

**FACTORS LEADING TO POOR READING AMONG GRADE TWO
LEARNERS**

A CASE OF SELECTED SCHOOLS IN CHIBOMBO DISTRICT

BY

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DECLARATION

I, **Lydia Chipili** hereby declare that this dissertation represents my own work. All published works or materials from sources that have been incorporated have been specifically acknowledged and adequately referred to.

Signed:**Chipili**.....

Date:**30.09.2016**.....

DEDICATION

This dissertation is dedicated to my parents Rev. Jolly Mutale Chipili. May his soul rest in peace and my mother Mrs Annie Kalumba Chipili for bringing me up and shaping my future. My husband Edwin Sikazwe, for his support and patience. My brother Benson Mutale Chipili for his encouragement and my beloved children for their encouragement, patience and understanding.

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APPROVAL

This dissertation by LYDIA CHIPILI is provided as fulfilling part to requirements for award of the degree of Master of Education in Education Management of University of Zambia in collaboration with Zimbabwe Open University.

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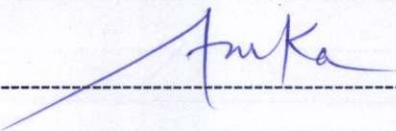
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ACRONYMS

CDC	Curriculum Development Centre
DEST	District Education Support Term
EGRA	Early Grade Reading Assessment
MOE	Ministry of Education
NAEP	National Assessment of Educational Progress
NBTL	New Break Through To Literacy
NGO	Non-Governmental Organisation
PLP	Primary Literacy Programme
PRP	Primary Reading Programme
ROC	Read on Course
SACMEQ	Southern African Consortium For Monitoring Learning Quality
SBCPD	School Based Continued Professional Development
SITE	Step into English
TTL	Time to Learn
ZEST	Zonal Education Support Team
ZPD	Zone of Proximal Development

ABSTRACT

The purpose of this study was to investigate factors that contribute to the poor performance in reading of grade 2 learners in selected primary schools which fall in low and high populated areas of Chibombo District. The aim was to meet the following objectives namely: to establish the attitude of teachers towards the teaching of literacy, to assess the attitude of learners towards the learning of literacy and to establish causes of poor reading. The research was conducted in seven primary and three community schools. The study focused on Grade 2 learners. Due to the nature of the study, both the learners and the teachers were targeted as points of investigation. The Grade two learners were targeted because by the time a pupil reaches grade 2, he or she would have acquired reading skills in grade one. Descriptive survey methods were used for data collection. The sample involved teachers teaching grade two pupils and other teachers teaching grades one to four pupils from primary and community schools and ten learners from each school. In this study there were a total of one hundred twenty two (122) respondents. Data on teachers focused on attitude to teaching literacy and the methodology of literacy. Data collection on learners was conducted using the Assessment tool, Early Grade Reading assessment (EGRA) which was developed by Time to Learn (TTL) and acknowledged by Curriculum Development Centre (CDC) in the Ministry of Education. The learners were assessed in chi Tonga on the letter sound knowledge and Oral Passage Reading, to determine if they are able to identify the sounds and read them. The findings showed that teachers were playing a key role especially in the preparation of the decodable stories, they were able to create stories using the sound and syllabus of the day. However, the analysis indicated that teacher- learner interaction was not adequately implemented. Most teachers were having double classes due to low staffing levels and high pupil enrolment. Some teachers were in a hurry of teaching in order to finish the syllabus. The passion of helping and identifying a learner as an individual is therefore not effectively applied. The findings showed that community school teachers were not motivated especially where payments were concerned. The study recommends that teachers should consider Learning to Read as a complex process that involves multifaceted skills and experience.

CHAPTER ONE

INTRODUCTION

1.0 Overview of the Study

This chapter will give the background to this particular study. The chapter will present the intended topic to be studied, purpose of the study, the objectives and the research question. The chapter also provides the significance of the study, the limitations and delimitations used in the study.

1.1 Background

This research considers reading and learning to read as a social, interactive process and very important aspect in a learner's life. Its aim is therefore not to offer a comprehensive account of reading approaches, but to focus on the problem that needs to be addressed.

Reading constitutes the foundation of all school learning. A learner who cannot read fluently will not be able to fully benefit from what school has to offer and will hardly become autonomous to access the knowledge and skill. Through reading learners are exposed to new words, including meanings. It enhances their imagination and creativity especially when they read various kinds of stories and create stories of their own. Government and Non-Governmental Organisations (NGOs) such as Time to Learn, World Vision and Child Fund are working towards ensuring that the level of reading is improved by a learner. Hence investment in infrastructure for learners distribution of reading and learning materials, improving teacher training in order to ensure that teachers are well trained and reviewing the curriculum. The Government also undertakes similar activities in order to ensure that everything necessary for the learning and teaching process is available.

Experts agree that measuring the beginning in reading skills in the first grades of primary education is key to monitoring and improving the quality of teaching and learning processes (Campbell, 1996).

Children are ideally supposed to begin reading in first grade of primary school. In order to learn to read, children must have previously acquired a set of abilities, such as: oral

language skills, symbolic function, and the capacity to focus attention and follow instructions, memory, perceptive spatial skills, and so on (Thorne, 2005). After these abilities are developed, learners must apply letter sound correspondences, blend sounds together to read words and recognize those words. In addition, they must learn that when they do not understand something that they read, they can use comprehension and vocabulary strategies to extract some meaning from the passage. This is a huge undertaking for both learners and teachers (Vaughn, 2004).

Some primary schools have recorded poor reading levels despite having good infrastructure, manageable class enrolment of 38 to 40 learners per class, good staffing levels no double classes for teachers and enough contact hours with the learners. There have been several government interventions in teaching of literacy namely; Primary Literacy Programme as a methodology, and teaching Literacy using the five key competences (Phonemic awareness, phonics, fluency, vocabulary and comprehension). Teachers and Head Teachers in different Zones and schools have been trained in the Methodology and content delivery in teaching literacy for Grades one and two. These trainings have continued through School Based Continuing Professional Development (SBCPD).

Zambia has had almost thirty years' experience of using English as the medium of instruction from grade one onwards. The fact that initial reading skills are taught in and through a language that is unfamiliar to the majority of children is believed to be a major contributory factor to the backwardness in reading shown by many Zambian children (MoE, 1996). To this effect the Zambian Government through the Ministry of Education in 2002 put in interventions to improve reading such as Primary Reading Programme. In Grade one it was New Break Through to Literacy (NBTL), in Grade two it was Step into English and from Grade 3 to Secondary school it was Read on Course (ROC). The policy requires that, pupils in the first grade be taught reading and writing in language familiar to them, preferably their mother tongue (Kotze and Higgins, 1999). The programme was piloted in the Northern Province; Icibemba was used as the medium of instruction in a class room situation. It was reported that, pupils who had participated in the NBTL were reading at a level equivalent to grade four. The programme was further piloted in all the provinces. The programme still proved to be successful with the literacy rate of 59% (Higgins et al, 2000). The NBTL has since been implemented at the National level.

However, due to inadequate teaching and learning materials for the Primary Reading Programmes (New Break Through to Literacy, Step into English and Read on Course,) teaching and learning has not been effective. Little is known of the impact Primary Reading Programme has had on reading levels in the country. Generally, most of the learners were not able to read. Upon observing that most of the learners were not able to read and write, the government came up with another intervention known as Primary Literacy Programme (PLP) was implemented in 2014. In this methodology the language of instruction from Grades I to 4 is the language of play, hence for Chibombo it is Chi Tonga.

