectives. This implementation strategy assumes that a chain of command, compliant teachers, parents, pupils and objectives that the whole school accepts should be in place. Nevertheless, this implementation strategy has been criticized from the fact that there are very few case studies that can apply to the success of the top-down model as an implementation strategy (Elmore, 1978 in Hudson and Lowe, 2009; Elmore, 1978 as cited in Hudson and Lowe, 2009).

2.6.2 The Bottom-Up Approach as a strategy for policy implementation

Bottom-up theorists such as Lipsky (1971, 1979) postulate that it is inevitable that frontline staff have a major impact in the way a given policy is to be implemented. This is because they are close to the ground and understand exactly how to go about implementing the solution to the prevailing problem such that they can advise policy makers on how to go about implementing such perceived solutions. This strategy as a means of policy

implementation also falls short of glory due to the fact that the policy environment sometimes demands bargaining. This brings us to policy-network as a means of delivering policy.

2.6.3 Policy-Networks Approach as a strategy for policy implementation

Theorists in network analysis such as Marsh and McConnell (2010) state that policy implementation is not only about one particular group (whether through instructions from the top or identifying problems from the bottom) but it involves a series of different sectors or actors of the society who need to find a common cause to the problem and hence its solution.

Accordingly, it can be seen that there are major risks for policy failure during the implementation stage. Inconsistent and ambiguity of goals or set targets will make it difficult to deliver meaningful policies. Additionally, policy failure at implementation stage can result from wrong assumptions in explaining the prevailing problem in the causal theory; lack of resources as regards to political, financial, technical expertise, work force, and indeed the inappropriate instruments. Moreover, critical variables, namely: lack of commitment and skills of policy implementers coupled with lack of support from the affected interest groups and government agencies as well as the instability and uncertainty of the socio-economic conditions in which policy is implemented can bring about failure of what is intended (Sabatier, 1986).

Jean Piaget, a well renowned psychologist is right when he viewed children as active explorers and thinkers who are constantly trying to find ways of adapting to the environment around them. Since learners are active thinkers, it is important to find out pupils' perceptions towards grade retention as most studies especially those conducted abroad concentrated much on parents' and teachers' perceptions towards the practice.

Counselling is another critical component in dealing with the issue of grade retention. Hoekstra and Carrell (2014) in their study 'are schools counsellors an effective education input' for example, contends that one of the central questions in education was how schools can allocate resources most efficiently to produce education. The study reviewed several other studies that focused on factors of production such as teacher quality (Chelty, et al; Forthcoming; Rivkin et al, 2005) and smaller class size (Angrist and Lavy, 1999; Hoxby 2000; Krueger, 1999; Urquiola, 2006). However, in addition to hiring more or better teachers, schools can also increase the number of school support personnel, such as counsellors, to deal with pupils' problems that may impact academic achievement either directly or through peer interaction.

Moloney (2013) retaliates that counselling is an important component in enabling young people to take more responsibility for their lives by helping them to deal increasingly with their own issues and by empowering them through the respect and warmth offered in the counselling process. He noted that for counselling to become embedded positively in an institution of learning, the counselling department will need to be understood and supported by the major sections of school life, particularly the school head teacher and administration, the teachers and the pupils themselves. School counsellors should therefore act in such a way that they gain the understanding of the main stakeholders in the school. When this happens counselling will be an important component of all-round education which also supports the academic life of the school (Kairen, 2011).

Grant-aided secondary schools in Zambia have embraced counselling as a critical component of pupils' academic, social and spiritual wellbeing. All the schools for example which

participated in this study provided guidance and counselling to all the learners and later on those who faced grade retention. As Moloney (2013) correctly observed many academic difficulties which led to pupils being retained have their origins in the family background of the pupils and the attitude and expectations of parents. He argues that the inability to concentrate in studies and lack of motivation often have their source in relationship issues, worries about changes and some strong academic policies like grade retention which the school have put in place coupled with the put-downs by teachers and peers to mention but a few. Stephen (2012) seems to agree with Moloney (2013) that even half an hour of good listening by a trusted counsellor can bring significant changes in attitudes which later on influence perceptions towards learning. One wonders however if all these components of effective counselling were considered in non-grant aided schools where most studies had been conducted which concluded that grade retention was a bad practice. It therefore follows that more studies have to be conducted which will factor in such critical issues of counselling and their role in impacting pupils perceptions towards grade retention.

As earlier on noted, the study by Jere (2006), Range et al; (2012) and many others reviewed so far do not encourage grade retention as an education intervention to assist low academic achievers. It is also clear that such studies proposed a total elimination of the policy in all schools. Instead various research works advocated for an early intervention, collaboration with parents, supplementary instruction, and several other initiatives that are recommended for pupils who are at risk of school failure. In view of this, the following according to Jere (2006: 24-25) were suggested:

- i. Focus on prevention and early intervention rather than waiting until chronic patterns of school failure and frustration have solidified.

- ii. Form partnerships with parents by maintaining close communication, inviting them to visit the classroom, and providing them with instructional materials to use in tutoring their children at home.
- iii. Create positive classroom climates and cultivate supportive personal relationships with struggling students.
- iv. Provide smaller classes for at-risk students, especially when they are mastering basic literacy skills.
- v. Closely monitor low-achievers' participation in lessons and work on assignments.
- vi. Provide at-risk students with additional learning opportunities through extended day or extended year school schedules, summer school programmes or tutoring outside of regular school hours.
- vii. Educate teachers to enable them to understand and meet special needs, and give them access to resource persons with expertise in remediation and special education.
- viii. Educate teachers to view and implement assessment as an ongoing component of the curriculum, designed to evaluate the effectiveness of their own instruction and track continuous progress in their students' learning.
- ix. To minimise the degree to which pupils are younger than their classmates, set the birth date cut-off for eligibility for kindergarten or first grade near the beginning of the school year.
- x. Make sure that achievement expectations for each grade are realistic. Setting curriculum standards and achievement benchmarks is an imprecise, trial-and-error enterprise. Many standards are set too high in that most students will not be able to meet them even if they consistently apply reasonable effort to their studies.

It can be noted from the above education interventions that some of them could be difficult to implement. For example, an intervention such as that of ‘forming partnerships with parents by maintaining close communication, inviting them to visit the classroom, and providing them with instructional materials to use in tutoring their children at home’. While educated parents would manage to carry out such an option, the challenge however would be how to deal with uneducated parents. Further, while some of the suggested options to grade retention could score success stories in developed nations, the effectiveness of such in undeveloped countries where the majority of the citizens survive on less than one dollar per day coupled with high illiteracy levels and unbearable disease burden are unlikely to bear positive results. Instead of completely discarding grade retention, there could be ways of implementing the policy such that it eventually benefits pupils hence the need to conduct more studies especially locally and from schools that promote the practice such grant-aided schools hence the present study.

Jere (2006) further contends that informed professionals needed to educate policy makers and the general public about the evidence against grade retention. He argued that school administrators, teachers, parents and even pupils in developing countries often believed that grade retention is in the best interest of pupils in many situations. He further observed that similar beliefs were also held and common in developed countries but with less justification. The study furthermore claimed that most politicians, administrators and teachers remained unaware of the evidence against involuntary grade retention. Byrness (1989); Smith (1989); Tomchin and Impara (1992) seem to support the outcome from the study by Jere (2006) that teachers often believed that grade retention would help pupils begin to achieve more satisfactorily. They argued that these beliefs usually were based on philosophical and logical arguments that had strong face validity and thus seemed compelling.

The above recommendations however were from studies that involved school administrators, teachers and parents but leaving out the pupils themselves who are the major stake holders in the learning process. Therefore, one may ask! What about the pupils themselves? How do they perceive grade retention so that their input may help come up with corrective measures or policy amendments or strengthening? Why dwell much on teachers' and parents' perceptions rather than soliciting the views and experiences of pupils themselves? This study endeavoured to address such concerns.

2.7Summary

Taking a snapshot from studies reviewed so far, the general outcome is that grade retention has not been a beneficial educational intervention strategy for pupils who perform poorly academically. Such conclusions emanates mainly from studies conducted abroad whose population targets were parents and teachers. Further, studies reviewed on grade retention targeted lower grades from government run schools unlike this study whose focus was on senior pupils in grant-aided secondary schools. Finally, this study addressed methodological, design and data analysis techniques gaps that have been identified during the process of reviewing other studies related to the topic of grade retention. While parents' and teachers' perceptions towards grade retention have their own rightful place in enhancing the effectiveness of the practice, pupils' perceptions towards grade retention on the other hand deserves a comprehensive research, hence the present study that investigated pupils' perceptions towards grade retention and its effects on academic performance in grant aided secondary schools in Kabwe, Kapiri Mposhi and Chisamba districts of Central province Zambia. The next chapter discusses research methodology.

CHAPTER THREE

METHODOLOGY

3.0 Overview

This chapter presents the research methodology that was used in the study. Research design was presented first followed by the target population, sample, sampling procedure and instruments for data collection. Furthermore, the procedure that was used for data collection, data analysis and ethical considerations has been presented as well.

3.1 Research design

The study used a case study research design to investigate pupils' perceptions towards grade retention and its effects on pupils' academic performance in grant aided secondary schools in Central province. The case study design in this study combined qualitative and quantitative techniques of collecting and analysing data. Robson (1993) argues that a case study offers an opportunity for the researcher to consider a situation, individual, group, organisation or whatever is appropriate as the object of study. He further contends that among the advantages of using a case study research design is that it provides in-depth study of a phenomenon in its real life context through the use of multiple sources of evidence. Kombo and Tromp (2006:72) further postulate that "A case study seeks to describe a unit in detail, in context and holistically. It is a way of organising educational data and looking at the object to be studied as a whole...a great deal can be learned from a few examples of the phenomena under study..." In this study, St Pauls Boys, Angelina Tembo Girls and Chipembi Girls Secondary schools of Central province were sampled as case studies because they provided real life situations where pupils' perceptions towards grade retention were sought as they practice the policy of grade retention.

3.2 Target population

Leave (2005) defines population of the research as a target group from which the researcher wishes to draw responses from. In this study, the target population was all pupils from selected grant-aided secondary schools in Central province. Other respondents were guidance and counselling teachers and deputy head teachers from selected grant-aided. Pupils from grant aided secondary schools were targeted because they were better placed to provide responses based on their experiences in mission schools where grade retention is being practiced. Guidance and counselling teachers were part of the target population as they were actively involved in decision making for pupils to be held back in a particular school year or grade. Furthermore, the deputy head teachers were equally involved in this study because they were active implementers of grade retention policy in grant aided schools and also chairpersons for the academic committee that recommend pupils likely to be retained.

3.3 Study sample

A sample is a selected representation of a larger population (Tuckman, 2006). The sample was 96 respondents drawn from three grant aided secondary schools in Central province. The sampled schools were St Pauls Boys Secondary school (Kapiri Mposhi district), Angelina Tembo Girls Secondary school (Kabwe district) and Chipembi Girls Secondary school (Chisamba district). These grant-aided secondary schools were purposively selected because they implement the policy of grade retention. The sample consisted of 90 pupils (60 females and 30 males), 3 guidance and counselling teachers (2 males and 1 female) and 3 deputy head teachers (2 males and 1 female). Out of 90 pupils who answered the questionnaire, 30 of them especially those who indicated that they were once retained were followed and

interviewed and their responses were validated and confirmed by using pupils' progress record cards.

Grade retention is one of the multifaceted research topic in which many researchers have studied it in different context depending on the aim of a particular study. In some studies done within African countries by Jere (2006) and those by Range et al. (2012) considered variables such as pupils' age and social-economic as some the important variables that came out as causes of grade retention. Although the main variables in this study were grade retention (Independent variable) and academic performance (dependent variable), some of the background characteristics, however, that were taken into consideration in the study sample are described or tabulated as shown below:

3.3.1 Respondents by age group

The majority 74 out of 90 of the respondents were in the age group between 16-20 years representing 82.2%. The majority of those in this age group were pupils in senior secondary schools mostly from grade ten to grade twelve. On the other hand 16 (17.8%) of the respondents were aged 15 years and below that mainly consisted pupils in grades eight and nine.

3.3.2 Respondents by grade

The table below indicates distribution of respondents by their grade.

Table 1: Distribution of Respondents by grade

Grade	Frequency	Percent
Grade 8	4	4.4%
Grade 9	8	8.9%
Grade 11	31	34.4%
Grade 12	47	52.2%
Total	90	100%

The majority of respondents 47(52.2%) were grade twelve pupils followed by grade eleven pupils 31(34.4%) while those in grades nine and eight were 8(8.9%) and 4(4.4%) respectively. Those in grade ten are not represented in this study sample because at the time of collecting data, they had not yet reported for school.

3.3.3 Respondents' mode of schooling

The majority 58(64.4%) of the pupils who took part in the study were boarders while 32(35.6%) were day-scholars. Out of the three grant-aided secondary schools which purposively sampled, two of them had boarding facilities while one was a day-school.

3.3.4 Respondents' social-economic background

Most of the pupils 72(80 %) were being sponsored by their biological parents. While 11(12.2 %) of the respondents were being sponsored by their extended family members. Those who

are sponsored by charitable organisations or NGOs and well-wishers were in the minority at 6(6.7 %) and 1(1.1 %) respectively.

3.4 Sampling techniques

This study used both purposive and simple random sampling techniques in the selection of the respondents. Purposive sampling was used in selecting the three (3) deputy headteachers and three (3) guidance and counselling teachers from grant-aided secondary schools because these had the appropriate needed information on grade retention as they directly deal with pupils earmarked to be held back due to poor academic performance. Further, deputy head teachers were targeted because they were chairpersons for academic committees in grant-aided secondary schools that make final recommendations to the head teacher for pupils short listed for grade retention. Perhaps Kombo and Tromp (2006) are right in their observation that the power of purposive sampling lies in selecting study information-rich cases for in-depth analysis related to the central issues under study.

In addition, random sampling was used to select pupils because it gave all pupils an equal chance of being selected as respondents. In this research, small pieces of paper written on it “yes” and “no” were distributed to the pupils and all those who picked ‘yes’ participated in the study.

3.5 Instruments for data collection

The research instruments used to collect data were questionnaires, scheduled interviews and analysis of pupils’ progress record cards. Three sets of scheduled interviews were used to solicit information from pupils, deputy head teachers and guidance and counselling teachers

while only one set of a questionnaire was employed to collect data from pupils in the selected grant aided secondary schools in Central province. The interviews were used because they are flexible and allowed the researcher to ask respondents follow up questions where need arose. Interviews were also used because they gave the respondents an opportunity to feel part of the team and freely participated in the study. The questionnaires were as well used as data was collected from a relatively large sample, all respondents were asked the same questions and confidentiality was ascertained. Questionnaires were also used to ensure reliability and validity of the data thereby minimizing the interviewers' biasness. Other than questionnaires and interviews, pupils' progress record cards were used to confirm and validate pupils' responses that came from questionnaires and interviews.