Further, the Southern African Consortium for monitoring learning quality (SACMEQ) reported in 2012 poor reading performance at grade six levels in the Zambian Basic Schools. These findings were the same as those of Namibia, Zimbabwe and Mauritius. The National Assessment report by Kelly and Kanyika (1999) also revealed poor reading levels among grade five pupils in Zambian Basic schools. Consequently, a study by Kelly (2000) demonstrated that, grade six who participated in the study performed considerably below the levels expected of those in their grades. For instance, grade six pupils who participated in the study performed within the level expected of four while grade five pupils fell within the performance band expected at grade three levels, whereas some grade four pupils both rural and urban schools fell within the performance band of grade two pupils.

Due to poor reading in primary schools as demonstrated by different studies, the Zambian government has undertaken policy changes in an effort to uplift the reading levels among learners. The Ministry of Education policy document of 1996 states that the fundamental aim of the curriculum for lower and middle basic classes (Grade 1-7) is to enable pupils to read and write clearly, correctly and confidently in a Zambian Language and in English. The Ministry of Education attaches the highest priority to the attainment of this goal' (MoE, 1996). In this respect, the MoE changed the language policy. From 1965 to 1996, English had been used as a medium of instruction and also as a language of initial literacy from the time the child starts grade one. Research evidence has however suggested that, the impact of this language was negative as it did not succeed in generating reading competence in many pupils (Kelly, 2000).

1.2 Statement of the Problem

Despite the Zambian government through the Ministry of Education having put up interventions to improve reading, pupils performance in reading has been poor. The poor performance of grade one to four learners in reading in Chibombo District has been a concern for quite some time. If this problem is not addressed it will slow down the country development.

1.3 Purpose of the Study

The purpose of the study was to investigate teachers' attitude towards the teaching of literacy and their perception of the methodology for successful implementation of PLP and learner attitude towards the learning of literacy.

1.4 Objectives

The following are the objectives of the study

1. To establish the views of teachers about the teaching of literacy.
2. To assess the attitudes of learners towards the teaching and learning of literacy.
3. To establish causes of poor learner performance in reading.

1.5 Research Questions

The proposed study will attempt to answer four specific questions in relation to the objectives outlined above.

1. What are the views of teachers about teaching literacy?
2. How is the attitude of learners towards learning of literacy?
3. What are the causes of poor learner performance in reading?

1.6 Significance of the Study

The significance of this study was therefore based on the fact that it may provide evidence and data on the factors leading to poor learner performance in reading at lower primary school level in Chibombo District.

This study may help to enhance effective application of relevant pedagogical strategies that will improve learner performance in reading at low primary school level. The study would not only assist the school management, District Education Support Team (DEST)

and the Zonal Education Support Team (ZEST), but would also provide strategies to guide the class teachers who are key to improving the performance of learners in reading.

1.7 Conceptual Framework

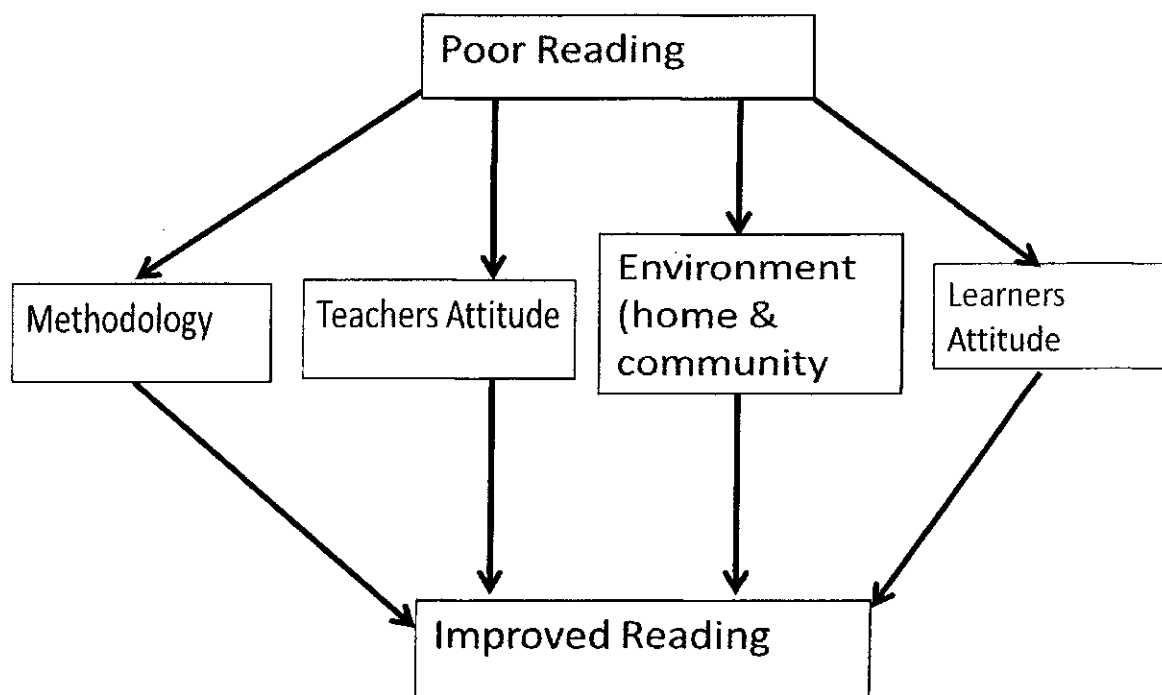


Figure 1-1 Conceptual framework

The framework presents the main source of learner performance in reading. Learner performance is a function of the interplay of four main factors, none of which operates independently of the other: methodology, teacher's attitude, environmental influence and learners' attitude towards learning. To facilitate learning, the learning environment must be organised in a way that will allow pupils to develop concepts and skills themselves at their own pace according to their individual aptitude. The barrier between school and home can be reduced by helping parents to engage with children's education. Because the environment mediates much of the learning of a child when the home and school environment have a negative attitude towards a child in education, the child gives up and this affects the psychological development of the child at school.

1.8 Theoretical Framework

This study is informed by the theoretical framework governing learning theories. Learning theories concepts propose that learning is a process of gaining knowledge and skills through studying or training or being taught. If people learn to behave or react in a particular way, they gradually start to behave in that way as a result of a change in attitude. Vygotsky's social-cultural theory is his perspective on cognitive development, in which children acquire their culture's value and beliefs through collaborative dialogues with more knowledgeable members of society (Sheffer, 1999). When applied to reading, children view reading according to their society's cultural values and beliefs. Vygotsky stressed on social interaction in language (Wood, 2006) which is one of Vygotsky's major intellectual tools, and which we accumulate as we grow up in society and which mediates the kind of understanding that we can form or construct. Here the language which is more suitable for learning to read is that which the children are familiar with, especially the language of the home or the mother tongue (Piaget, 2008).

According to the Social-cultural theory, children learning to read can be enhanced when they work in their Zone of Proximal Development (ZPD). The ZPD is the range of tasks that one cannot yet perform independently but can accomplish with the help of a more competent individual. This means that instructions begin with someone more knowledgeable such a teacher performing an activity like demonstrating how to read. After that the teacher and the learners perform the task of reading together. It is the Scaffold that helps the novices to acquire the necessary reading skills. A Scaffold is the appropriate assistance a more competent individual gives inexperienced person in order to perform a task they are incapable of doing on their own.

The Scaffold also helps learners to acquire skills that they would be unlikely to acquire without help, implying that with the appropriate assistance learners are even able to acquire complicated reading skills, such as those required to read an opaque language such as in grade two. As the learners acquire the necessary skills they gradually assume more responsibility, read on their own and teach one another (Schunk,2009). This means that Scaffolding also instils in learners the skills necessary for independent learning to practise reading.

The ZPD also implies that if learners are not scaffolded, they cannot acquire reading skills. It means that if children are not assisted, they cannot learn how to read. Furthermore,

some attempts at Scaffolding, do not succeed, such as those which are not based on cultural practise and activity (Wood, 2006). When Scaffolding is not based on activity, the instructional process is not organized on the basis of learning to acquire the required skills, only the gifted benefit. And if Scaffolding is not based on cultural practices, it means the young ones are not interacting and reading with the teacher or a more experienced person who should be making their performance more effective. It is also implies that the language they are using is not a mother tongue or familiar, meaning that their reading is not being refined.

1.9 Delimitation

This study was conducted in government primary schools and community schools in Chibombo District of Central Province.

1.10 Limitation of the Study

There were challenges encountered. It was difficult to get the questionnaires answered on time because participants took time to complete because there were no appointments with respondents in most instances due to poor communication network. Another challenge was that, some respondents were not cooperative to provide certain information free of charge.

In order to overcome some of these limitations, it was necessary to explain to the school head teachers the importance of the research, so that they cooperate to allow getting to the respondents. The interviews and group discussions were conducted during the extra curriculum activities to avoid disturbing the learning activities.

1.11 Ethical Consideration

In order to maintain ethics, the study ensured that the opinions of the respondent remained confidential and non-judgemental. Respondents were assured that data and information provided by respondents was treated with confidentiality. However, the findings for this research were made available on request to the participants.

1.12 DEFINITION OF TERMS

Language of Instruction; the language of instruction in or out of school refers to the language used for teaching the basic curriculum of the educational system.

Letter Sound Correspondence: A phoneme (sound) associated with a letter

Local Language; The language spoken in the homes and market place of a community as distinguished from a regional, national or international language.

Mother tongue instruction; The use of the learners' mother tongue as the medium of instruction. It can refer to L1 as s subject of instruction.

Mother tongue; A child's first language, language learned in the home from older family members.

Phonemes; These are smallest meaningful units of speech sounds.

Poor reader; Pupils who have not made satisfactory progress even after being given literacy instruction under Primary Literacy Programme.

Reading; is a deliberate process of looking at and understanding written language.

Reading Comprehension; This involves reading words from a text and having a clear understanding of what is written.

1.13 SUMMARY

This chapter looked at the background to this particular study. The chapter presented the purpose of the study, the objectives and the research questions through which the objectives have addressed. The chapter also provided the significance of the study, the limitation and theoretical framework, definition key terms and ethical consideration. The next chapter is a presentation of the literature review.

CHAPTER TWO

LITERATURE REVIEW

2.0 Overview

The chapter provides an account of the learner poor performance in reading. The purpose is to outline the factors that contribute towards the poor performance of learners in reading, focusing on teachers' and learners' attitudes towards learning literacy and teaching methodology. To have a broader perspective of different groups of pupils performance in reading, the chapter opens with review of general performance of children in reading at global level then goes down to reading performance of children in Africa focusing on Nigeria, Malawi, Namibia, Botswana, Lesotho, Swaziland and lastly Zambia. In Zambia it examines reading levels in Zambia as revealed by Southern Africa Consortium for Monitoring Education Quality (SAQMEQ), Ministry of Education and many other local and international researchers. The last part of the chapter provides the summary of the work in the chapter.

2.1 Definition of reading

Reading is about understanding written texts. It is a complex activity that involves both perception and thought (Herbert, 2003). Accordingly, Reading consists of two related processes: word recognition and comprehension. Word recognition refers to the process of perceiving how written symbols correspond to one's spoken language. Comprehension is the process of making sense of words, sentences and connected text. Readers typically make use of background knowledge, vocabulary, grammatical knowledge, experience with text and other strategies to help them understand written text (Herbert, 2003). This attribution of meaning to the written words is clearly an integral part of reading, and fosters the reading ability of the learners.

To emphasize the definition, Williams (1993) notes that a particularly careful approach is, therefore, needed with learners who have little knowledge of English if they are to learn to read successfully in the language. He further observes that most methods of teaching initial reading assume that the learner knows the language. These methods, therefore, focus on decoding (i.e. identification) of the written words. In initial reading of a second

language where the learner may not know the language, this can degenerate into mere "transcoding" i.e. converting the written form into a spoken form without understanding.

Reading as the recognition of printed or written symbols which serve as stimuli for recalling the meanings requires that the readers accrue sufficient past experience (Dike, 2006). In light of this, Gibson and Levin (1975) quoted in (Shaffer, 1999) have identified three phases in learning to read. First the children equate reading with story-telling, where the child can pick up a story book and read words which may not even be there in the print, that reading starts quite early in the child's life. They add that as early as eighteen months of age, children are able to grasp the physical act involved in reading which are gazing, pointing, and monitoring. This early literacy awareness fosters an orientation to print knowledge that facilitates the children's appropriation of reading.

Other studies have pointed out that there is great need to encourage literacy-rich home environments for the children in order to inculcate in the children early reading interest. In the next stage, children recognize that the squiggles on the printed page represent words. They may then try to match the spoken words of a familiar story to the symbols on the page (Hamunyele, 2010). In the third and final phase, children must have become quite skilled at decoding letters and can sound out unknown words by breaking them into individual sounds or syllables. Hence, by the time children are in the third grade, when the ROC is introduced, they are expected to master the rules of translating letters into meaningful sounds and should also comprehend what they are reading about (Shaffer, 1999).

2.2 Reading Performance at Global level

Acquiring competence in reading has been a big challenge in most part of the world. Many studies, such as, the National Assessment of Educational Progress (NAEP) of 2009 have revealed that globally, reading levels by learners in early grades of school, are low and this is a big challenge in many countries. The National Assessment of Educational Progress (NAEP) that was carried out in America in 2009 reports that millions of American children reach fourth grade without learning to read proficiently. It further comments that reading proficiently is a crucial marker in a child's educational development.

Governments and stakeholders have realized that children in lower grades are not able to read to the required standard in spite of the measures put in place by relevant authorities and governments. This problem is not only prevalent in developing and poor countries with undeveloped economies but also in rich countries (Juel, 1994; Gross, 1995) with developed economies, where reading may be considered to be most highly valued and part of many people's main activities.

The developed world like UK for instance, children in the lower grades were reading below their level. According to Gross (1995), in the UK, approximately a quarter of grade two and three children were functioning at fairly low level for the grade level. He continued to state that one out of twenty were hardly able to read. A similar situation was recorded in the United States of America. The United States of America National Assessment (1994) recorded low reading levels among children in lower grades. Matafwali (2005) recorded that studies that were conducted elsewhere show that children who did not display good reading skills in their first grade had approximately ninety per cent chances of remaining poor readers after three years of schooling and were not likely to improve thereafter. According to (Feistelson, 1973), reading skills are essentially the same all over the world. This means children anywhere, including Zambia may be affected in the same way.

In a study conducted by Stephens (1998) on the acquisition of English language skills amongst selected Ghanaian primary school children, reading and oral skills of more than 1000 lower primary school children in 14 schools, children were able to follow instructions but could not speak English. In reading, children could not read a third of the number of words presented to them. For instance, if children were given fifteen words to read, they could not read more than five words. Stephens (1998) further found out that just as in Ghana, in other countries including Benin, Cameroon, Ethiopia and Nigeria children meet problems in reading in first year and the following year of primary school.

Reading is a developmental skill which is influenced by a number of interacting factors. These include phonological awareness represented by a given writing system of a particular language. This correlates positively with the reading ability of an individual in every language (National Reading Panel, 2000). A number of studies have linked the poor reading ability to the lack of proper teacher training in the phonological awareness and

lack of language competence among the many factors, (Torgesen, Wagner, and Rashotte, 1997). With the diverse languages which the Zambian community shares, it is not clear on the kind of attitudes the teachers teaching reading in local languages have towards the teaching of lower grades.