In the quest to collect credible data, the validity and reliability of questionnaires and scheduled interviews were tested by conducting a pilot survey. White (2003) contends that although conducting a pilot study does not guarantee success in the main study but it does increase the likelihood of success. In this study, pre-testing of the research instruments provided valuable insights and chance for the researcher to check respondents' understanding of the meaning of the items in the questionnaire and ascertain the appropriateness of the research design chosen. A pilot study was conducted on 21 pupils (7 from each grant-aided secondary school) after permission was sought from the respective head teachers. The pupils who participated in the pilot study were part of the target population of this study but they did not participate in the main study. Nunnally (1970) and Babbie (1973) cited in Malambo (2012: 34) observed that "...a pilot study should be conducted on the sample of subjects similar to the group which the final study is to be conducted...pilot samples should be chosen in exactly the same fashion as is intended for the final survey..."

3.6 Procedure for data collection

In this study the questionnaires were self-administered to the randomly selected pupils from all the three grant-aided secondary schools sampled. These were numbered according to the desk numbers for each pupil. The purpose of numbering questionnaires according to numbers that appeared on the pupils' desks was to enable the researcher with the help of guidance and counselling teachers identify and follow up some of the pupils who were once retained. Out of those (90 pupils) who answered the questionnaires, the researcher followed 30 pupils out of all those who indicated that they were once retained with interviews. In other words, some of the pupils who experienced grade retention were also interviewed in order for the researcher to gain more insight and understanding mostly about the effects of grade retention on academic performance. The claims made by pupils from the questionnaires and interviews were later on compared with what was written on their specific and individual progress record cards. This exercise was made easy because in grant-aided secondary schools, they are very particular and up to date with record keeping.

Each pupil had a specific seat and desk number which corresponded with his or her name in the school registers and pupils progress record cards. For instance, a pupil who claimed that grade retention helped him or her improve in the academic performance, such a response was compared with what that particular pupil said in the questionnaire, interview and progress record card. In order to further establish the effects of grade retention on pupils' academic performance, the guidance and counselling teachers who had access to all the results for all the pupils and the deputy head teachers who are the chairpersons for the academic committee were equally interviewed and engaged to confirm whether what the pupils claimed were true

or not. That way, the researcher managed to establish whether the policy of grade retention in grant-aided secondary schools in central province had either positive or negative effects on the pupils' academic performance.

3.7 Data analysis

Data was analysed both qualitatively and quantitatively. Babbie (2007) argues that qualitative analysis ought to have non numerical examination and the interpretation of observation, for the purpose of discovering underlying meanings and patterns of relationships. On the other hand, Neuman (2006) attests that quantitative analysis ensures accuracy, validity and reliability thereby reducing on errors and biases. In this study thematic analysis was used to analyse qualitative data especially data generated from interviews, pupils' progress record cards and some questions from the questionnaire which were open-ended. Further, qualitative data was categorised in order to examine emerging themes.

On the other hand, quantitative data was descriptively and inferentially analysed by using a Chi-Square test at 95% confidence interval and a measure of error of 5% ($\alpha = 0.05$) particularly those items in the questionnaire which were close-ended. The Chi-Square values, probability values and other relevant statistical values were computed using Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS 20.0 version) which also helped to generate frequencies, tables, percentages and graphs. The Chi-Square test was used because the samples from the three grant-aided secondary schools were independent, each group of respondents (pupils) were randomly and independently sampled and the sample size was relatively large ($N > 30$). Further for likert scaled items, the mean and standard deviations were calculated.

3.8 Validity and Reliability

The study employed both qualitative and quantitative methods although the former took precedence. Kasonde-Ng'andu (2013: 4) contends that “Qualitative research is a method of investigation used in many different academic disciplines, though more traditionally in the social sciences and further contexts. It involves description, thus seeks to describe and analyse the culture and behaviour of humans and their groups from the point of view of those being studied.” Clearly, the principle aim for a qualitative researcher is to obtain an in-depth understanding of people’s behaviour and the reasons attached to such behaviour. Therefore, qualitative research approach helped the researcher to gain more insight on the pupils’ perceptions toward grade retention in grant aided secondary schools especially in circumstances where the responses could not be quantified. In other words, qualitative methods were far less structured and controlled. Jackson (2008) states that conducting research using such approaches enables the participants eventually adjust to the researcher's presence (thus reducing reactivity) and that, once they do, perceptions would be acquired from different points of view.

On the other hand, quantitative methods bring on board the principle of verifiability, that is, research outcomes can be confirmed, proved, corroborated and substantiated (Kombo and Tromp, 2006). While qualitative methods produce information only on a particular case studied, requires smaller but focused samples and relies on strategies that are flexible and interactive, quantitative research methods on the other hand can be used to verify and test hypothesis. Greene, Carnacelli and Graham (1989) attest that the use of both quantitative and qualitative research approaches in a study increases the quality of the final results and provide a more comprehensive analysis of the phenomena being studied because the outcomes got

using one paradigm could be clarified and verified by the use of the other paradigm thereby enhancing the credibility, reliability and validity of the research results.

Other than the use of interview schedules and questionnaires to collect data, pupils' progress records cards were used to establish and verify the effects of grade retention on pupils' academic performance. The fact that one of the objectives of the study was to establish effects of grade retention on pupils' academic performance implied that there was need to observe the respondents' academic progress for a relatively longer period of time. However, the effects were still established by validating the pupils', guidance and counselling teachers' and deputy's responses with the actual performance recorded in the pupils' progress records cards.

Furthermore, the schools sampled although they were all grant-aided secondary schools, are however run or managed by different church mother bodies or congregations. For example, St Pauls School is being managed by the Marist Brothers under the Roman Catholic Church while Chipembi Girls secondary school is run by the United Church of Zambia and the Catholic Sisters preside over Angelina Tembo secondary schools. In addition, a pilot study was carried out in order to test the validity and reliability of research instruments, validate the research design, data analysis tools, sampling procedures and determine the appropriate sample size. All these measures were deliberately employed as a way of further increasing the validity and reliability of the research findings of this study.

3.9 Ethical considerations

During the main study, before administering any instrument, clearance from the University of Zambia research ethical committee and permission was sought from the head teachers of the selected grant-aided secondary schools. Thereafter, respondents' informed consent was obtained as well. This was followed by random sampling of pupils. Further, Ethical considerations were taken into account by assuring all respondents and participants of confidentiality. It was made clear from the data collection instruments (questionnaires and structured interviews) that the information provided was to be used for academic purposes only. The names of all the respondents in the study remained anonymous. The questions in the questionnaire and interview guide did not cause psychological and emotional harm to the respondents. The deputy head teachers and guidance and counselling teachers were interviewed after permission was sought from their superiors (i.e. head teachers). The respondents (pupils, deputy head teachers and guidance teachers) were as well allowed either to continue or discontinue participating in the study at their own will without any form of force.

3.10 Summary

This section discussed the research methodology that combined both qualitative and quantitative research paradigms. Thereafter, a case study research design was presented followed by target population that comprised of all pupils, guidance and counselling teachers and deputy head teachers from grant-aided secondary schools that were drawn from three districts of central province Zambia. The chapter also highlighted ninety-six (96) respondents as the study sample size; sampling techniques used which combined both purposive and simple random sampling. Structured questionnaire and interview guide served as instruments for data collection which were supplemented by pupils' progress record cards analysis. The

Chi-square test computed by the Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS version 20.0) was used to analyse quantitative data while themes and subthemes were employed to analyse qualitative data. Lastly ethical considerations have been presented as well that included seeking respondents' consent and clearance from the University of Zambia Ethical Research Committee among others. The next chapter presents research findings.

CHAPTER FOUR

PRESENTATION OF RESEARCH FINDINGS

4.0 Overview

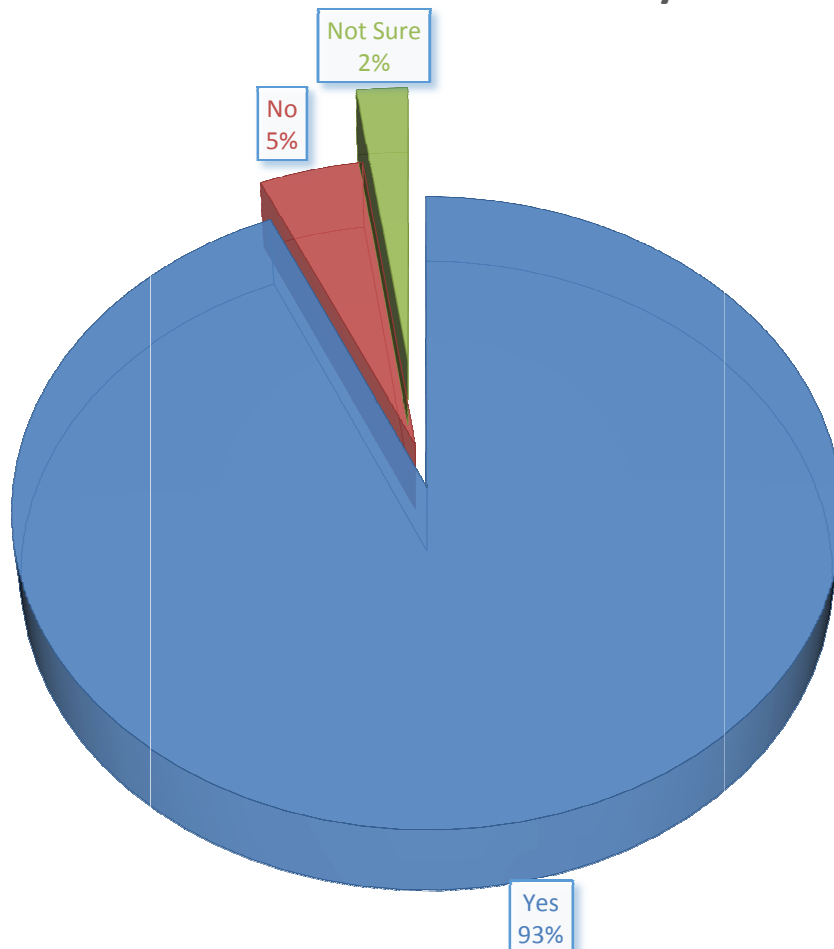
This chapter presents the research findings. The findings will further be analysed and discussed in the chapter that will follow. The presentation is structured along the research questions which the study intended to answer which were as follows:

1. What are perceptions of pupils towards grade retention in grant-aided secondary schools in Central province?
2. What are the effects of grade retention on pupils' academic performance in grant aided secondary schools in Central province?
3. To assess the extent do grant-aided secondary schools implement grade retention policy in Central province?

4.1 Pupils' knowledge on grade retention policy

In order to establish pupils' perception towards grade retention, respondents were first asked on their knowledge on the existence of grade retention policy in grant-aided secondary schools. Their responses are as shown in the figure below.

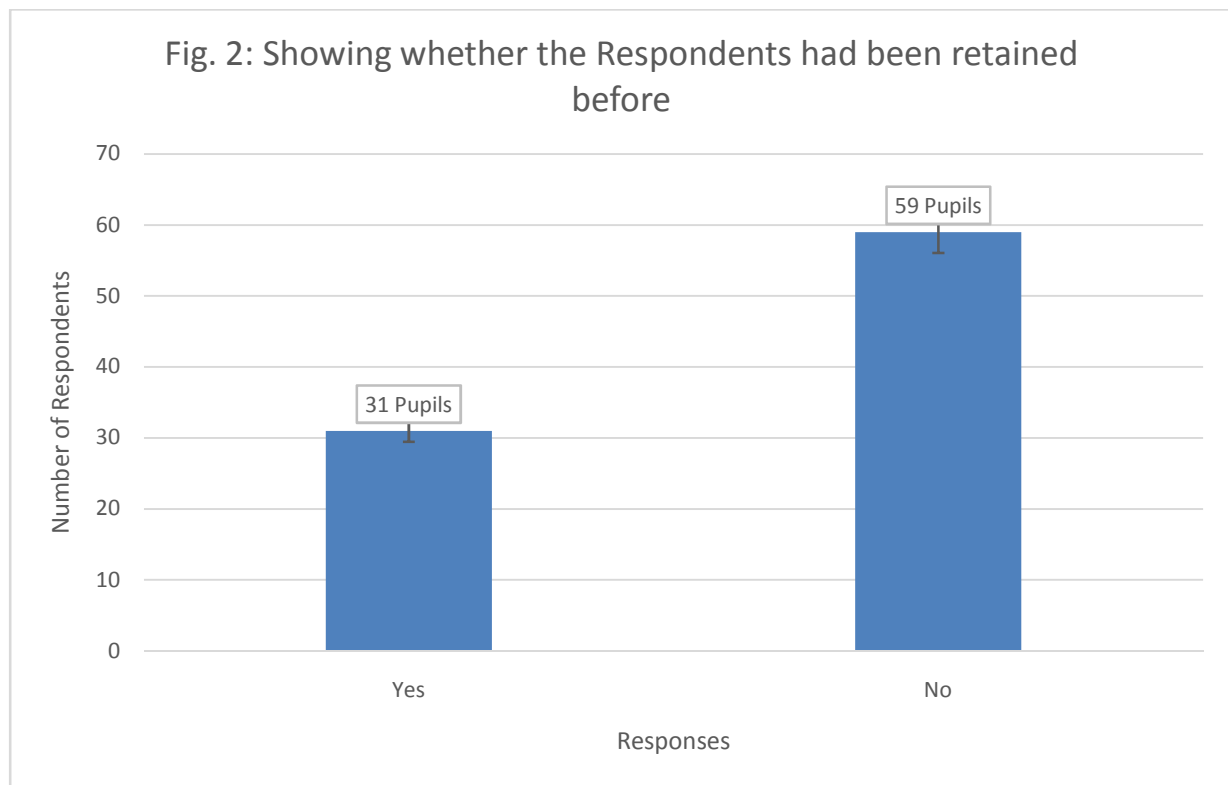
FIG.1: Showing Respondents' Knowledge About Grade Retention Policy



The above figure shows pupils' knowledge on the grade retention policy in grant-aided secondary schools. Most of the pupils, 84(93 %), stated that they were aware about the existence of grade retention policy. The minority 6(7 %) showed ignorance on the existence of the grade retention policy. Of these, 4(5 %) stated that they were not aware while 2(2 %) were not sure whether the policy existed or not.

4.2 Whether some respondents had been retained before

The research went further to find out whether some respondents had been retained before in their education. The results are as shown below:



The above figure shows the responses of the pupils when they were asked whether there was a time when they had been retained before. The majority, 59 out of the total respondents of 90 pupils (representing 66%) stated that they had not been retained. However, 34 % (that is, 31 out of 90 respondents) of the respondents stated that they had been retained before.

4.2.1 How many times some pupils have had their grades retained

This research study went further to find out from those pupils who had at one time been retained how many times they did that. The table below shows the responses from the pupils.