Thomas and Collier (1998) argue that because most children are not given enough time to learn their native languages, they struggle, not as a result of having language learning difficulties, but because they are put in difficult situations in the school environment. The duo further observe that in order to overcome such situations, children must be given up to 90% of the time to learn their first language in kindergarten and grade one, with only 10% dedicated to learning English. Gradually as they learn more English, they would be taught in their first language 50% of their time and 50% in English, the second language, up to the sixth grade before making the full transition to English. The study was in second language learning while my study emphasized learning how to read in the first language.

Further studies have noted that children in ideal bilingual learning situations are likely to perform well because they understand what they are hearing and are able to build their underlying conceptual-linguistic foundation. Further, encouraging and supporting children's first languages and culture encourages them to quickly learn to read and write without any language impingement (Campbell, 1996). This is supported by Stubbs (2000) who has noted that language teaching has to start from where the child is, because there is, logically, nowhere else to start. Zambian teachers being bilingual from their background, it is not clear on the attitudes they hold towards the teaching of reading in the local languages of the children in the lower grades of Chibombo primary schools.

A lack of phonemic and phonological awareness may impede an individual's ability to acquire accurate and fluent word reading skills. This, it was noted, is a primary source of difficulty for children with reading disabilities (Torgesen, Wagner, and Rashotte, 1997). Research evidence has also shown that phonological awareness is critical to the acquisition of early decoding skills in children. If there is lack of these skills especially when the young learners make the transition to learning and reading and writing with comprehension in the ROC, there is a likelihood that the pupils may flounder. This point has been noted by Matafwali (2005:2010) who revealed that lack of phonological skills are contributory factors to pupils' lack of reading. Matafwali (2005:2010) further noted

that when phonological awareness deficiency is identified as a major contributing factor to a child's reading and spelling difficulties, it is possible to make corrections. The above cited studies were with reference to the teaching and learning of English language while the current study looked at the teaching and learning in the children's familiar language in the primary schools of Chibombo district.

On the African continent, the reading habit of children dwindled due to poor reading cultures of Africans generally, and other notable factors like non-availability of reading materials (books). Choudhung (1990:87) says that the reading habit is best formed at a young impressionable age in school, but once formed, it can last one's life. School children acquire reading literacy through a variety of activities and experiences within different contexts. According to (Sharma, 1978), to know about the world and its environment, a child helps him/herself through reading books, newspapers, and other magazines. Based on this fact, (Panagrahi and Panda, 1996) explain that once the child has been taught to read and develop a love for books, he can explore for himself the wealth of human experience and knowledge. These authors further said that children missing the opportunity of getting in touch with books at this stage, find it difficult to acquire reading habits in their later years. Dave (1977) asserts that reading is an intellectual action which is possible only if a man has formed a habit of reading and practicing it since childhood. It for this reason that this study looked at the factors leading to poor reading levels in the lower primary schools of Chibombo District.

2.3 Reading performance from the African perspective

The reading abilities for African children have been poor because of the wrong medium which governments adopted for children to learn in. A study done by UNESCO (2003) in 30 African, Asian and Latin American countries recommended the use of local languages or the mother tongue in formal and non-formal education for the initial stages of the child's years in school. This shows the importance attached to the use of the learner's first language in learning to read and write even by major decision formers in education. In other words, this precisely shows why it is important to conduct initial literacy in the first language of the learners to give them a head start in reading and writing while recognizing the value and significance of English as the official language of our country.

With such recommendations, learner's attitudes towards the learning of literacy have not been established in the primary schools of Chibombo District of Zambia.

A study conducted by (Ball, 2010), in Analytical Review commissioned by UNESCO, states that UNESCO has long recognized that the language of instruction as well as knowledge of languages play key roles in learning. In order to promote quality in children's opportunities to learn, UNESCO's Global Monitoring Report (2008a) points out there is need to recognize the importance of mother tongue instruction in early childhood and the first years of primary school. The report further noted that early grade reading was key to the development of reading fluency among the lower readers if a familiar language was used. With the introduction of the PLP in the primary schools of Zambia. The factors that were contributing to the poor reading amongst the lower grades are not known.

A study by Rosinki (2009) on reading abilities in Malawi noted that reading fluency has been identified as a key component in reading and in learning to read. A significantly large number of pupils who experience difficulty in reading manifest difficulties in reading fluency, this contributes to their overall struggles in reading. Further sentiments were echoed by (Ehri, 1998) when he noted that being able to read words by sight automatically is the key to skilled reading of text as it allows readers to process words in text quickly, without attention directed to the word itself. A first benchmark for fluency is being able to "sight read" some words. The idea is that children recognize at sight the most common words in written language, and, that instant reading of these words allows them to read and understand text more quickly. The findings by the two scholars could not be relied upon because they studies were conducted in relation to second language learning. Since the children learn in their familiar language, it was significant to identify the factors that were leading to poor reading in the primary schools of Chibombo District.

A group of the disabled and the physically challenged individuals who attend regular school with the able bodied individuals have challenges at being good readers. Another group of poor readers is composed largely of children from families of lower socio-economic or minority status groups who enter school significantly delayed in a much broader range of pre-reading skills such as awareness of alphabet sounds and letters (Torgesen, 2002). Other factors associated with reading failure are more to do with the

condition of the pupils, for instance high absenteeism rate, poor motivation, low self-esteem and hunger, tiredness and mistreatment of pupils by the caregivers teachers or parents.

A study conducted by Scarborough (1991) on the hindrances of reading achievement among the disabled in Angola raised significant issues worthy looking at. He found that if there is a history of reading difficulties in the family then there is a higher chance of a child having reading difficulties. The study did not clearly give the age of the learners despite using the familiar language in schools.

2.4 Studies conducted in Zambia on poor reading in schools among learners.

Zambia has not been spared from the problem of poor reading amongst the primary school children. In fact a study by (Matafwali, 2010) revealed that 'reading levels of majority of Zambian children were regrettably still low and that there was a downward performance even for children who had shown an initial boost at reading in grade one. Based on this fact (Kalindi, 2005) found that the standards of reading for both local language and English were appalling among the lower and the middle basic school learners in Mpika and Kasama. These results suggested that the majority of pupils at Grades 3 and 4 were weak in reading in Nyanja. Grade 6 pupils too were not on the whole very proficient enough to warrant any positive performance. The apparent weakness of the pupils in reading Nyanja merited further investigation. The findings of the study did not consider grade 2 learners which this study considered.

The Ministry of Education, (Zambia), estimates that only six per cent of pupils have desirable levels of performance in literacy, and about 10 per cent have desirable levels in numeracy (MoE, 2010). This in part accounts for the failure by an average Zambian pupil to read or write irrespective of the level of education. The various assessments conducted by the ECZ had a number of issues on poor reading. The results of various scheduled educational assessments and examinations confirm this dismal picture. With the high numbers of school dropouts, poor school attendance and the general lack of a literate environment, the once literate society risks losing even the initial literacy they had. Children do not read for knowledge, the reading that is common is specific, short term and often examination focused. This has led to underdeveloped literacy abilities among

children and youths. But even those that are able to read progressively read less and less (ECZ, 2012). Reports from the Examination Council of Zambia were compiled before the PLP program was implemented and the report was for all the primary schools in the country. This study looked at the primary schools of Chibombo District and specifically looked at the lower primary school learners.

A study conducted by Mubanga (2011) revealed that performance in letter-sound knowledge was poorer than in the task where learners were to name the letters. In this task their performance indicated that they had challenges in associating letters with their sounds, as it can be seen from the results. Some children are able to demonstrate knowledge of letter-sound relationships without actually understanding the alphabetic principle. These are situations where children are able to recognize that the letter "s" makes an /s/ sound, but they really do not understand that "samba," "sola," "fast" and "seat" all have an /s/ sound in them, and that the /s/ sound is represented by a letter when they write the word. The study meant that learners were able to read effectively if the phonemic awareness was perfect.

A study conducted by Mwambazi (2011) on the factors and the nature of low reading achievements among grade two pupils in selected schools of Mpika and Mbala districts revealed some important findings. He used the BASAT, questionnaires, interview guide and the lesson observation form. The findings among others were that grade 2 learners were unable to read according to their level. This was due to a number of factors like absenteeism, shortage of teaching and learning materials and poor family background. The study was in the Northern Province of Zambia hence the findings could not be relied upon. My study was conducted in Chibombo district of Central Province of Zambia.

Mulenga (2012) conducted a study on grade three preparedness for the Read On Course (ROC). He used a mixed method of data collection and analysis. His findings indicated that most of the pupils were inconsistent with the class attendance, they were the ones who usually did not perform well as compared to the others that consistently attended classes. The pupils' poor attendance in school was one of the factors that the study cited as one of the major drawbacks to attaining desirable reading and writing levels. The study also established that over enrolment and lack of adequate teaching and learning material were major factors that contributed to the poor reading and writing of grade 3 learners.

These factors were related to the teaching and learning of literacy in English while the current study looked at the reading in the learner's familiar language in Chibombo District of Central Province.

2.5 Summary

This chapter dealt with different studies concerning reading abilities amongst school going children from different parts of the world including Zambia. These studies looked at reading performance from a global perspective. It included reading performance in Africa and focused on reading levels in Zambia.

The revelations were taken from the Southern Africa Consortium for Monitoring of Education Quality (SACMEQ) studies, Ministry of Education and other international researchers.

CHAPTER THREE

METHODOLOGY

3.0 Overview

The study investigated factors that contribute towards poor performance in reading of grade two learners in ten selected schools in Chibombo district. This chapter presents the research methodology, research design, area of study, population, sampling method, research sample, data collection procedures, data collection instruments, and limitation of the study.

3.1 Research Design

The researcher used the qualitative approach due its suitability in social research which is done in the subject's natural setting. Qualitative research is a type of primary research in which the researcher collects first-hand information obtained directly from participants (Miles and Huberman, 1994). In this study, data was collected from grade two learners, teachers teaching from grade one to four and from the school management. The research investigated factors on views of teachers teaching literacy, learners' attitude towards learning literacy and the support provided by school management in teaching and learning of literacy. The methodology used to teacher literacy was also investigated. Basic characteristics of qualitative research are such that it is undertaken within the habitat of the participants, relies on spoken words of participants rather than on books, it is a meaningful way of collecting human experiences, qualitative research design keeps on changing as new data and additional sources become available (Miles and Huberman. 1994)

Orodho (2003) defines a descriptive survey as a method of collecting information by interviewing or administering a questionnaire to sample individuals. Oguba (1998) also states that surveys are used to gather systematically factual information necessary or decision making. They are efficient methods of collecting descriptive data regarding the characteristics of the population, current practices, conditions or needs and preliminary information generating research questions.

The survey was descriptive because the data was described and explained according to the findings. Qualitative approach was used to find out feelings, opinions, attitude and beliefs of the participants through interview guide.

3.2 Study Population

The population of this research consisted of all primary schools, Grade 2 teachers, and Grade 2 learners in Chibombo District.

3.3 Study Area

The sample was drawn from ten government primary schools namely: Chibombo, Kafululu, Mufwambe, Shampane, Mwamuyamba, Mukuni, Okada, Kansesa, Kakunka and Lyansa.

3.4 Sampling Technique

Sampling according to (Ghosh, 2002) is the collection of information from a portion of the total population and on the basis of the information collected from the subset, to infer something about the whole target population.

Random sampling technique was used to obtain learners from the selected schools to ensure that equal opportunity is extended to all the learners. Pieces of paper were put in the box written No and Yes. If a learner picked a piece of paper written Yes he/she had to participate but if a learner picked a piece of paper written No he/she did not have to participate. Purposive sampling was used to select only grade two teachers and head teachers.

3.5 Sample Size

The sample of this research was learners from the lower section, grade two teachers, and school head teachers from the selected primary schools. The ten primary schools sampled were selected in Chibombo District in order to make a representation of other schools in the district. Grade two teachers in each of the selected schools (4 or 3 teachers), 10 learners (5 boys and 5 girls) from each selected schools and four (4) school head teachers. A sample is a number of people or things selected from the larger group (population) to provide information (Thungu, 2011). However, from big school (grade one schools) four

teachers took part, from grade two schools three teachers took part and from community schools only two teachers took part due to poor staffing levels.

3.6 Research Instruments

The research instruments used were the interview guide (guiding questions) and assessment tool (EGRA) for the grade two learners. The interview guide had semi-structured, open ended questions for the teachers and head teachers. The open ended questions were used to enable participants express themselves freely. The interview guides were used for interview with the teachers and head teachers. The assessment tool was used for grade two learners in order to assess the learners' ability on phonics.

3.7 Data Analysis

The data collected was manually analysed and processed. The data was analysed to derive the causes of poor learner performance in reading.

3.8 Summary

This chapter presented the methodology used in the research study. It included the research design, study population, and study area. The sampling technique was explained and determination of the sample size was indicated. The research instruments, data collection and interview guides including assessment tools were presented accordingly.

The chapter ended with an analysis of all data collected in the research study on grade two learners.

The next chapter will present the research study findings in relation to the research questions mentioned in chapter four.

CHAPTER FOUR

PRESENTATION OF RESEARCH FINDINGS

4.0 Overview

The previous chapter focused on the research design and methodology used in the collection and analysis of data. This chapter presents the findings of the study and this is done using qualitative approach.

The Chapter is guided by the following research questions as stated in chapter one.

- a) What are the views of teachers about the teaching of literacy.
- b) What is the performance of grade two learners in literacy.
- c) What are the causes of poor learner performance in reading.

4.1 Teachers' views towards the teaching of literacy

The qualitative data was collected using the interview guide. The main aim of using the interview guide was to obtain in-depth information about the experiences and challenges of teaching literacy to a second grade class.

4.1.1 Findings from the teachers

The first question the teachers were asked related to the social factors responsible for poor learner performance in reading. Many teachers explained that some learners came from broken homes. One teacher pointed out that, *"I have learners who come from broken homes while others are orphaned. This makes them unable to concentrate in class, they also had no one at home to encourage them to read."*

The other question related to the teaching profession. This question focused on the P.L.P teaching methodology. Many of the teachers indicated that they were motivated by the use of PLP as the teaching methodology to improve learner performance in literacy. One teacher stated that, *"I have six learners who are able to read fluently in local language and eleven are also trying to read with less difficulties because of the PLP methodology."* Another teacher said that, *"there was positive interaction with the learners when PLP*

methodology is used. Learners have realised that the words they speak are what they read in class."

Therefore, pupils develop a positive attitude towards reading in their local language. Teachers are also motivated when they impart knowledge and skill in learners and when the learners have grasped the concept of reading and could apply it in their real life situation.

Some teachers mentioned that they are naturally motivated because from childhood their dream-career was to become a teacher. One teacher said,

I enjoy teaching and I am intrinsically motivated to teach even under difficult situation. I taught at a community school, and the school was not in good condition when I went there. I worked hard together with the community. The school has now improved with good infrastructure, good learner enrolment, and trained teachers have been sent to the school.