Table 2: How many times pupils were retained in their Grades

How many times you were you retained?	Frequency	Percent
Once	29	32.2%
Twice	2	2.2%
Not Applicable	59	65.6%
Total	90	100%

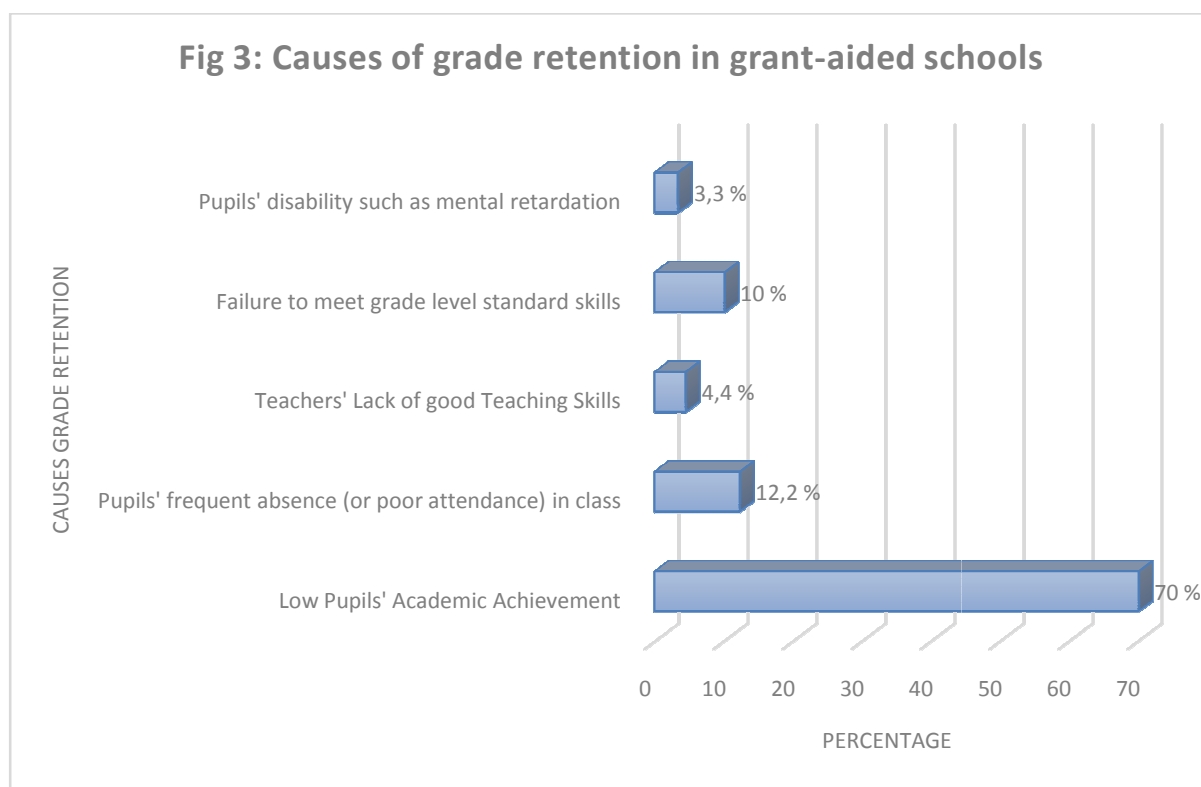
The table above shows the number of times that some respondents had been retained in their grades. Of the 31(34 %) who stated that they had been retained before, the majority, 29(32.2 %) indicated that they had only been retained once while the minority 2(2.2 %)stated that they had been retained twice.

4.3Causes of grade retention in grant-aided secondary schools

Respondents were further asked to identify the possible major causes of grade retention in grant-aided schools.

4.3.1 Pupils’ responses on the causes of grade retention in grant-aided schools.

Grade retention is one of the academic policies that grant-aided secondary schools of central province implement as an interventional measure for pupils whose academic performance was poor. Pupils from these schools being at the centre of this study, it was important to find out from them the main causes of grade retention. The study therefore sought pupils’ experiences on this matter and their responses are hereunder shown in figure 3:



The above figure shows the major causes of grade retention as unearthed by this research study. The majority of the pupils, 63(70 %) indicated that grade retention was due to low pupils' academic achievement. In addition, 11(12.2 %) of the respondents stated that grade retention was due to pupils' frequent absence from lessons. 9(10 %) of the respondents alluded grade retention was due to failure to meet standard grade level skills. Moreover, 4(4.4 %) of the pupils pointed out that they were retained because teachers did not have good teaching skills. Lastly, but not the least, 3(3.3 %) of the pupils pointed out that the grade retention was due to pupils' disability such as mental retardation.

4.3.2 Deputy Head teachers' views on the causes of grade retention

The deputy head teachers chair the academic committee whose role is to scrutinise all those pupils earmarked for retention and finally recommend to the Head teacher for action. When asked as what caused pupils to be retained all the deputy head teachers interviewed affirmatively 3(100%) indicated that poor academic performance was the major cause of grade retention in mission schools.

One of the Deputy Head Teachers said the following:

The majority of our pupils who get retained are those that perform poorly academically.

Another Deputy Head Teacher interviewed reviewed the following:

...poor academic performance is the major cause of grade retention in our mission schools...

Another Deputy Head Teacher narrated:

...as you know, there could be other reasons why our pupils get retained, but the main reason is due to poor academic performance...

4.3.3 Guidance and counselling teachers' views on the causes of grade retention

The guidance and counselling teachers who are charged with the responsibility of monitoring and evaluating pupils' academic performance among other roles were equally consulted about the causes of grade retention. During an interview, their views were not different from those held by the deputy head teachers. That is, all of them 3(100%) stated that although there were other reasons for retaining pupils such as prolonged illness and absenteeism, the main cause was however due to pupils' poor academic performance.

Guidance and Counselling Teacher 1:

It has been observed with concern that most of our pupils who fail to progress to the next grade are those who fail to perform well in their academic achievement.

Guidance and Counselling Teacher 2:

Unsatisfactory academic performance contributes a greater percentage to the pupils who face grade retention.

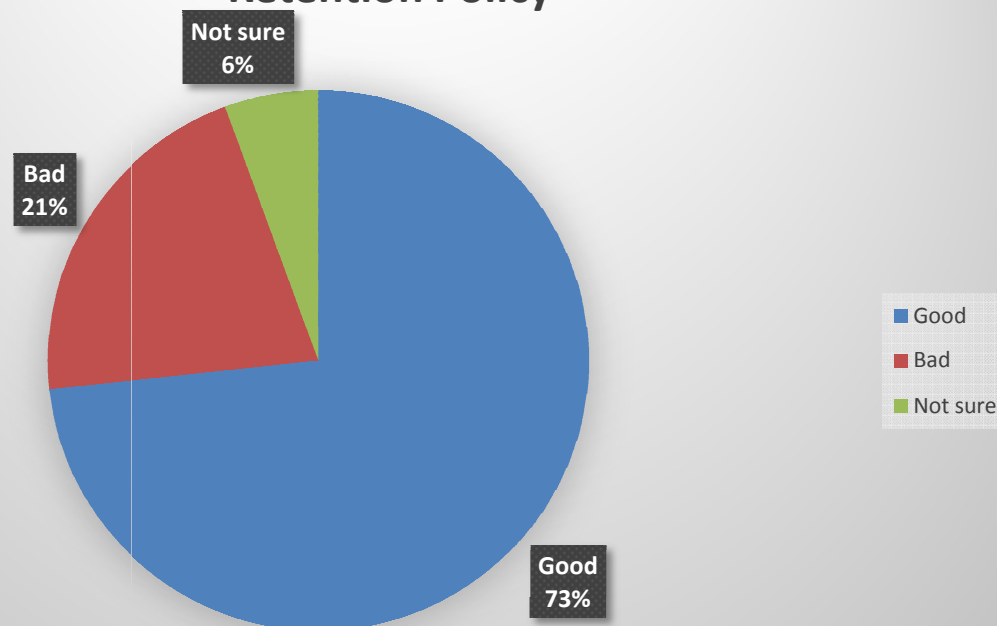
Guidance and Counselling Teacher 3

Poor academic performance is the main cause of grade retention among our learners

4.4: Pupils' perception about grade retention in grant-aided secondary schools

This research study also wanted to find out how pupils in grant-aided secondary schools perceived grade retention policy. The results are as shown in the figure below:

Fig. 4: Showing Pupils' Perception about Grade Retention Policy



The above pie chart shows pupils' perception about grade retention policy. The majority of the pupils 66(73 %) viewed grade retention policy as being good. However, 19(21 %) of the pupils were of the view that grade retention policy was bad. Nevertheless, 5(6 %) of the pupils were not sure whether grade retention policy was good or bad.

4.4.1 Pupils' common responses on how they perceived grade retention

The following were some of the views from pupils who were interviewed as regard to how they perceived grade retention in grant-aided secondary schools. One of the respondents narrated as follows:

...grade retention policy is very good because it has helped me in my academic performance... This policy is testimony enough that mission

schools care for us pupils unlike in government secondary schools where they don't care about our academic performance...

Another respondent indicated the following:

...instead of being laughed at, I instead received a lot of encouragement from friends... I also received support and encouragement from my mother who encouraged me to work hard despite what had happened. I can now say that it is good to be retained so that you learn more and work harder.

The other respondent further narrated the following:

Retention policy may seem to be bad in certain circumstances but when you look at it realistically, it's just as good as being given a second chance. I now understand it and I won't let that pass me. Retention shouldn't be a burden to anyone's life but simply a way of how to refresh and plan your future wisely by proving to your parents with great marks without the benefit of doubt.

Furthermore, a response from one of the pupils interviewed was as follows:

Retention policy is a very bad thing... I felt out of place, the whole thing was just strange. I lost my concentration in class and my academics were a mess. What I think is that this whole thing of retention came to destroy and not to build...

The other respondent expressed the following view:

Retention policy is not something bad because it can help us improve and become what we want to be in future

A snapshot of the pupils who were interviewed as shown above gave overwhelming response that they perceived grade retention policy positively.

4.4.2 Deputy Head Teachers' Views on how they perceived grade retention

As already noted, the deputy head teachers play a critical role in the whole process of retaining pupils as they preside over the academic committee as chairpersons. The academic committee makes final recommendations to the head teachers for the pupils earmarked for retention. Their views on how they perceived grade retention policy were sought and one of the deputy head teacher indicated the following:

..For me grade retention is a very good practice because it has really helped us mission schools not only to maintain good academic standards and provide quality education but also to help struggling pupils academically realise their potential...

The other deputy head teacher expressed the following views:

...my personal view is that this educational intervention works well in lower grades but not at secondary school level...anyway in mission schools we use it to produce 100% pass rate which in my view government runschools can also achieve the same if they were to employ this intervention....

The other response was as follows:

...yes we use grade retention to help some of our pupils who are very weak in their academic achievement...in that sense it is taken to be good.

The Deputy Head Teachers' views were not very different from those expressed by the pupils. The above narratives indicates that 2 out the 3 deputy head teachers gave an affirmative response in favour of the policy and only 1 expressed mixed feelings on whether it is good or not.

4.4.3 Guidance and Counselling Teachers' views on how they perceived grade retention

The guidance and counselling teachers in grant-aided learning institutions play intermediate roles and act as a bridge between pupils and the school administrators. They are also the custodian of pupils' academic results with the purpose of tracking pupils' individual performance. Their views were equally sought and responses are shown below:

The first respondent interviewed revealed the following:

...this policy is good depending on how it is implemented. For mission schools it helps us to sieve so that only fully baked pupils are allowed to proceed and write the final examination. In fact it helps us maintain standards unlike in government schools where they are just interested in quantity but not quality as you know...

The second respondent also indicated the following:

...grade retention is good although it conflicts with government policy of allowing more children access school places...

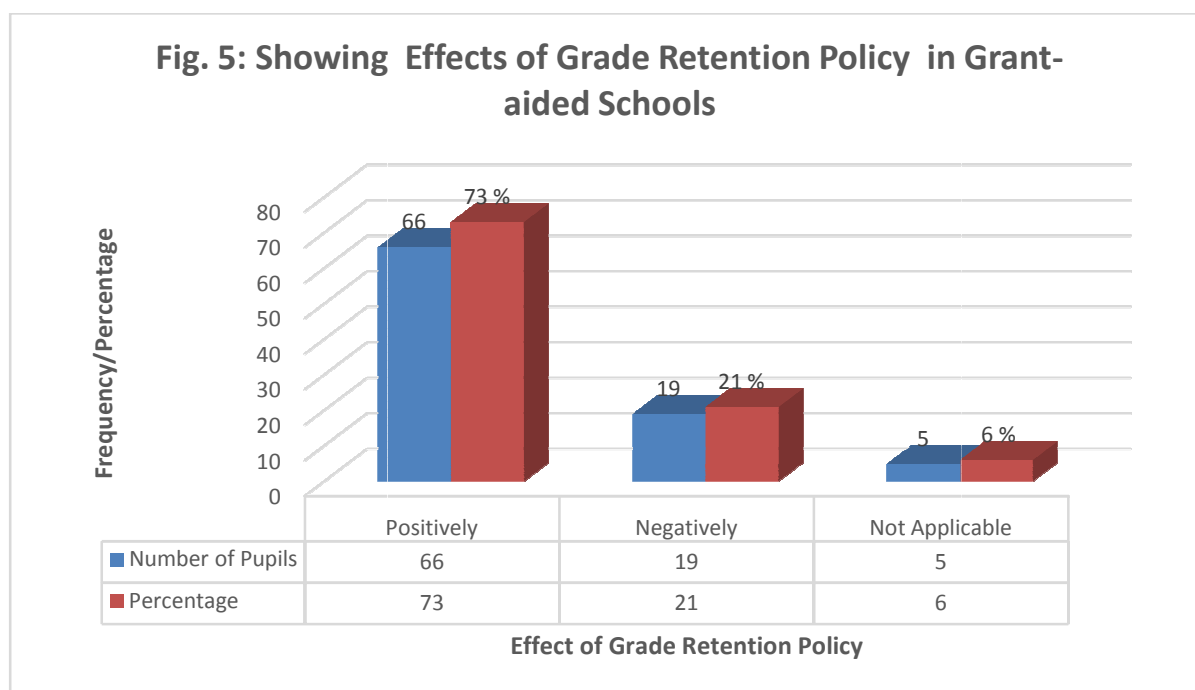
The other respondent further narrated the following:

...In as much as the motives of implementing grade retention are good in terms of improving the academic performance and maintaining standards and quality of education offered in missions schools, it must be acknowledged that the practice also boards on pupils' emotions. However, it is the way we actualise this policy in grant-aided secondary schools that makes a difference on whether pupils would regard it good or bad. So far we have done very well as mission schools because the practice is done holistically with the involvement of all stake holders...

All the guidance and counselling teachers overwhelmingly 3(100%) endorsed grade retention as a good educational intervention to help pupils who performed poorly in their academic work especially those who continually scored below average. However, one of the guidance and counselling teacher cautioned that the way the policy was implemented largely determined how pupils perceived the practice.

4.5 Effects of grade retention on pupils' academic performance in grant-aided secondary schools

Having established pupils' perception about the grade retention policy, this research study sought also to establish how pupils were affected by the grade retention policy. Pupils were asked to state whether the effects of the policy were positive or negative on their overall academic performance. Their views are as shown in the figure below:



The above figure shows the effects of grade retention policy in grant-aided secondary schools on the overall academic performance of pupils. The majority of the pupils 66(73 %) stated that grade retention policy has had a positive effect on their learning experiences. 19(21 %) of the respondents indicated that grade retention policy had a negative effect on their learning experiences. However, 5(6 %) of the respondents were not sure whether the policy had a positive or negative effect on their learning experiences.