This had motivated the learners to work hard. In the field the researcher discovered that the schools visited had a local policy on reading. The local policy on reading was also effectively implemented. The school administrators had taken up the task to orient teachers and parents on the importance of reading. They strongly monitor the teachers to put into consideration frequent testing and giving of feedback, remedial testing and provision of learning material as measures to improve learner performance in reading. Teachers were also to be accountable for learner performance in reading. One teacher cited that,

The local policy has helped me to work hard and understand my role to teach effectively especially to teach pupils how to read. And most of the pupils in my class are able to identify and pronounce the letter sounds with less difficulty.

She further stated that, "some parents have appreciated the teaching of phonics because learners are able to read in local language."

4.1.2 Effectiveness of PLP Methodology

Teachers were asked on the effectiveness of using PLP Methodology in teaching. The teachers explained that they had inadequate time in which to implement the classroom activities assigned for each lesson. The one hour allocated to teach literacy was inadequate to complete the literacy activities especially the five key activities (Phonics, Phonemic Awareness, Fluency, Vocabulary and Comprehension), which should be taught in each lesson when using PLP teaching methodology.

One Teacher explained, *"I constantly rush through PLP Lessons. Even when learners have not understood, I have no time to go back to the previous lesson because I constantly felt that I do not have enough time to complete the syllabus."* Some teachers confessed that, they did not manage to complete the syllabus due to limited time and too many activities that are supposed to be taught during the literacy hour. In one hour you have to teach phonics, phonemic awareness, fluency, vocabulary and comprehension. Time is simply not enough to correct learners' mistakes.

A female teacher stated that, *"despite not having enough time for teaching literacy, PLP methodology is effective because learners are able to recognize the letter sound made by specific letters, this helps learners learn to read. For example when two letters blend, add a vowel words are represented such as /fwa/ /kwe/ /mfu/."*

4.1.3 Successes and challenges of teaching literacy to grade two learners

Teachers were asked on the success and challenges of teaching literacy to a grade two class. One teacher explained, *I enjoyed teaching and I appreciated being a grade two class teacher. However, there are many challenges because most of the learners enter grade two class without the skill of reading.* Another teacher mentioned that, *"As a grade two class teacher, I am forced to start with grade one's work which needs a lot of preparation to make the learners catch up with grade two's work.* Another teacher said that, *"I am happy teaching grade two pupils because most of these learners do follow my instructions.* One teacher further added that, *"I am more like a parent to the learners because I guide them. This has helped the learners to be motivated and always willing to learn."* *Most of the learners in class are trying but need to work hard on phonics."*

One teacher explained that, most of the non-Tonga speaking teachers have difficulties to teach using chi Tonga.

Chi Tonga is difficult for teachers whose mother tongue is not chi Tonga and that we believe that learning to read in chi Tonga is difficult for learners whose mother tongue is not chi Tonga, and this has been a challenge because most of us teachers who are not Tonga speaking people do not easily accept to teach grade one to four classes.

4.1.4 Effective Teaching of Literacy

A question was asked to establish factors that lead to effective teaching and learning in literacy. Most of the teachers stated that, PLP was effective in teaching literacy if learners are consistent in attending class and do not miss lessons. When a child misses lessons for two to three days, such a child would need remedial work for him/her to catch up. The high rate of absenteeism in class demotivated the teachers. Some learners that were doing well initially, would perform poorly by the end of the year due to absenteeism.

The teachers in schools visited expressed concern about the high levels of absenteeism. Pupils that were inconsistent with class attendance did not perform well as compared to the others that consistently attended classes. The pupils' poor attendance in class is one of the factors that the teachers cited as one of the major drawbacks to attaining desirable reading. One of the teachers in this regard said, *"The pupils' school attendance in this community is very bad. The parents do not strictly monitor their children's attendance in school. You would find that the pupils can only attend class two or three days in a week. As teachers, we have very little control over this issue."* This was a retrogressive move towards the teaching of reading in primary schools.

Remedial work was only applied effectively where the staffing level was good in schools. The four teachers argued that, "Remedial work has been a challenge due to poor staffing. Morning class starts at 7:00 hours ending at 10:45 hours and another class from 11:00 hours to 15:30 hours. This has affected remedial work because we always rush to make preparations for the next lessons.

As regard to reasons why remedial could not be conducted one teacher said, *"I do not have time especially that I handled double class and the number of pupils were over 65 per class. In addition to that, parents to the children do not come to school even when they are invited regarding their child's poor performance."*

4.1.5 Effectiveness of using Subjective Learning in Teaching Literacy

The other question asked was the use of Subjective Learning in Teaching Literacy. The question was asked in order to learn if the teachers were using subjective learning in the class when teaching literacy. One teacher responded that, *"Teaching of literacy requires the learners to listen and follow instruction from the teacher."* While another teacher indicated that, *"the learner's role is to complete the task given and corrected by the teacher."*

Five teachers expressed the importance of using decodable stories that, *"the decodable stories are very effective in teaching comprehension and the decodable stories are being created by us teachers. They have helped us to develop skills and knowledge in writing stories and most of the stories are written according to the sound taught. And these have improved the preparation and production of teaching and learning materials. Through decodable stories learners are able to read as individuals, pair and as a group. This has helped the learners to develop knowledge and skills in reading,"*

One teacher explained that, *"Through School Based Continue Professional Development we are able to share ideas and skills to improve on the writing of the decodable stories. Therefore, the learners are motivated because the classrooms have a lot of teaching and learning materials, they are interacting with the charts and helping them to read individually and as a group."* While another teacher indicated that, *"the interaction with their learners especially those that are Tonga speakers have helped her to learn a lot from them especially the language chitonga."*

4.2. Performance of learners in literacy

4.2.1 Findings from the learners

The learners were assessed using Early Grade Reading Assessment (EGRA). The researcher presented a list of 100 familiar letter sounds and asked the learners to identify and read from the list. Letter-sound means the ability to relate letters to their sound as well as relating sounds to letters. It is a very useful skill in reading because it enables learners to identify individual syllables and words by sound.

The letters were mixed up and presented in a random sequence, both in small and capital letters as indicated in Appendix B to avoid learners using the memorised order of the

vowel sounds. From the letter-sounds pupils were required to identify and read letter - sounds. The pupils were asked to relate and give correct sound of the letter.

Table 1 Learners Familiar Results

SCORE	FREQUENCY	%
0 – 20	41	40.2%
21 – 40	17	17%
41 – 60	29	28%
61 – 80	15	15%
81 – 100	0	0%

The performance in letter-sound knowledge was poor because learners failed to name the sounds. In this task performance of learners indicated that they had challenges in associating letters with sounds.

In table I, out 102 learners, 15 of them learners scored 60 to 80 marks, 29 learners scored between 41 and 60. The rest (58 learners) got between 0 and 20.

Sounds (phonemes) are the key elements a child should master in learning to read. If they lack sound knowledge then reading difficulties in such children should be expected even in their advanced grades.

Before children learn to read, they must be familiar with the letter sound. They should be able to identify the letter-sound in different fonts and type-case, and they should know small and capital letters have the same sounds. They should be able to discriminate one letter sound from the other. For instance, identifying different features between the letter sound /c/ and /s/ and between sound /h/ and /n/. The challenges emanates from their inability to recognise and associate letters with their sounds

Task 1 Letter Sounds Results

Learners			Grade	Red Level (Not able to read)			Yellow Level (Attempt to read)			Green Level (Able to read)		
Boys	Girls	Total	2	Boys	Girls	Total	boys	girls	Total	Boys	Girls	Total
52	50	102		32	26	58	13	16	29	7	8	15
102				58 =58%			29=28%			15=15%		

Table 1 Letter sound results

From the letter sound assessment 15 learners were outstanding. They managed to read at least 60 letter sound correctly. They were in green level. In yellow level that is desirable 29 learners were able to read at least 40 words. In red level that is below minimum, 58 learners read less than 25 words and some could not even read a single word.

As shown in the table above, the 58 pupils that read less than 25 letter-sounds had difficulties to identify and read most of the letter-sounds. This kind of performance suggested that pupils would have serious difficulties to read words and sentences.

4.2.2. Letter Sounds

Table 3 below shows the performance of pupils on individual letter-sounds which were areas of difficulties. Level of achievement was classified as follows: Correct means number of learners that identified and read letter-sounds, Incorrect means number of learners that attempted but could not identify and read the letter-sounds correctly, No response means number of learners that could not even attempt to identify or read the letter-sounds.

Table 3 Assessment Results

Area of difficulties in Letter-sounds	Level of Achievement		
	Correct	Incorrect	No response
/v/	2	15	85
/w/	2	5	95
/z/	4	19	69
/y/	4	9	89
/g/	5	22	65
/b/	9	17	76
/n/	9	28	65
/h/	9	25	68
/l/	8	20	74
/d/	9	18	75
/j/	11	29	62
/k/	19	34	49
/m/	15	27	60
/s/	13	31	58
/c/	14	30	58
/f/	12	27	63
/e/	23	29	50
/a/	26	49	48
/bb/	7	14	81
/kk/	14	21	72
/hh/	7	27	58

The analysis of individual letter-sounds indicated that majority of pupils had problems to identify and read as follows: 81 pupils found difficulties with these letter-sounds /v / / w/ /z/ /y/ and /g/ ,73 pupils had difficulties to identify and read / b/ /n/ /h/ /l/, 51 pupils had problems to read /d/ /j/, 63 pupils experienced problems to read, /k / and /m/, 51 pupils experienced problems to read /f/. Results further revealed that 58 pupils experienced problems to read letter-sounds /c/ and /s/, 53 pupils could not read letter-sounds /a/ and /e/ and 70 pupils had problems to read letter sounds /bb/, /hh/, and /kk/.

Only 15 pupils managed to relate the letters to their sounds, while 58 failed to relate any letter to its correct sound. Some pupils could not differentiate between sounds and names of letters. One teacher acknowledged that her pupils had letter-sound identification difficulties especially with the following /w/ /g/ /k/. Another teacher cited that, “pupils relate certain letter of the alphabet to vowel sounds (a,e,i,o,u) and they confused sounds made by letters /c/ and /s/

Reading Comprehension

The second part of learner assessment was comprehension where an individual was asked to read aloud a text and answer questions.

Sentences	Able to read	Attempt to read	Not able to read
Muzovwu wakaambila a nsilibi	20	29	53
Muzovwu wakaambula nsilibi kuti kakali kasyoon buyo	15	28	63
Wakali kukonszya kwiisowela ansi akwiilyatauka	13	26	63
Yakati nokuba kuti yakajisi mubili musyoonto, yakali jisi nguzu kwiinda muzovwu.	13	26	63
Muzovwa wakanyema	13		
Nsilibi yakamuluma kumubombo	13		
Kuwa buzuba oobo muzovwu wakatalili kwiiyoowa nsilibi	13		

From the read aloud text, 13 learners read the story and answered the questions, 26 learners attempted to read the story and tried to answer the questions, while 63 learners tried but failed even to complete the sentence and could not even answer a single question.

Task 2 Read Aloud

Table 2 Read aloud results

Learner			Grade	Red Level (Not able to read)			Yellow Level (Attempt to read)			Green Level (Able to read)		
Boys	Girls	Total	2	Boys	girls	Total	Boys	Girls	Total	boys	Girls	Total
52	50	102		33	30	63	11	15	26	7	6	13
102				63			26			13		

Results from the reading task indicate that 63 pupils were in red (not able to read) they were below minimum level, some could not even read a single word, they had most difficulties in reading, 26 pupils were in yellow (attempt to read) desirable and were able to read at least one or two sentences. 13 pupils were outstanding, they managed to read four sentences correctly. In this study reading difficulties were notable with generally all the sentences. However, some pupils faced difficulties with these words: Muzovwu, wakaamila nsilibi, kasyoon, kukonsya, kwiisowela, akwiilyatauka and muzommwu.

Table 4 Comprehension Questions and Results

		Correct	In correct	No Response
1	Muzovwu bakazwangana ani (ansilibi)	18	21	63
2	Nsilibi yakajisi mubili uuli buti (Musyoonto)	13	26	63
3	Nguni wakaa nyeema (Muzovwu)	13	26	63
4	Muzovwu wakebelesya nzi kunyamuna nsilibi (mubombo)	13	26	63
5	Nkaambo nzi muzovwu ncaakatalike kwiiyoowa nsislibi (nkambo yakamuluma)	13	26	63

Results from the reading task in Table 3 (Reading aloud results) above indicated that 63 pupils experienced difficulties in reading. In this study reading difficulties were notable generally in all the sentences. However, most pupils faced these difficulties with the words Muzovwu, wakaambila, nsilibi, kasyoon, kukonzya, kwisowela, akwiilyatauka and muzommwu.

Table 5 below shows detailed results on individual school performance regarding reading tasks. The problem at each school was word identification which affected the pronunciation and reading fluency.

Table 3 Reading results

SCHOOL	Able to read	Attempt to read	Not able to read
School A	2	3	5
School B	1	1	8
School C	4	2	4
School D	0	2	8
School E	1	6	3
School F	2	5	3
School G	3	5	2
School H	0	1	9
School I	0	1	9
School J	0	0	10

Results from the reading comprehension indicated that out of 102 pupils 13 were able to read the story and answer the 5 questions with correct answers while 26 pupils could read but with difficulties and failed to complete the whole story. Pupils were able to answer questions 1 and 3 with correct or not correct answers. The other 63 pupils failed completely to read the story and could not give any response.

One teacher explained that, *“pupils failed to master letter-sounds, these same sounds are supposed to help them when reading. Pupils have problems with word recognition which leads to their failure to connect words to make sentences. And since these pupils have difficulties in mastering the sounds, it becomes difficult for them to read words.”*

The critical challenges faced when teaching reading, another teacher mentioned, was that, *“most of the learners do not break through in grade one, so teaching them in grade two where everything seems unfamiliar became more difficult”*

The letter sound and reading aloud was administered to 102 learners in the 10 schools. The results of the reading comprehension test indicated that there were inadequate comprehension tests conducted in schools. It was discovered that most of the learners had been memorising the sounds instead of identifying letter-sounds. Most of them were just saying the vowel sounds (a,e,i,o,u) but failing to identify the letter-sound.

4.3. 1 Causes of poor learner performance in reading

Teachers were asked what could have contributed to learner poor performance in reading. The following were the reasons given by teachers:

The teachers cited that letter-sound as one which contributed to poor learner performance in reading. A female teacher said that, *"Pupils fail to master letter-sounds that could help them when reading words. They have problems with word recognition and these problems lead to their failure to connect words to make sentences. And since these pupils have difficulties in mastering the sounds, it becomes difficult for them to read the words."*

Another teacher gave her views by saying, *"some pupils fail to match the same letter-sound in capital form to small letters in a given sequence."*

Many teachers stated that some of the pupils could not read at desirable level at the end of grade one although they progressed into second grade. Some teachers stated that they had suggested to the parents of the pupils that were not able to read in chi Tonga by the end of grade one to repeat. But this was usually not taken by the parents or guardians. The school administration also could not do anything as the pace of the pupils progression was entirely up to the parents. One of the teachers said, *"I once advised one parent to have the child repeat grade one because the child was not making satisfactory progress in reading by grade two. However, the parent said he did not mind the child's performance as long as the child was progressing from one grade to the next. The parent said all he wanted was for the child to complete school at a tender age."*

Teaching and learning materials are not adequate especially learners activity books. Teachers complain that they had to use their initiatives to produce copies for learner's activity books. The learners need these books for continuing reading even at home. In class, learners share a copy in the ratio of 1 to 5.