4.5.1 Pupils'common responses on the Effects of Grade Retention on Academic Performance

The following were some of the views from pupils who were interviewed as regards to the effects of grade retention on academic performance in grant-aided secondary schools. The sampled common responses by different respondents are presented below. One of the respondents indicated the following:

...after being retained, I devoted much of my time on studies...

The other respondent further expressed the following:

...from the time I was retained things have changed to such an extent that what teachers teach has become like revision...

In addition, the following were indicated by yet another respondent:

...my parents told me of the retention policy in mission schools. That made me to work very hard...

Another respondent expressed the following views:

...it affected me negatively in such a way that the class they had put me in, was a lower grade than I was and so the classmates were laughing at me and degrading me very much saying that I was dull.

Furthermore, the other respondent noted the following:

I was encouraged to focus on my goal and ignore any negative comments from people...

Another respondent answered as follows:

...it helped me positively on the part of my grades which were not so good.

Additionally, the following was noted by one of the respondents:

...I was very frustrated when I was retained because most of my classmates were laughing at me.

Another response from one of the respondents was as follows:

Retention policy in mission schools has really affected my life in a negative way such that I feel shy learning with people who were in the lower grade...

In response to the question, one of the respondents had this to say:

After I was retained I saw that I was improving in my learning and participation...

A further response was narrated as follows:

...My experience is that every time the teacher asked a question I was always lifting my hand and when it came to the test I always got high marks than the ones I used to get before being retained.

The following was furthermore expressed by one of the respondents:

...I am very proud I am now doing well and I know even with my grade ten I can go to a boarding school...

In response to the question, it was noted by one of the respondents as follows:

...when I was retained I worked very hard and now I like my performance at school...

Although there were isolated cases where grade retention was viewed negatively, the rest of the pupils which were the majority answered in favour that the policy had positive effects on their learning experiences in grant-aided schools.

4.5.2 Deputy Head teachers' views about effects of Grade Retention in grant-aided secondary school

Views from deputy head teachers were solicited on how grade retention policy affected pupils' learning experiences. All the deputy head teachers interviewed 3(100%) indicated that they were proud of grade retention policy as it helped pupils to do well and also the school to

maintain standards not only in central province but country wide where pupils are able to access education from mission schools. This is evidenced by the verbatim below:

It is a joy for us to see a pupil who used to score 10%, 20% but after being retained that particular pupils begin to perform above average and continues to do well to an extent of surpassing those who were not retained... We are very proud that some of our pupils who were once retained are now studying at the University of Zambia and some universities abroad....Others are now working and live independent lives...Of course, at the beginning the pupil and parents may feel bad but with counselling and constant collaboration between us and parents, both the pupils and parents come to appreciate grade retention as a good practice...

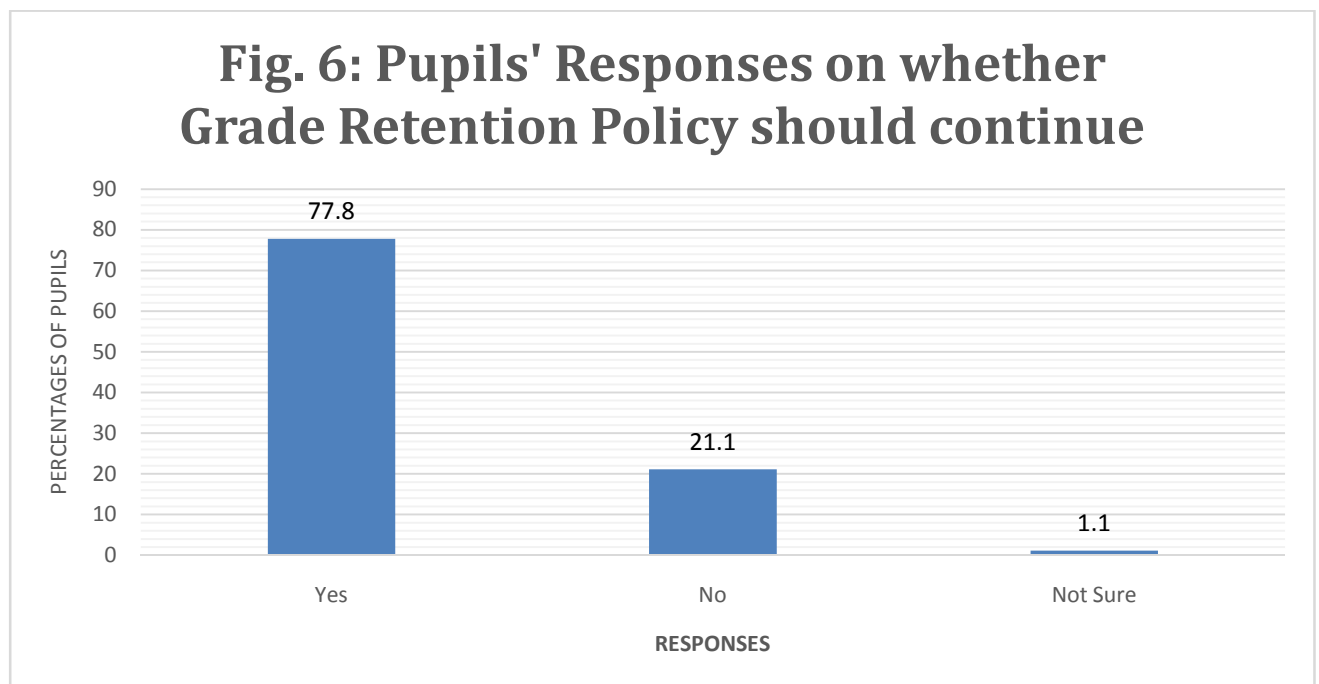
4.5.3 Guidance and counselling teachers' views about effects of grade retention policy on pupils' learning experience in grant-aided schools

The guidance and counselling teachers' views were in agreement with those expressed by the deputy head teachers that the effects of grade retention policy were positive in grant-aided learning institutions. They were however quick to point out that grade retention was an emotional issue and therefore there was need to put in place robust counselling programmes to avert the short term negative effects that come along with the policy of grade retention. The guidance and Counselling actual responses are expressed below:

This policy has helped our pupils to improve their academic performance despite being an emotional issue...So far we have done very well as mission schools because the practice is done holistically with the involvement of all stake holders...

4.6 Whether grant-aided secondary schools should continue with grade retention policy?

This research study also endeavoured to find out from the respondents whether the grade retention policy should continue in grant-aided secondary schools or not. The responses of pupils to this question were as shown in the figure below:



The majority of the respondents, 70(77.8 %), were of the view that grade retention policy should continue in grant-aided secondary schools. 19(21.1 %), however, were of the view that grade retention policy should not continue in grant-aided secondary schools. 1(1.1 %) of the respondents were unsure whether grade retention policy should continue or not.

4.6.1 Deputy Head teachers' responses on whether grade retention should be continued in grant-aided school

Out of the three (3) deputy head teachers who were interviewed, two (2) of them indicated that the policy should continue as it helped mission schools maintain standards and produce well rounded graduates in society. On the other hand one of them declined citing reasons that the practice was in conflict with government policy of more pupils accessing school places and also due to the challenge of examination numbers from the Examination Council of Zambia which expires after three years.

One Deputy Head Teacher said:

...this is a policy and so it cannot be questioned or challenged...

Another Deputy Head Teacher expressed the following views:

....grade retention should continue because it is good...

The views of another Deputy Head Teacher were as follows:

Grade retention should not be continued because it is in conflict with other government policies.

4.6.2 Guidance and counselling teachers' views on the continued implementation of grade retention policy in grant-aided schools

Contrary to the views of the majority deputy head teachers, all the three counsellors 3(100%) interviewed were of the view that better and modern strategies should be explored to replace grade retention. They further argued that in this era of advanced technology, interventions

that are technologically based should be sought to help pupils who struggle in their academic work.

One of the Guidance and Counselling Teacher answered as follows:

Grade retention come along with it a lot of trauma and emotions hence the need to explore other educational interventions for our pupils who perform poorly in the academic subjects.

Another Guidance and Counselling Teacher responded:

...if there are other options, why not consider them?

The response from yet another Guidance and Counselling Teacher was as follows:

It takes a lot of work and counselling to convince a retained pupil to accept and appreciate this policy... So any other means that can help our pupils improve in their academic performance is welcome...

4.7 Whether grade retention policy contributes to improvement in academic performance?

Having established the general views of respondents whether the policy should be continued in grant-aided schools or not, the respondents in this research study were further asked whether grade retention policy contributed to improvement in the academic performance or not. Pupils' views and experiences were sought to establish how grade retention policy contributed to the improvement of the academic achievement. The findings from this study are as shown in the table below:

Table 3: Pupils' Views on whether grade retention policy contributes to academic performance in grant-aided schools

Whether grade retention policy contributes to academic Performance?	Frequency	Percent
Strongly agree	50	55.6%
Agree	28	31.1%
Strongly disagree	5	5.6%
Disagree	4	4.4%
Not Sure	3	3.3%
Total	90	100%

From the table above, the majority of the pupils agreed that grade retention policy contributed to their academic performance. These had a collective total of 78(86.7 %) of which 50(55.6 %) said they strongly agreed while 28(31.1 %) were for those who agreed). However, 9(10 %) of the respondents disagreed that grade retention policy contributed to academic performance in grant-aided schools. 3(3.3 %) of the respondents were unsure if grade retention policy contributed to their academic performance.

4.7.1 Pupils' common responses on whether Grade Retention contributed to improvement of Academic Performance

The following were some of the views from pupils who were interviewed as regards to how grade retention contributed to their improvement of the academic performance in grant-aided secondary schools. One of the respondents indicated the following views and experiences:

...after being retained, I devoted much of my time on studies. Learning and understanding the concepts that gave me difficulties earlier became easy more especially after the series of prayer and encouragement by the Champlain priest conducted. Through such encouragements, I felt that God and the whole school community were with me. This made me to work hard to such an extent that I started scoring an average of 77% during class exercises, mid-term and end of term tests. I must admit that before being retained, I used to get between 20% and 30% but now I'm happy and changed. I say thank you to all teachers because I now understand most of the things they teach and my goal is to obtain 6 points at grade twelve (Field Interview, 2015)

Another respondent answered as follows:

After I was retained I saw that I was improving in my learning and participation. I had confidence I was not ashamed that I was retained. I did not regret on anything because I saw that I improved than before (Field Interview, 2015).

The other respondent further expressed the following:

...when I was retained I worked very hard and now I like my performance at school. I was retained because my results were not good. I was getting lower marks like in Maths. I was getting 45%, English 57%, History 64%, BS 34%, ICT 25% and PE 50%. That was not good for me but now I have improved in everything. Maths I got 81%, English 75%, History 80%, BS 60%, ICT 69% and PE 71% and that is very good that is why I am encouraged (Field Interview, 2015).

One of the respondents interviewed said the following:

...it affected me negatively in such a way that the class they had put me in, was a lower grade than I was and so the classmates were laughing at me and degrading me very much saying that I was dull. The mission school retained me because I did not do well in my academics and with the approval of my parents I was retained. I felt so bad and very embarrassed because the people who were behind me were now with them in the same class. I felt out of place, the whole thing was just strange. I lost my concentration in class and my academics were a mess.

Another respondent expressed the following views:

...it helps me positively on the part of my grades which were not so good. It really helped me a lot, but there were times when you would feel bad to see former classmates precede. It felt like mental torture doing the same things that one had achieved a year before, but later got used to it and it really helped. Though I do not think everyone can be helped by grade retention, because some people improve while some just get worse.

The experiences of one of the respondents were as follows:

I was made to be retained in grade 8; from there I thought of it and started studying. In the first end of term I was doing well and my parents were very proud until now, because of studying. I am the one who gets highest marks with all subjects except Maths. I have never been the lowest I pass with 70% and above. I am very proud I am now doing well...

Although there were isolated cases where grade retention was viewed not to have contributed to the improvement of pupils' academic performance, the rest of the pupils who were the

majority answered in favour that the policy helped them improve in their academic performance.

4.7.2 Deputy Head teachers' common responses on the contribution of Grade Retention in improving pupils' academic performance

Views from deputy head teachers were solicited on how grade retention policy affected pupils' academic performance and one of them indicated the following:

It is a joy for us to see a pupil who used to score 10%, 20% but after being retained that particular pupil begin to perform above average and continues to do well to an extent of surpassing those who were not retained... We are very proud that some of our pupils who were once retained are now studying at the University of Zambia and some universities abroad....Others are now working and live independent lives...Of course, at the beginning the pupil and parents may feel bad but with counselling and constant collaboration between us and parents, both the pupils and parents come to appreciate grade retention as a good practice...

Another deputy head teacher expressed the following:

...while! While!...I think it is in public domain that grant-aided schools perform very well...these 100% we have been producing over the years it's because of such policies...

Furthermore, the other deputy head teacher indicated the following:

...grade retention has helped us to maintain good standards although now we are faced with a challenge of examination numbers expiring after three

years...we are foreseeing a situation where some pupils despite their poor performance could be allowed to proceed for fear of examination numbers expiring. Otherwise it is a good policy because even some of our parents who were against it are now in full support of grade retention (Field Interview, 2015).

The sentiments from the deputy head teachers all point to the general trend that grade retention in grant-aided secondary schools help pupils to work hard and take their studies seriously.

4.7.3 Guidance and counselling teachers'views about how Grade Retention policy had improved pupils' academic performance

Views from counsellors were solicited on how grade retention policy contributed to pupils' academic performance and their responses are shown below. Among the respondents who were interviewed, one of them indicated the following:

...it must be acknowledged that when a pupil is retained, it is traumatising in the first place but with encouragement and counselling, the pupils will later appreciate why the school authorities took that decision (Field Interview, 2015).

Guidance and counselling teacher noted the following:

...for fear of being retained, our pupils are ever studying...in view of this grade retention has contributed to pupils' academic performance and it has worked very well for grade eights and nines. The challenge still remains with senior grades mainly due to their negative attitudes and perceptions

about the policy. The other reason is that at senior level, for the child who lacks basic skill, grade retention may not work despite that pupil being held back several times...(Field Interview, 2015)

Further, the other guidance and counselling teacher said the following:

...despite the emotional and psychological negative effects that come along retaining a pupil, it has worked very well especially for the slow learners to catch up with their academic work....

Although the guidance and counselling teachers interviewed pointed out that grade retention was an emotional issue, all of them 3(100%) however admitted that it helped slow learners to improve in their academic performance in the long term. They further revealed that what was needed was an effective counselling team to help affected pupils accept their verdict.

4.7.4 Findings from pupils' progress record cards on whether grade retention contributed to improvement of pupils' academic performance

The responses from pupils who indicated that grade retention had helped them improve in their academic performance were verified and compared with what the pupils' progress record cards contained.

The pupils' progress record cards generally showed that the majority of pupils who were retained in a particular grade improved in their academic performance. The upward trend in academic improvement continued up to the time the pupils wrote either grade nine or twelve

final examinations. For example the results claimed by a named pupil during an interview were verified and confirmed with the actual performance as indicated in the record cards both before and after retention as follows:

Table 4: Pupils academic performance before and after grade retention

SUBJECT	Academic Performance Before Retention	Academic Performance After Retention
English Language	43%	70%
Religious Education	49%	67%
Environmental Science	24%	67%
Office Practice	45%	66%
History	38%	58%
Agricultural Science	42%	54%
Mathematics	16%	51%

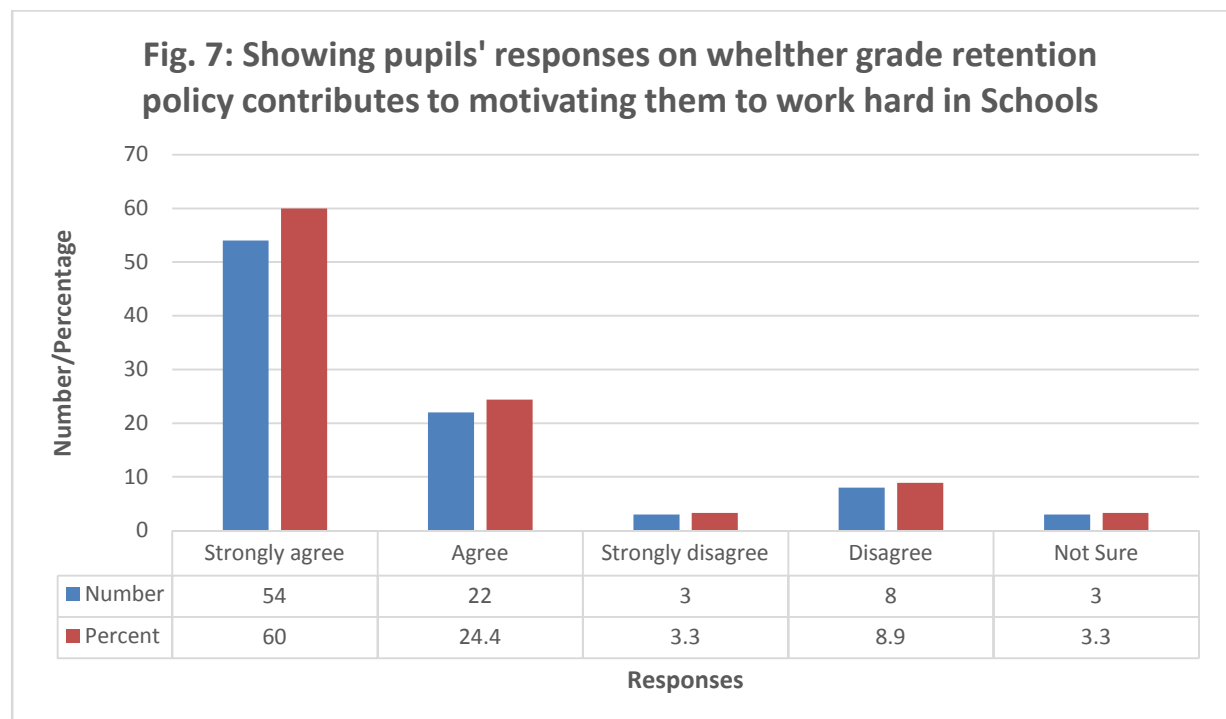
The table above shows a tremendous improvement in the pupils' academic performance ranging from 16% to 49% and 51% to 70% before and after grade retention respectively. The improvement in academic performance almost doubled on average. The analysis of other pupils' results who participated in the study showed similar trends although what remained unknown was how such pupils would perform after school especially when they entered into colleges and universities a task which was beyond the scope of this study.

4.8.Does grade retention contribute to motivating pupils to study hard in grant-aided secondary schools?

In trying to assess the effect of grade retention policy on pupils’ academic performance, this research study endeavoured to find out whether this policy contributed to motivating pupils in grant-aided secondary schools to work hard whilst in schools.

4.8.1 Pupils’ responses on whether grade retention motivated learners to study hard

The existence of grade retention in grant-aided secondary schools has got a lot of implications on pupils’ academic performance. This study wanted to ascertain whether the policy contributed in motivating pupils to work hard in their school work or not. The responses from the pupils as regards to this question are as shown in the figure below:



From the above figure, the majority of the pupils, that is, 76(84.4 %) were in agreement that the policy of grade retention in grant-aided secondary schools contributed in helping them to be motivated to study hard in school. However, 14(12.2 %) of the pupils did not share the view that grade retention policy in grant-aided secondary schools helped pupils to get motivated into studying hard in schools. 3(3.3 %) were unsure whether grade retention policy motivated pupils into working hard in grant-aided secondary schools.

4.8.2 Deputy Head teachers' views on whether the existence of grade retention in grant-aided schools motivated pupils to study hard or not while in school

All the deputy head teachers except for one who were interviewed categorically stated that the policy encouraged pupils to put more effort in their studies. One of the deputy head teachers who indicated that grade retention did not motivate pupils to work hard but instead he presented that pupils did so due to fear of being retained. Whether the pupils worked hard due to fear or motivation from the policy, their point of departure of all those deputy head teachers was that pupils in grant-aided schools showed more seriousness towards their school work.

4.8.3 Guidance and counselling teachers' views on whether grade retention motivated pupils to study hard or not in grant-aided schools

An interview with guidance and counselling teachers on this question reviewed that the motivation by pupils to work extra hard in their studies depended on how the policy was implemented. All the guidance teachers 3(100%) indicated that pupils were encouraged to put more effort in their studies because of effective communication of the policy by the school

authorities, vigorous counselling services, encouragement and prayers from Champlain priests among other factors.

4.9.Extent to which grant-aided secondary schools implement grade retention policy

In assessing the extent to which grant-aided secondary schools have implemented the grade retention policy, respondents were asked on what are some of the strategic factors that have helped in making it possible for the implementation of the grade retention policy to be a success or failure in grant-aided schools.

4.9.1 Pupils views on the extent to which grant-aided schools implement the policy of grade retention

The study went further to determine the extent to which grade retention policy was being implemented in grant-aided learning institutions. The responses that came strongly are as follows among many as shown in the table below:

Table 5: Showing extent to which Grant-aided Secondary Schools implement grade retention policy

Strategic Factors that make Grant-aided Secondary Schools Implement Grade Retention Policy with ease	Frequency	Percent
Parents, pupils, teachers and school administrators collectively participate in helping retained pupils	52	57.8%
Guidance and counseling is given prior, during and after retention of a pupil	14	15.6%
Champlain priests and/or reverends pray and encourage retained pupils	13	14.4%
There is continuous follow-up and reminder of each pupils' academic performance	7	7.8%
There are regular meetings between teachers and parents to discuss the performance of pupils	4	4.4%
Total	90	100%

The table shows that the majority of the pupils, 52(57.8 %), pointed out that the grade retention policy has been successful in grant-aided secondary schools because it is a collective responsibility among parents, pupils, teachers and school administrators to ensure that the policy is a success. Secondly, 14(15.6 %) of the respondents alluded that the success of this policy in grant-aided secondary schools owing to the guidance and counselling which is given prior, during and after retention of a pupil. Moreover, 13(14.4 %) of the respondents stated that this policy was a success and unique to grant-aided secondary schools because

these schools have Champlain priests and/or Reverends that pray and are able to continuously encourage retained pupils. 7(7.8 %) of the respondents were of the view that the success of this policy in such schools is due to the continuous follow-ups and reminders of each pupils' academic performance by school authorities. Last but not the least, 4(4.4 %) of the respondents were of the view that there are regular meetings between teachers and parents to discuss the performance of their children in school.

4.9.2 Deputy Head teachers' responses on the extent to which grade retention policy is implemented in grant-aided secondary schools

An interview with a named deputy head teacher from one of the sampled grant-aided secondary school that participated in the study responded to the question and narrated:

...In the first place, it should be noted that grade retention in our mission schools is a policy. Therefore, every pupil is obliged to comply with this policy. As you know that a policy is a course of action or a guiding principle that directs and influence decisions and actions and it should be followed at all cost. Just like as we have government policies which are followed without questioning, similarly our grade retention is an academic policy aimed at helping those pupils who struggle in their academic performances. So what we have done is that this policy is communicated to parents, pupils and other stake holders upon admission. In fact the policy is written clearly in all the acceptance letters and the parents sign agreement forms. This has helped us

prepare not only parents but also pupils psychologically to work hard and avoid being retained...(Field Interview, 2015).

The picture being portrayed from the above interview is that grant-aided secondary schools have successfully implemented the policy of grade retention because of various interventional measures such the inclusiveness approach the school authorities have adopted by involving all key stake holders such as parents in the policy implementation model.

4.9.3 Guidance and Counselling teachers' views on the extent grade retention is being implemented in grant-aided secondary schools

Guidance and counselling teachers' views were equally sought on the extent to which grant-aided schools implement grade retention. An interview with one of the counsellors reviewed the following:

...So far we have done very well as mission schools because the practice is done holistically with the involvement of all stake holders... For instance, vigorous guidance and counselling programmes, parental involvement, close monitoring and regular reminders on the child's academic performance, effective communication of the policy through newsletters, open days, PTA meetings and spiritual support our pupils receive from Champlain Priest play a critical role in the success of this practice...

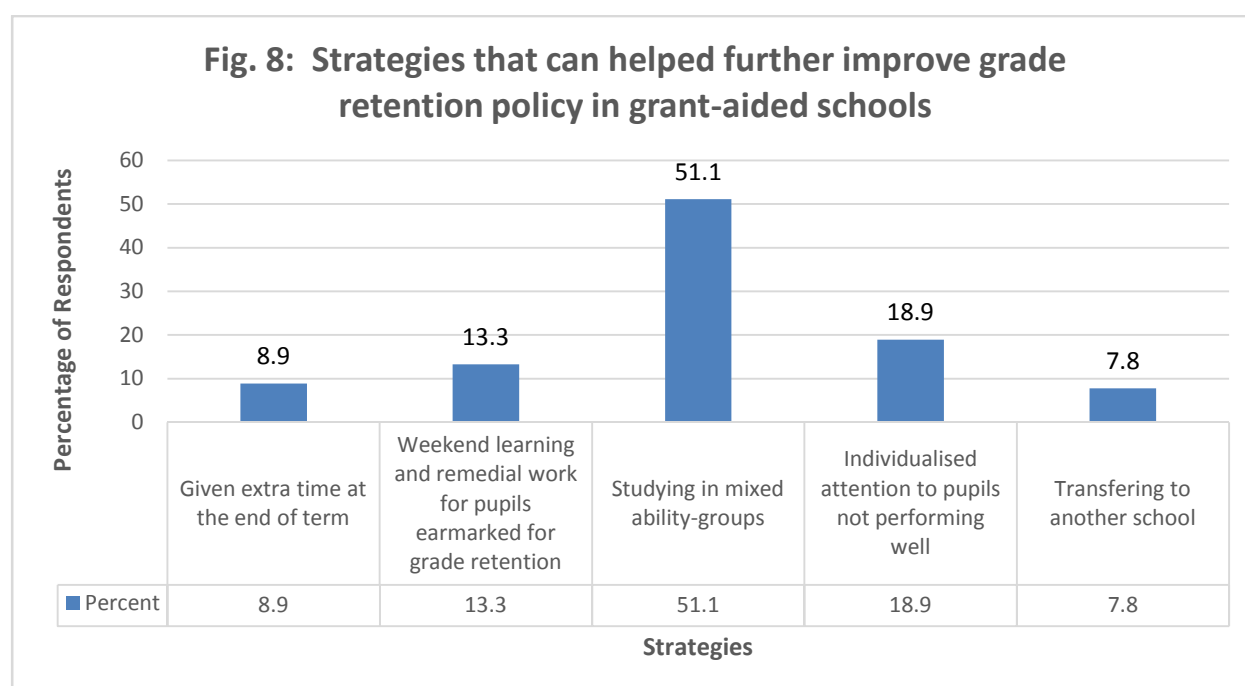
The deputy head teachers and guidance and counselling teachers' views seems to agree with what the majority of the students pointed out that grade retention policy in grant-aided secondary schools is a success story.

4.10. Suggestions on how grant-aided secondary schools can further improve on grade retention policy

The research study endeavoured to establish suggestions from respondents on how grant-aided secondary schools can further improve grade retention policy.

4.10.1 Pupils' responses on strategies that can further improve on grade retention policy

Pupils' responses were sought on what they felt should be done to further improve grade retention policy in grant-aided secondary schools and their views are as shown in the figure below:



From the above figure, the majority, 46(51.1 %), of the respondents stated that they would be comfortable to learn or study in mixed ability-groups after being retained. In addition, 17(18.9 %) of the respondents opted for individualised attention, while 12(13.3 %) of the respondents chose weekend learning and being given remedial work. 8(8.9 %) and 7(7.8 %) opted to being given extra time at the end of the term and being transferred to other schools respectively.

4.10.2 Deputy Head teachers' views on strategies that can further improve grade retention policy

The deputy Head teacher responded as follows when asked on the matter during an interview:

...in a mission school like this one, there is no debate on whether a pupil should choose or not because grade retention is a policy. The fact that a parent and a pupil have sought for a place in our school and they sign agreement forms, it automatically implies that they have accepted all our terms and references including the policy on grade retention...so we don't compromise on this policy because it has also helped us to maintain high academic standards, produce a holistic and responsible graduate and above all to give chance to vulnerable and neglected children chance to realise their potential. Therefore, whatever strategy that may be suggested, such can only supplement but not replace grade retention.

The outcome of the above interview with one of the respondent indicates that the suggested strategies should aim at supplementing grade retention but not to replace the practice. Out of the three (3) deputy head teachers who were interviewed, two (2) of them expressed slightly different views on the subject under review. Although the two acknowledged that grade

retention in its current form helped improve pupils' academic performance, there were however need to find other ways of improving the practice.

4.10.3 Guidance and counselling views on strategies that would help grant-aided secondary schools improve grade retention policy

Asked as to whether they would welcome other strategies aimed at improving on grade retention policy, all the three (3) guidance teachers were of the view that any progressive measure aimed at helping struggling pupils to perform better were welcome. They further added that there was need for grant-aided secondary schools to embrace the newly introduced ICT-based strategies and methods such as the use of computer based self-taught tutorials, use of assimilations and modelling among othersto help teach slow learners. However, due to non-existence of ICT infrastructure especially in rural areas where most grant-aided schools are located, encouraging pupils to learn and study in mixed ability groups, given remedial work and individualised attention would greatly help the low achievers improve in their academic performance. They furthermore presented that such strategies would help reduce the large numbers of pupils being retained in grant-aided secondary schools.

4.11 Summary

This chapter has endeavoured to present the research findings as outlined in the above figures, tables and verbatim. Based on the findings presented, the general feeling by various categories of respondents was that grade retention was a positive education intervention that helped pupils in grant-aided secondary schools to improve in their academic performance. Thus, there is need to now move on and discuss the findings in the chapter that follows. The following chapter discusses the main research findings.

CHAPTER FIVE

DISCUSSION OF THE RESEARCH FINDINGS

5.0 Overview

This chapter presents the discussion of the research findings. The main goal of this research study was to establish pupils' perceptions towards grade retention policy and its effect on the academic performance in selected grant-aided secondary school of Central province, Zambia. The findings were discussed along the objectives of this study which were:

1. To establish pupils' perceptions towards grade retention in grant-aided secondary schools in Central province.
2. To determine the effects of grade retention on pupils' academic performance in grant-aided secondary schools in Central province.
3. To assess the extent to which grant-aided secondary schools could enhance the implementation of grade retention in Central province.

In line with the above objectives, this research study has generally revealed that grade retention policy is rife in grant-aided secondary schools and that the pupils in these schools are comfortable with the existence of this policy.

5.1 Pupils' perception about the existence of the grade retention policy in grant-aided secondary schools

When pupils were asked about their perception towards the grade retention policy, an awe-inspiring majority of the total respondents viewed the policy as being good. Only a small

number of the respondents regarded the policy as being bad. In addition, a tiny number of respondents were unsure whether the policy was good or bad.

Accordingly, as argued by Shepard and Smith (1988), perceptions are formed by people in several different ways and as such suggest two types of knowledge that influence peoples' perceptions being propositional and practical. Statistically speaking, this research study has unearthed facts due to pupils' own experiences about the policy. Hebb's theory on perception indicates that perception is influenced by several factors which among others include past experiences, attitudes, long periods of learning and long periods of practice. Hebb concluded in his theory that although certain characteristics are innately determined there is however certain other characteristics that can be proved to be the result of learning and long periods of practice (Kuppuswamy, 2012). As observed, pupils from grant-aided secondary schools were likely to develop certain perceptions toward the practice as a result of long learning and experience they have had in such schools. The outcome of this study indicates that the majority of the pupils from grant-aided secondary schools perceive grade retention positively. This is contrary to studies done by Jere (2006) and DelConte, (2011) whose outcome showed that pupils had negative perception towards the policy of grade retention.

The differences in the outcomes between this study and other research studies like those done by Jere and DelConte as already noted above were attributed to variations in the perceiver's factors (i.e. attitudes, experience, interest and expectations), target's factors (i.e. motives, background, proximity and similarity) and the factors in the situation such as social setting, time and working setting as indicated by the study conducted by Nzuvu (1999).

As Malim and Birch (1998: 150) observe: “perception is the process whereby the brain makes sense of the information received from senses.” It may be argued therefore that perception is the subjective interpretation of sensations in the light of experience, motivation and emotion and contextual factors. Gregory (1996) equally noted that perception is not simply determined by stimulus patterns but rather it is a dynamic searching for the best interpretation of the available data. Based on the findings of the present study, one may therefore deduce that the majority (73%) of pupils from grant-aided secondary schools who participated in the study developed positive perceptions towards grade retention based on their experiences and interpretation of how the policy had been implemented.

Malim and Birch (1998) furthermore argue that our past experience play an important role in the way we perceive things or issues. For instance an individual who was once involved in a car accident may apprehensively perceive heavy traffic for some time at least. A burnt child may equally perceive fire with fear. In a similar way pupils who were once retained or observed a friend being retained in these grant-aided secondary schools perceived grade retention either positively or negatively depending on their experiences, observations and how the implementation of the policy was done as earlier on mentioned.

As argued by Hebb (1949), Gregory (1996), Malim and Birch (1998) perceptions are selective and largely determined by the condition of sense-organs and the nervous system, past experience, immediate attitude and formation of stereotypes. This can be confirmed by different views by pupils from grant-aided secondary schools on how they perceived grade retention. Responses from various categories of respondents who were interviewed further

confirmed these variations in perceptions but those who perceived grade retention positively were more than those who said that it was a bad practice.

Further, the outcome of this study which generally indicates that pupils from grant-aided secondary schools had a positive perception towards grade retention contradicts the findings from the studies done by Jere (2006) within African countries with similar learning conditions as Zambia and Anderson et al; (2002) conducted from the United States of America. These studies by Jere, Anderson and others indicated that the third graders perceived grade retention negatively and regarded it as the most stressful life event...even worse than losing a parent or going blind. These differences are mainly due to the fact that in grant-aided secondary schools they put much emphasis on counselling, parental involvement and proactively preparing the minds of the would be retained pupils, hence the positive perception. Additionally the use of policy-Networks approach model greatly assisted bringing pupils on board in order for them to accept and appreciate the policy of grade retention.

As theorists in network analysis, Marsh and McConnell (2010) correctly observed that policy implementation is not only about one particular group but it involves a series of different sectors or actors of the society who need to find a common cause to the problem and hence its solution. Sabatier (1986) further contends that there are major risks for policy failure during the implementation stage such as lack of commitment, lack of support from the affected interest groups among others. These factors can bring about failure of what the policy is intended to achieve. Realising that parents and pupils are stake holders in the successful implementation of grade retention policy, grant-aided secondary schools deliberately involve them as a strategy to make policy implementation a success story. Moreover, as Jean Piaget rightly postulated that children are active explorers and thinkers who are constantly trying to

find ways of adapting to the environment around them. It is important therefore to actively engage the pupils in the implementation of grade retention policy.

Counselling was another critical component that helped the majority of learners in grant aided schools to perceive the policy positively. Ndhlovu (2015:59) define counselling as “...a mutual helping relationship between a person in need (client) and a trained counselor”. Moloney (2013) argues that counselling is an important component in enabling young people to take more responsibility for their lives by helping them to deal increasingly with their own issues and by empowering them. He also observed that many academic difficulties which led to pupils being retained have their origins in the family background of the pupils and the attitude and expectations of parents. He argues that the inability to concentrate in studies and lack of motivation often have their source in relationship issues, worries about changes and some strong academic policies like grade retention which the schools usually put in place as a strategy to help improve pupils’ academic performance.

Ndlovu (2015) and Stephen (2012) seem to similarly agree with Moloney (2013) that even half an hour of good listening by a trusted counsellor can bring significant changes in attitudes which later on influence perceptions towards learning. This shows how critical counselling is to the successful implementation of grade retention policy which grant-aided secondary schools vigorously embraced thereby influencing pupils’ positive perception toward the practice.

Thus, in trying to establish pupils’ perception toward grade retention policy, this study has shown that the pupils, who are the major stakeholders in the grade retention policy, view the policy as being good. This is a clear indication that the existence of this policy in grant-aided

secondary schools is good and acceptable. This is because the percentage of pupils who stated that the policy is good significantly outweighs those who stated that it was a bad policy. There were other factors that could have contributed to the majority of the pupils in grant-aided secondary schools to positively perceive grade retention. One of them was that most of the pupils were aware and knowledgeable about grade retention policy. For instance, when asked whether they were aware of the existence of grade retention in grant-aided secondary schools 84 (93%) out of 90 pupils said they were knowledgeable about the policy. The high knowledge levels among pupils were attributed to an effective communication of the policy by the school authorities to pupils and parents. In this regard, the policy of grade retention was effectively communicated to all stake holders through:

- Acceptance letters
- News letters
- PTA meetings
- Open days

5.2 Effects of grade retention policy on pupils' academic performance

This research study revealed that the grade retention policy has some positive effects on the pupils' academic performance. The respondents convincingly (with over 70 % of all the total respondents in the research study) stated that there were some positive effects brought about by the existence of the grade retention policy in grant-aided schools. Some of these positive effects brought about by the existence of this policy in these schools will be discussed hereunder.

5.2.1 Whether grade retention policy contributes to pupils' academic performance

When the pupils were asked whether the policy contributed to their academic performance, there was an astounding agreement among the pupils that the policy did contribute positively to their academic performance. The total percentage of those in the affirmative was 86.7 %. In statistics, this percentage represents an overwhelming response. Therefore, based on this present research study, it is very true that grade retention policy contributed to the academic performance of pupils in these grant-aided secondary schools.

The findings are in agreement with the outcome from studies done by Jimerson (1999) as well as another study by Jimerson and Ferguson (2007) in which they demonstrated that grade retention may impact positively on pupils' academic performance albeit the successes are short lived. Whether the research findings and/or conclusions by the above mentioned scholars are valid or not is beyond the scope of this research study.

However, it has been noted that going through pertinent literature on grade retention reveals mixed feelings about this policy in schools. Tomchin and Impara (1987) argue that being held back gives the child a chance to mature and review material that was not mastered during the failed academic year. As such grade retention should be viewed as an acceptable corrective measure that prevents pupils from facing further failure on a daily basis. This is because some pupils do not necessarily fail academically due to being dull but owing to their immaturity in grasping concepts. Additionally, some grade retention effectiveness studies have stated academic-related benefits of grade retention (Gottfredson, Fink, and Graham, 1994), especially when pupils receive special support (Owen & Ranick, 1977; Peterson, De Gracie,

&Ayabe, 1987). In supporting this, it should be mentioned here that findings from the present study revealed that grant-aided schools have put in measures that offer support to the retained pupils. These measures include teachers devoting much of their time on the pupils that need help in terms of remedial work as well as facilitating for a conducive learning environment in which other well performing pupils are encouraged to be working hand-in-hand with those pupils who have difficulties in certain subjects.

Nevertheless, some scholars like Gottfredson et al. (1994), Owen and Ranick, (1977; Peterson et al., (1987) and Jere (2006) argue that positive effects of grade retention, if detected, are limited and tend to diminish over time. To the contrary, studies by Malambo (2012), Kakupa (2014) indicated that pupils from grant-aided secondary schools performed better as compared to their counterparts in government run schools because of strong academic policies among other factors that exist in mission schools. It should be noted that while such arguments are valuable the researcher should mention though that this study did not want to dwell on the positive or negative effects of grade retention policy per se. Its focus was on the pupils' perception of the policy in grant-aided secondary schools where it is in existence.

5.2.2 Whether grade retention policy motivates pupils to work hard in grant-aided secondary schools?

The results when the respondents in this study were asked whether grade retention policy motivated pupils in grant-aided secondary schools to study hard most of them (84.4%) affirmed with convincing that the existence of this policy was motivating pupils to study hard.

However, Kulbir (2008) argues that in order for pupils' performance in schools to improve, teachers should have genuine love for the subject they teach not necessarily being compelled by external pressures, in this regard, the grade retention policy. This means that it is not necessarily the existence of external pressures (policies) that can encourage pupils to work hard but the teachers themselves adapting to good teaching methods. The teacher should not cling to traditional methods of following the paths of least resistance. Nevertheless, whether Kulbir (2008)'s assertions or arguments are thus valid in this respect, one has to take note that this is a gap that another research can try to bridge.

On the other hand, Pagani et al. (2001) have argued that grade retention represents a costly measure, because they add extra school expenses due to the extra year for every grade repeated owing to the negative performance of a pupil academically. Moreover, in trying to assess the continuity of this policy in grant-aided secondary schools, the researcher tried to find out from pupils whether the policy should continue. The majority of the respondents indicated that grade retention policy was a good educational intervention for pupils who continually performed poorly in the academic performance hence they were for the idea that the policy should be continued.

In concluding on the effects of grade retention policy on pupils' academic performance, this research study has established that most pupils in grant-aided secondary schools perceive grade retention policy as something that is good. Moreover, most of the pupils stated that the

existence of the policy contributed to their positive academic performance in school as well as motivating them to work extra hard and progress in their education.

5.3.Extent to which grant-aided secondary schools implement grade retention policy

As seen in the literature review(Sabatier, 1986; Marsh and McConnell, 2010), the critical stage of any given policy is the implementation stage. Thus, one would need to assess the factors that have enabled the successful implementation of the grade retention policy in grant-aided schools.

According to the findings of this research, the studyhas identified some peculiar factors which make the grade retention policy to be a success in grant-aided schools. Hereunder, one will now discuss some of the prominent ones:

5.3.1 Collaboration among different stakeholders (parents, pupils, teachers and school administrators)

During this research, the researcher held a lot of interviews with some schools to establish the legal framework that has been put in place to make sure that grade retention succeeds. It was evident that all the grant-aided secondary schools that participated in the study had written grade retention policy. In addition, they had grade retention committee headed by the Deputy Head Teachers. Other members of the committee were head of departments, careers/guidance and counselling teachers, pupil representative and Parent Teachers' Association (PTA) representative. The role of the committee was to review the performance of pupils in different internal examinations who they find that some pupils are not performing well, they recommend to the Head Teacher. It is after they make recommendations to the Head Teacher

that the respective parents to the pupils get involved. After the parents are informed of the pending decision, pupils are then written to caution them that their academic performance was not good and they risked being retained. However, in the letter, it is requested of the pupils to convince the committee why they should not be retained. After that, a final decision is made by the committee and further actions take effect.

Considering the above initiative put in place by the school authorities in these grant-aided schools, it is clear that even if a policy was bad strictly speaking, it would still be successful because all the concerned parties are involved. This is what has been advocated for when implementing policies by the network analysis theorists Marsh and McConnell(2010) who state that policy implementation is not only about one particular group, in this case, the respective school administrations in which they identify a problem and then give instructions from the top or having identified problems, the pupil comes up with a decision from the bottom that he/she needs to be retained but it involves a series of different actors of the whole school community through the committee who find a common cause to the problem and hence come up with the solution of retaining that particular pupil in the current grade until such a time when he/she is ready to write examinations under the school's name.

5.3.2 Continuous guidance and counselling to pupils who face grade retention

In this research study, school administrators also mentioned that pupils are told about the retention policy from the time they are being enrolled. They have to accept if their academic performance does not match with the pressure of work academically, then, they would be retained at one point or another. After they accept, then they are accepted and enrolled. Once

they are in school, they are given guidance and counselling on a continuous basis. This means the guidance and counselling teachers are very busy in these schools. These findings are in agreement with the outcomes of the study by Malambo (2013: V) which revealed that “...good performance in grant-aided secondary schools were attributed to adequate learning and teaching materials, high teacher morale (teacher motivation), strong school academic policies, high level of pupil discipline, controlled enrolment levels, effective guidance and counselling system, prize giving ceremonies in recognition of outstanding pupil performance and close supervision of teachers and pupils among other factors..” Clearly, the grade retention policy is such one policy that grant-aided secondary schools have been using over the years as one of the measures to ensure quality education is provided to the pupils.

The findings of this study were further supported by Chelty and Rivkin (2005); Angrist and Lavy (1999); Hoxby (2000); Krueger (1999); Urquiola (2006) and Moloney (2013) who argued that counselling is a critical component in dealing with student’s problems that may impact academic achievement either directly or through peer interaction. They further retaliated that counselling should not only be embedded positively in an institution of learning but also supported by the major sections of school life, particularly the school head teacher and administration, the teachers and the pupils themselves. School counsellors should therefore act in such a way that they gain the understanding of the main stakeholders in the school. When this happens counselling will be an important component of all-round education which also supports the academic life of the school later on in dealing with issues of grade retention (Kairen, 2011).

Grant-aided secondary schools in Zambia have embraced counselling as a critical component of pupils’ academic, social and spiritual wellbeing. In all the schools, for examples, which

participated in this study, they provided guidance and counselling to all the learners and later on to those who faced grade retention. Therefore, as Moloney (2013) correctly observed many academic difficulties which led to pupils being retained have their origins in the family background of the pupils and the attitude and expectations of parents. It implies that a vigorous guidance and counselling programme being embarked on in grant-aided schools helped in one way or another to the successful implementation of the grade retention policy. In fact, Ndlobvu (2015), Stephen (2012) and Moloney (2013) concluded that even half an hour of good listening by a trusted counsellor can bring significant changes in attitudes which later on influence pupils' perceptions towards learning and in this case towards grade retention policy in grant-aided secondary schools.

5.3.3 Continuous follow-up on pupils' academic performance

The other important factor is that on a continuous basis, pupils' academic performance is monitored and gauged by school authorities and feedback on the progression rate is also shared with parents of pupils.

Apart from creating a positive school climate through guidance and counselling, availability of appropriate teaching and learning materials helps. Kakupa (2014), Ribbins and Burrige (1994) identified another attribute of an effective school which is the active parental involvement in school matters and pupil's academic performance. Grant –aided secondary schools in this regard have successfully used this approach to implement grade retention policy thereby improving academic performance of pupils and the overall standard of education. For example, schoolmanagers from the grant-aided secondary schools where this

study was conducted used Open Days as a way of encouraging parental participation in the pupils' academic affairs.

5.3.4 Regular meetings between teachers and parents

In addition to the above factors, it was also revealed that there are regular meetings between teachers and parents which are aimed at discussing pupils' performance on a continuous basis. If there is need that something should be done, teachers and parents resolve such collectively. As indicated by Jackson (2010), there are many ways in which parents and teachers can collaborate and work together to ensure that pupil's school academic succeed. Grant-aided schools realised the importance of embracing parents in the implementation of its academic policies such as grade retention as such actualising the said policy with easy. For instance, teachers want what is best for their pupils, and parents too want the best for their child and it is this common ground that mission schools have capitalised on for their successful implementation of grade retention.

Further, by working together, for example, teachers and parents in grant-aided schools provided the best learning environment for pupils not only at school but at home as well. Furthermore, grant-aided secondary schools realised that working with parents of the pupils was a good strategy because most parents know their children best. Therefore, by working with them, such schools had a very good resource that helped to highlight the child's abilities and behaviour that acted as key determinants when making a decision which pupil to be retained.

5.3.5 Suggestions of Strategies that can further improve on grade retention policy in grant-aided secondary schools

Grade retention has over the years remained a controversial and an emotional issue which is supposed to be analysed in context. Some of the other strategies that respondents have proposed in this study in order to further helped grant-aided schools improve the policy of grade retention included learning or studying in mixed ability-groups which the majority(51.1 %,) of the respondents suggested followed by (18.9 %) of the respondents who preferred the use of individualised attention to pupils not performing well and the least (7.8%) of the respondents who suggested that pupils performing poorly should be given extra time at the end of the term.

It can be argued that grade retention policy in which ever form it may be looked at, it brings with it challenges. Some of these may arise from non-supportive parents, fear of being laughed at cost implications and the humiliation that come along grade retention to mention but a few. This can be attested by one of the research participant who after being retained went home and got a gun which he wanted to use to kill all those who were involved in the retention process and those who laughed at him. This is typical example of some of the negative effects of grade retention especially if it's done in senior grades coupled with other spiral effects such as high dropout rates, social and emotional depression among others. It therefore calls for a careful and proactive approach whenever matters of grade retention are being implemented.

As correctly pointed out by Marsh and McConnell (2010) that whether a policy is initiated from the top, down or collectively, there was need to take caution how it is implemented. As already alluded earlier that it was such a conscious approach that grant-aided secondary schools had been taking which made a difference in the way pupils perceived grade retention thereby improving on their academic performance.

Still on other strategies that may be co-opted in order to improve grade retention, the study has indicated that one of the deputy head teachers who participated in this study completely objected to any strategy but rather to leave it in its current form. The deputy head teacher felt that if the policy of grade retention was changed, the quality of education being delivered and the standards in grant-aided secondary schools would drastically go down. While the deputy head teachers' views hold some truth in them, other respondents especially guidance and counselling teachers felt that such view however lacked intense interaction with the pupils to see how pupils earmarked for retention go through emotional trauma. In other words, the realities about grade retention are usually felt by the pupils themselves, their respective class and subject teachers and the guidance and counselling staff that are constantly in touch with pupils. The deputy head teachers are mainly on the administrative side where they make decisions based on what has been presented to the management.

The stance taken by guidance and counselling teachers of welcoming suggestions aimed at further improving or eventually getting rid of grade retention were rational. This is because guidance and counselling teachers were constantly in touch with pupils thereby experiencing what pupils go through each time they were denied chance of proceeding to the next grade

due to poor academic performance. Hence strategies that would change the policy of grade retention should be explored and evaluated and if found helpful, they should be implemented.

The guidance and counselling teachers were for the idea that strategies such as allowing pupils to be studying in mixed ability groups, giving struggling learners extra time at the end of the term, intensive remedial and homework policy among others should be encouraged and implemented alongside grade retention. They further suggested to grant-aided schools to tap into modern technology which the Ministry of education was at the time of the present study promoting as a way of helping slow learners catch up with their academic work without necessarily being retained. Considering on the global technological trends in the education sector, one tends to agree with guidance and counselling teachers from grant-aided schools that ICTs should be embraced to teach all the pupils including those who face difficulties in their academic performance. For example, the use of computer based modelling and assimilation teaching techniques should be promoted at all cost because they help pupils learn at their own pace using real and virtual objects.

However, the use of ICTs may not be feasible owing to non existence of ICT facilities especially in rural areas and crowded classes that usually characterise most Zambian classrooms. Despite grant-aided secondary schools being known for their boldness of limiting enrolments levels, the use of ICTs in the teaching and learning process still remains a farfetched dream. Until such a time when Zambian schools shall have full access to ICT facilities, grant-aided schools will continue making use of the available strategies such as those suggested indicated in the findings of this present study which are further discussed below.

5.3.5.1 Learning and studying in mixed ability groups

The majority of the respondents in this present study suggested that allowing pupils to learn and study in mixed ability groups would help to improve the implementation of grade retention policy. Chipembi Girls Secondary school that participated in this study, for example, has incorporated the strategy of encouraging pupils in the examination classes (grade 9 and 12) to be studying in groups comprising different abilities from the members of that group. The rationale is that those pupils struggling in their academic performance would be assisted by the able peers. Other than just identifying, class teachers, gifted pupils and priests, parents and guidance teachers to help pupils in examination classes, the same should also apply to retained pupils. Such strategies if accommodated would improve the way grade retention is being implemented in grant-aided schools.

A study conducted in Botswana by Lloanya (2014) indicated that teachers needed to create a supportive learning environment in the classroom where learners are recognised as individuals with differences in abilities. He further argued that such an approach would boost pupils' confidence thereby helping them perform to the best of their ability. He furthermore observed that every child can learn, regardless of the challenges that the child encounters, therefore, teachers need to diagnose and find out where the learner excels and encourage him/her to reach his/her potential. Based on the outcome of this study, grant-aided secondary schools that participated in the study seem to have been applying such strategies mainly for pupils in the examination classes. However, the same measures can equally apply to pupils earmarked for grade retention as a proactive measure. However, the success of the strategy of allowing pupils to learn and study in mixed ability groups depends on the positive attitudes of

teachers who are involved in the implementation process. As argued by Hebb's theory on perception that attitudes play a critical role in the formation of one's perception.

It can be deduced therefore from Iloanya (2014) study findings that are in conformity with the suggestions made by respondents of this present study which is anchored on Hebb's theory that due to the fact that both teachers and pupils perceived grade retention policy as a good educational intervention, teachers in particular would be able as well to implement the suggested measures aimed at improving grade retention policy. In this regard, teachers were encouraged to:

- Use good classroom management techniques to enable all categories of learners to be actively get involved in the learning process.
- Motivate pupils through praise and encouragement, giving good instructions, knowing pupils names, monitoring pupils' activity and providing not only timely but also constructive feedback
- Allow pupils to work in groups and the lessons would highly be interactive to accord each pupil a fair chance to participate
- Make their lessons interesting by varying the methodologies and activities of instruction.
- Teach pupils how to be creative and resourceful bearing in mind that each pupil is special in one way or the other thereby giving each pupil a special attention to boost their self-esteem

It is clear from all of the above that allowing retained pupils to learn and study in mixed ability groups would help grant-aided secondary schools improve the policy of grade retention. However, it should be noted that teaching and helping pupils in a mixed ability

groups has got its own challenges. It is important therefore for the school authorities and teachers in grant-aided schools were such a strategy would be promoted to take stock of challenges of mixed-ability classes such as difficulties to keep everyone's attention, motivating everyone, not having enough time to help everyone and planning the lesson to meet all pupils' different needs (Jonasson, 2006). Nevertheless, grant-aided schools seems to be on top of such challenges because their teachers usually work full days including weekends of which they are rewarded for doing extra duties like helping pupils in examination classes. Such services should also be rendered to pupils earmarked for grade retention as suggested by a cross section of respondents in this study.

5.3.5.2 Individualised attention

The findings of this present study indicated that providing an individualised attention to pupils who were earmarked for grade retention would greatly help grant aided secondary schools improve grade retention policy. This outcome is in agreement with the findings from studies conducted in Zambia by Malambo (2012) and Kakupa (2014) which revealed that individualised attention was one of the factors that made pupils from grant-aided schools to perform better in their academic performance as compared to their counterparts from government run schools. This can manly be attributed to the fact that in individualised attention the teacher takes the pupils' individual needs into consideration such as rate of learning, the learning style, attitude, maturity, interest which affects the level of learning, motivation and learning environment.

In this regard, grant-aided schools, just as it does on pupils in examination classes, it should make an emphasis on the need for teachers to provide retained pupils with individualised attention in order to make a difference in the way grade retention policy was being practiced. Such a strategy if implemented, can help teachers to take into account many learners' differences thereby enabling retained pupils to work at their own pace and at the time most convenient. Other advantages of employing individualised attention strategy to pupils who faced grade retention are that teachers would be able to apply different learning styles, it is cost-effective, active learning would be realised and above all the pupils would be given an opportunity to be in control of how and what they learn.

While such measures would assist grant-aided secondary schools improve on grade retention policy, there are however challenges that came along with individualised attention. Among them are difficulties to maintain pupils' motivation, long period of time on the part of teachers to prepare differentiated learning and teaching materials and the need for teachers to continually change their roles in order to suit pupils' individual needs. However, school authorities from grant-aided schools, as they do for pupils in examination classes, should show similar resilience of overcoming such challenges. Deliberate measures such as awarding the teachers with prizes based on good academic performance of once retained pupils, paying of teachers extra incomes at the end of each term and the collaboration that exist in grant-aided schools between PTA and school administration where teachers each year would be sponsored outside Zambia not just to celebrate the good results scored by gifted pupils but also by retained pupils.

5.3.5.3 Extended learning time and weekend learning

Among other strategies suggested by the respondents that grant-aided secondary schools would use to improve grade retention policy is the provision of extended learning and weekend learning to pupils earmarked for grade retention. Although not all grant-aided schools implement such interventions, the majority however have made it mandatory for all pupils in the examination classes (i.e. grade nine and twelve) be given extra learning time and attend weekend lessons. A deliberate policy can be put in place where pupils facing possible retention would equally benefit from such programmes as such pupils would be given enough time to go through some of the concepts that could have been missed or not understood. This would act as a critical ingredient to the success story grant-aided schools would record in as far as improving grade retention policy is concerned. This is so because merely subjecting retained pupils to the same conditions as before may not help much but providing differentiated teaching and learning methods, approaches and strategies alongside grade retention would benefit the affected pupils as attested by suggestion from pupils themselves and other varied respondents that took part in this study.

Range et al. (2012) correctly noted that almost anyone will find exception to the rule that includes testimonies of ‘how it worked or failed for some pupils’ but the common denominator is that the practice towards grade retention must reflect research done on many children, while keeping recording individual differences. Therefore, the fusing of other educational strategies such as giving retained pupils extra time at the end of a term and providing weekend learning lessons alongside grade retention is recommendable. However grant-aided schools should not wait until a pupil is retained for such initiatives to be implemented. Subjecting only pupils in examination classes was not good enough but rather

extending such programmes and initiatives to all classes especially targeting all those pupils identified to be struggling in their academic performance and are likely to be returned.

5.4 Summary

In conclusion, the major findings of the study have been discussed in this chapter. The general picture that has come out of this study is that pupils' perception towards the policy of grade retention is good and that the policy has had positive effects on academic performance. Based on the findings of the study, it is evident that grant-aided secondary schools have successfully implemented grade retention policy. It has been highlighted from the discussion that in order for a policy to be implemented successfully, there is need for all parties concerned to be fully aware of what course of action needs to be taken. Indeed, implementation is a critical stage in the policy cycle. This, therefore, means that whether a policy is initiated from the top, down or indeed collectively, there is need for caution during the implementation stage. It is this conscious approach that grant-aided secondary schools have taken which made a difference in the way pupils positively perceived grade retention thereby impacting positively on the pupils' academic performance.

While other studies out rightly condemned grade retention policy as a bad education interventional strategy to help struggling pupils improve in their academic performance, this study has shown that with measures such as guidance and counselling, continuous collaboration between teachers and parents, effective monitoring of pupils' academic and collective approach to resolving challenges pupils encounter, effective communication of the policy to all stake holders, among other factors, grade retention policy has been received well

in grant-aided secondary schools. Lastly, this chapter has also presented strategies suggested by respondents how grade retention policy can further be improved upon in grant-aided secondary schools. Some of the suggested strategies included provision of individualised attention, encouraging pupils to be studying in mixed-ability groups, introduction of extended learning time at the end of term and weekends. The emphasis from such suggestions is that these strategies should be made available to pupils struggling in their academic performance proactively. Grant-aided schools should not wait for pupils to be retained before instituting such measures. In that, grade retention policy can be implemented with a difference and in a much more improved, effective and efficient manner. The next chapter highlight research conclusions and recommendations.

CHAPTER SIX

CONCLUSION, IMPLICATIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

6.0 Overview

This chapter presents the conclusion of this research. It also presents the recommendations based on the findings of this present study and a proposed future research.

6.1 Conclusions

The first objective of the study was to establish pupils' perceptions towards grade retention policy in selected grant-aided secondary schools in central province, Zambia. The findings of the study revealed that most of the pupils in grant-aided secondary schools perceive grade retention as something that is good. The pupils' positive perception towards the policy of grade retention was mainly due to the following factors:

- High levels of knowledge awareness among pupils about the existence of the policy.
- Parental involvement
- Effective communication of the policy by the school authorities to the pupils, parents and other stake holders through acceptance letters, newsletters, PTA meetings and open days.

As such, the pupils would want grade retention policy to continue as well as maybe extended to other schools where it is not in place, for instance, the public schools here forth known as government schools.

The second objective sought to determine the effects of grade retention on pupils' academic performance in selected grant-aided secondary schools in central province. The findings of this study indicated that regarding the effects of the grade retention policy, most of the pupils in these schools stated that the policy has positive effects because in most instances, it has caused their academic performance to improve as well as making them more serious towards school work. Although in the initial stages of retaining a pupil, there were negative effects being reported such as the affected pupils losing concentration in class, fear of being laughed at by friends and fear of parents' negative reaction, to mention a few, such challenges were quickly resolved through the following measures:

- Vigorous guidance and counselling programmes.
- Constant reminder by school authorities to parents and pupils themselves on individual pupils' academic performance.
- Conducting organised spiritual prayers by priests and Reverends in order to encourage retained pupils.
- Coordinated caring groups involving class teachers, hostel masters, deputy head teachers, parents, prefects and close friends to retained pupils.
- Putting up a deliberate policy of making anyone found laughing at any of the retained pupils a punishable offence.

The third objective was to assess the extent to which grant-aided secondary schools could enhance the implementation of grade retention policy in central province. This study further revealed that these schools have successfully implemented the grade retention policy due to the following stringent measures that school authorities have put in place:

- Inclusiveness of all stakeholders such as parents, pupils, teachers, PTA and school administration in the design, formulation and implementation of grade retention policy.
- Continuous collaboration between teachers and parents on matters that affect pupils' academic performance.
- Counselling is given prior, during and after retaining pupils
- Collective approach to resolving challenges retained pupils encounter

As regards to Hebbian Theory of perception, the findings of this study are in conformity with what the theory stated that factors in the perceiver such as one's past experience, interest, expectations and attitudes; factors in the target like one's motives, background and similarity; and factors in the situation such as the social and working setting play a critical role in the formation of perception. It can therefore be concluded that pupils' past experiences and observations on how grant-aided secondary schools implemented the policy of grade retention determined either direct or indirect on how pupils perceived the policy.

6.2 Recommendations

The following recommendations emerged based on the findings of this study whose main aim was to establish pupils' perceptions toward grade retention and its effects on academic performance in selected grant-aided secondary schools of Central province, Zambia:

6.2.1 Recommendations towards grade retention practice

1. School authorities should encourage teachers to enhance studying of pupils in mixed-ability groups as a strategy to enable pupils to learn from each other.
2. Teachers should offer individualised attention to pupils earmarked for grade retention so that they can improve in their academic performance.
3. Schools should introduce weekend learning to help pupils who have been earmarked for grade retention.
4. Pupils should be provided with extra time by school authorities at the end of the school terms especially terms 1 and 2 with a focus on pupils whose academic performance shows weakness during the term.
5. Lastly, but not the least, grant-aided secondary schools should take advantage and promote the use of ICTs to help pupils improve in their academic performance thereby getting rid of grade retention.

6.2.2 Recommendation toward grade retention policy

The grant-aided secondary schools should implement grade retention policy in conformity with the Examination Council of Zambia policy on Examination numbers. This would reduce on inconveniencing pupils whose examination numbers could expire due to grade retention.

6.2.3 Recommendation toward future research

This study on ‘pupils’ perceptions towards grade retention and its effects on academic performance in selected grant-aided secondary schools in central province, Zambia’ was done purely as an academic research conducted on a small scale. A longitudinal study should be conducted by other educationists to follow up pupils who were once retained and compare their academic performance at tertiary level in order to ascertain long term effects of grade retention policy on pupils’ academic performance in grant-aided secondary schools.

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APPENDIX A: QUESTIONNAIRE FOR PUPILS

Serial No.:

UNIVERSITY OF ZAMBIA

SCHOOL OF EDUCATION

SELF ADMINISTERED QUESTIONNAIRE

TOPIC: “pupils’ perceptions towards grade retention and its effects on academic performance in selected grant aided secondary schools in Central Province”

Dear respondent,

I am a student from the University of Zambia pursuing Masters Degree in the school of education in Educational Psychology. I am conducting a research on the above topic purely for academic purposes. Please be advised that you have been randomly selected to participate in the answering of this questionnaire.

Be-rest assured that the information you will give in this questionnaire will be treated with utmost confidentiality.

INSTRUCTIONS:

- 1) Attempt all questions by indicating with a tick ✓ where applicable and also by filling in the blank spaces where appropriate.
- 2) Please refer questions and misunderstandings to the researcher or research assistant.

SECTION A: Demographic Information of Respondents

Instructions:

Attempt **ALL** questions by indicating with a tick (✓).

1. What is your gender?
 - a. Male ☐
 - b. Female ☐
2. What is your current age range?
 - a. 15 Years and below ☐
 - b. 16 – 20 Years ☐
 - c. 21- 25 Years ☐
 - d. 26 Years and above ☐
3. What is your grade?
 - a. Grade 8 ☐
 - b. Grade 9 ☐
 - c. Grade 10 ☐
 - d. Grade 11 ☐
 - e. Grade 12 ☐
4. What is your mode of schooling?
 - a. Boarder ☐
 - b. Day ☐
5. Do you have any condition such as visual impairment, hearing impairment, physical impairment, speech and language disorders that pose as a challenge to your learning process?
 - a. Yes ☐
 - b. No ☐
6. Which of the following is true about your status? Tick only one.
 - a. Double orphan ☐
 - b. Single orphan ☐
 - c. Non-of the above ☐
7. Who sponsors your education?
 - a. Biological parents ☐
 - b. Extended family members ☐

- c. Charitable organisations ☐
- d. Others (specify) ☐

SECTION B: Pupils' Perceptions toward Grade Retention

Instructions:

Attempt **ALL** questions by indicating with a tick (✓) where applicable and also by filling in the blank spaces where appropriate.

1. Do you have knowledge about grade retention in your school?
 - a. Yes ☐
 - b. No ☐
 - c. Not sure ☐

2. Have you ever been retained or made to repeat a grade?
 - a. Yes ☐
 - b. No ☐

3. If the answer to question (2) above of section B is yes, how many times were you made to repeat a grade?
 - a. Once ☐
 - b. Two times ☐
 - c. Three times ☐
 - d. More than three times ☐

4. What do you think are the main causes of grade retention among pupils? You can tick more than once from the following alternatives. You can also add your own (if any) in the spaces provided below:

01	Low academic achievement	
02	Frequent absences or poor attendance	
03	Parental request	
04	Developmental immature	
05	Failure to meet grade level standard skills	
06	
07	
08	

5. How do you perceive grade retention?

a. Good

☐

b. Bad

☐

c. Not Applicable

☐

6. Do you think grade retention should be continued in grant-aided secondary schools?

a. Yes

☐

b. No

☐

c. Not

☐

7. If the answer to question (6) above of this section is yes, list the reasons why grade retention should be continued in grant-aided secondary schools?

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8. If the answer to question (6) above of this section is no, list the reasons why grade retention should not be continued in grant aided secondary schools?

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SECTION C: Effects of Grade Retention on Academic Performance

Instructions:

Attempt **ALL** questions by indicating with a tick (✓) where applicable and also by filling in the blank spaces where appropriate.

1. How has grade retention affected your academic performance?

a. Positively

☐

b. Negatively

☐

c. Not Applicable

☐

2. Please mark your response on the positive effects of grade retention with a tick to each item in the box using the given scales.

	Strongly Agree	Agree	Not sure	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
1. Grade retention improves academic performance					
2. Grade retention motivates pupils to work hard					
3. Grade retention helps slow learners understand basic skills in subjects like mathematics, sciences and English					
4. Grade retention gives pupils more time catch up with school work					
5. Grade retention gives chance to young pupils to mature.					

3. Please mark your response on the negative effects of grade retention with a tick to each item in the box using the given scales.

	Strongly Agree	Agree	Not sure	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
1. My academic perform is better when I learn with classmates of the same age					
2. I can learn more when I'm allowed to proceed to the next grade despite weak academic achievement					
3. Grade retention is expensive					
4. Grade retention creates greater differences among classmates					

SECTION D: The Extent to which Grant-Aided Secondary Schools Implements Grade Retention

Attempt **ALL** questions by indicating with a tick (✓) where applicable and also by filling in the blank spaces where appropriate.

1. Are you satisfied with the manner in which grant-aided secondary schools implements grade retention policy?
- a. Yes ☐
- b. No ☐

2. Briefly explain the extent to which grant-aided secondary schools implement grade retention policy?

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SECTION E: Suggestions on other Strategies that can further improve Grade Retention Policy in grant-aided secondary schools

Attempt **ALL** questions by indicating with a tick (✓) where applicable and also by filling in the blank spaces where appropriate.

1. Given an opportunity to either improve the grade retention policy or leave it in its current form, which one would you opt for?
- a. Improve grade retention policy ☐
- b. Leave it in its current ☐
2. Which of the following strategies would you opt for meant to improve grade retention policy? You can tick more than one. You can also add your own (If any) in the spaces provided below:

01	Given extra time at the end of the term	
02	Given remedial work at the end of the term	
03	Promoted to the next grade despite poor academic performance	
04	Transferred to another school	
05	Pupils given individualised attention	
06	Parental involvement	
07	
08	

The End – Thank you very much for your cooperation

APPENDIX B: INTERVIEW SCHEDULE FOR PUPILS

UNIVERSITY OF ZAMBIA

SCHOOL OF EDUCATION

INTERVIEW SCHEDULE FOR PUPILS

TOPIC: “pupils’ perceptions towards grade retention and its effects on academic performance in selected grant aided secondary schools in Central Province”

Dear respondent,

I am a student from the University of Zambia pursuing Masters Degree in Educational Psychology from the school of Education. I am conducting a research on the above topic purely for academic purposes. Please be advised that you have been purposively selected to participate in this interview.

Be-rest assured that the information you will give in this interview will be treated with utmost confidentiality.

1. Having answered the questionnaire and been one of those pupils who was retained, explain in detail some of the main reasons for your retention.
2. Are you aware and satisfied with the procedure the school use to determining which pupils to be retained?
3. Are your parents involved in the process of retaining pupils?
4. How do you view grade retention policy in mission schools?
5. Has grade retention policy helped you in your academic performance?
6. How can you describe the short term and long term effects of grade retention on your academic performance?
7. Do you think mission schools implement grade retention differently compared to government schools?
8. If grade retention policy was to be abolished in grant aided secondary schools, would agree or disagree?
9. If you agree to the above question (8) what alternatives to grade retention would you suggest and why?
10. If you disagree to question (8) above, elaborate the reasons why?

The End – Thank you very much for your participating in the interview

APPENDIX C: INTERVIEW SCHEDULE (GUIDANCE AND COUNSELING TEACHERS)

UNIVERSITY OF ZAMBIA

SCHOOL OF EDUCATION

INTERVIEW SCHEDULE FOR GUIDANCE AND COUNSELING TEACHERS

TOPIC: “pupils’ perceptions towards grade retention and its effects on academic performance in selected grant aided secondary schools in Central Province”

Dear respondent,

I am a student from the University of Zambia pursuing Masters Degree in Educational Psychology from the school of Education. I am conducting a research on the above topic purely for academic purposes. Please be advised that you have been purposively selected to participate in this interview.

Be-rest assured that the information you will give in this interview will be treated with utmost confidentiality.

1. For how long have you been guidance and counselling teacher?
2. Do you have a grade retention policy and committee in the school?
3. As guidance and counselling teacher, do you sit on the committee that makes decisions on which pupils to be retained?
4. What is the criteria/procedure used to determining which pupils to be retained?
5. What motivates you to implement grade retention yet government secondary schools discourage the practice?
6. Are parents involved in the process of retaining pupils?
7. How do pupils perceive grade retention?
8. Do you think grade retention has a bearing on pupils' academic performance?
9. Have you followed and keep record of the academic performance for retained pupils?
10. How can you describe the effects of grade retention on both short term and long term pupils' academic performance?
11. How different do you implement grade retention as a mission school compared to government schools?
12. Has grade retention worked for your school as a grant aided institution?
13. Do you think there is need to find other alternative interventional strategies to grade retention?
14. If the answer to question (13) is yes, what are some of these alternative interventional strategies to grade retention?

The End – Thank you very much for your participating in the interview

APPENDIX D: INTERVIEW SCHEDULE (DEPUTY HEAD TEACHERS)

UNIVERSITY OF ZAMBIA

SCHOOL OF EDUCATION

INTERVIEW SCHEDULE FOR DEPUTY HEAD TEACHERS

TOPIC: “pupils’ perceptions towards grade retention and its effects on academic performance in selected grant aided secondary schools in Central Province”

Dear respondent,

I am a student from the University of Zambia pursuing Masters Degree in Education in Educational Psychology from the school of Education. I am conducting a research on the above topic purely for academic purposes. Please be advised that you have been purposively selected to participate in this interview.

Be-rest assured that the information you will give in this interview will be treated with utmost confidentiality.

1. In your position as Deputy Head teacher and chairperson for academic committee, for how long have you held this portfolio?
2. Do you have practice grade retention in your school?
3. Do you have a grade retention policy in the school?
4. How long have you been implementing grade retention?
5. Briefly, tell us the background of grade retention in your school.
6. What are the factors that you consider when retaining pupils?
7. Do you have a committee that decides who to be retained?
8. What is the composition of the committee if it does exist in your school?
9. Briefly explain the criteria/procedure used when determining which pupils to be retained.
10. Are parents involved in the process of retaining pupils?
11. How has the pupils been reacting to grade retention?
12. Briefly take us through on how pupils perceive grade retention.
13. What are some of the challenges of implementing grade retention?
14. How different do you implement grade retention as a mission school compared to government schools?
15. Do you think grade retention has a bearing on pupils' academic performance?
16. What are some of the effects of grade retention on pupils' academic performance?
17. Has grade retention worked for your school as a grant aided institution?
18. What motivates you to implement grade retention yet government secondary schools discourage the practice?
19. Do you think there is need to find other strategies to improve grade retention policy?
20. If the answer to question (19) is yes, what are some of these strategies aimed at improving grade retention policy?

The End – Thank you very much for your participating in the interview

APPENDIX E:

(BEFORE GRADE RETENTION)

SAMPLE OF PUPILS' ACADEMIC PERFORMANCE BEFORE BEING RETAINED

APPENDIX E:

(AFTER GRADE RETENTION)

SAMPLE OF PUPILS' ACADEMIC PERFORMANCE AFTER BEING RETAINED

APPENDIX F:

RESEARCH ETHICAL CLEARANCE CERTIFICATE

RESEARCH ETHICAL CLEARANCE CERTIFICATE

APPENDIX G: Research Budget

ITEM	No: Days	Quantity	Unit Cost	Total (K)
A: Stationary				
• HP ink cartridges (4 black & 2 colour)	-	06	185	1, 110.00
• Ream of paper	-	04	45	180.00
• Pens	-	10	1.50	15.00
• Pencils	-	10	0.80	8.00
• Envelops	-	50	1.65	82.50
• USB Flash Disk (32 GB)	-	01	350	350.00
Sub Total				1,745.50
B. Data Collection				
• Daily Subsistence Allowance				
○ Researcher	5	1	350	1, 750.00
○ Research assistances	5	2	250	2, 500.00
Sub Total				4, 250.00
C. Transport				
• Researcher from Lusaka to Kabwe	5	1	100	500.00
• Researcher from Kabwe to Lusaka	5	1	100	500.00
• Research Assistance from Lusaka to Kabwe	5	2	80	800.00
• Research Assistance from Kabwe to Lusaka	5	2	80	800.00
Sub Total				2, 600.00
D: Data entering and analysis	-	-	1, 500	1, 500.00
Sub total				1, 500.00

E: Thesis Binding	-	-	900	900.00
Sub Total				900.00
F: Contingency Fee @ 10% of total				1, 099.50
Sub Total				1, 099.50
Grand Total				12, 095.05

APPENDIX H: Research Work Plan

[illegible]