Teachers also noted that some head teachers are not supporting the teaching of PLP. They have left PLP in the hands of the grade teacher as the owner of the programme. This has led to poor foundation at grade one level.

Time management for teaching literacy was also not adequate. Teachers explained that one hour was not enough to explain all the teaching activities allocated. And all the five concepts of PLP to be taught in one hour it was a big challenge. High enrolment has also contributed to poor performance of the learners. The teachers explained that with so many learners, it was difficult to identify individual needs of the learners and help them. It was also noted that most of the teachers who are not Tonga speaking use either Bemba or Nyanja during teaching, but when it comes to writing on the board they use chi Tonga, making the teaching of literacy complicated to a learner.

4.3.2 Challenges experienced by Grade Two Teachers in teaching literacy

The challenges discussed with the teachers included lack of materials, pupils over enrolment, poor staffing and too much work in PLP programme which hindered the effective teaching of reading.

A teacher complained that, *"lack of teaching materials such as pupils activity books has been a big problem."* The same teacher further acknowledged that, *"There are a lot of things involved in PLP programme so sometimes I got stuck."* For example *"when I introduce a phonic sound today, it will have reading words, as a result there will be many new words for the learners which should be used in the decodable story. There are also too many activities to be done such as phonemic awareness, fluency, vocabulary and comprehension in one hour literacy lesson."*

A teacher from one school expressed the following sentiments. *"As a teacher, I would love to have special time for the children, but in the first place classes are overcrowded with more than 70 children in one class and about 60 of these pupils need special attention. The other thing is that I am handling two classes."*

She further said, *“over- enrolment of pupils makes it difficult for me to teach reading and controlling and managing the class becomes hard. When pupils are many in class, teacher –pupil contact is not effective and the one hour period of teaching literacy is not enough as well.”*

Another teacher added that, *“it has been a challenge teaching double class with high enrolment in a class. One class has 72 Learners in the morning and another class has 78 learners in the afternoon. Teaching and learning is not effective as I have too much work to do. This has affected the teaching of PLP because teacher–learner interaction is limited, and I am concerned when the learners perform badly. In addition, learners need to go through all the letter-sound according to the syllabus. I therefore try to rush the learners through the syllabus. This however affects learners negatively.”*

One critical challenge faced by teachers when teaching reading, was that, *“most of the learners do not break through in grade one, so teaching them in grade two where everything seems unfamiliar becomes more difficulties.”* Teaching and learning were inadequate, most teachers trained in PLP do not accept to teach PLP because of the activities that are involved. Teachers complained that, *“ there are a lot of activities to be taught in one hour and the teacher need to understand how to prepare the lesson plan using the five key concept (Phonics, Phonemic Awareness, Fluency, Vocabulary and Comprehension) of teaching PLP.”*

In addition the teacher needs to prepare the assessment test which is conducted every after five weeks. In the term the learners are assessed in week five (5), ten (10) and thirteen (13). And the teacher needs to compile the progress report of how the learners are performing in reading. The teachers appreciated the assessment because it helps them to determine the gap between the learning target and the instruction strategies and actual changes in the learners in terms of reading competencies.

Another challenge was parents not supporting the policy of teaching the local language from grade one to four. Some parents have a negative attitude towards the teaching of the local language.

4.4 Summary

In this chapter, the findings of this study have been presented. It has explained the findings on the views of teachers who teach literacy to Grade two learners. Teaching methodology such as PLP and challenges faced by grade two teachers. The attitude of learners towards learning of literacy was presented. And the performance of learners in literacy in different schools was analysed with a view to improve reading. The school and home environment where learners attended lessons and where they come respectively were discussed to establish how learners were influenced.

CHAPTER FIVE

DISCUSSIONS OF RESEARCH FINDINGS

5.0 Overview

Chapter four presented the findings of the study on the causes of poor performance in reading among grade two learners according to the research questions. This chapter will present the discussions of the study which was guided by research objectives:

- a) To establish the views of teachers towards the teaching of literacy
- b) To assess the attitude of learners towards the learning of literacy
- c) To establish causes of poor learner performance in reading.

5.1 The views of teachers towards the teaching of literacy

From the data collected through the use of the interview guide, the findings indicated that teachers did not take into consideration the individual differences of pupils when teaching. If teachers took time to listen and understand their pupils they would change their teaching to cater for individual pupils' needs, because each child had unique characteristics which the teacher should discover and build on when teaching. To encourage and support children's first languages and culture encouraged children to quickly learn to read and write without any language impediments. Campbell (1996) supported by Stubbs (2000) recognized the fact that language teaching should start from where the child is, because logically there is no-where else to start from.

5.1.1 Over Enrolment in class rooms

The findings of the study established that high enrolment levels of learners in classrooms made it difficult for teachers to interact effectively with learners. Most teachers found the process of managing the class very difficult. High enrolment of learners also affects the quality and quantity of interaction and teacher- learner relationships. These relationships are important for learner achievement. Having too many learners contributes to the poor performance of learners. These findings are in agreement with (Mubanga, 2012) whose findings indicated that lower grade classes were over enrolled. The teachers further explained that, it is difficult for them to ensure that each learner has grasped the concepts

that have been taught. They mentioned that even trying to get them to settle down for a lesson can be quite challenging. For example, one class of 89 learners made it difficult to teach, and to provide attention and quality education.

It was even difficult to mark and ensure that children conducted all the corrections to their work. In addition to high enrolment, some teachers were also involved in teaching double class. The longer the teaching hours, the more tired the teacher becomes thereby compromising on the quality of work they do.

High enrolment also resulted in inadequate supply of learning and teaching materials. For, example one learners' activity book was shared by six to seven learners, this was not effective learning process. It led to frustration on both the learners and the teacher, and contributed to poor teaching commitment and poor learning outcomes.

The teachers revealed that a learner's role should be to listen and pay attention to instructions. But due to high enrolment, inadequate teaching and learning material and limited contact hours in schools pupils were unable to effectively listen or pay attention to instructions. Research has revealed that working with high enrolment can hinder the use of learner centred activities.

Teachers also stated that their classes were mostly overcrowded such that there were no opportunities for pupil-teacher contact in order to offer individualized learning support to needy children. On average most classes had about 60 pupils with far extremes 82 pupils from Shimukuni primary school. Two schools had higher enrolment levels of over 80 pupils per class and the teachers were teaching double sessions, meaning when one class knocks off another one comes in. Generally, the performance of the pupils was low. This low performance could be attributed to teachers' challenges when teaching overcrowded classes. Such challenges compromised pupil performance and led to low teacher motivation.

Congestion due to over enrolment in most of the classes contributed to poor class control and management on the part of the teachers. Sometimes, this made teachers to behave quite emotionally, a situation which eventually contributed to poor teaching and learning.

5.1.2. Inadequate staffing

It was learnt that despite good enrolment, some schools had low staffing levels leading to teachers to teach more than one class. Some teachers were even teaching three classes from 7:30 to 16:45 hours, this led to teachers having insufficient time to prepare lesson plans, teaching and learning materials. The literacy methodology involves a number of learning activities which teachers were expected to conduct within the literacy hour, but this not achieved due to increased work-load. The teachers added that literacy assessment was poorly implemented in weeks 5, 10 and 13, due to increased workload resulting from inadequate staffing in some schools.

Choudhung (1990:87) stated that the reading habit is best formed at a young impressionable age in school, and once this habit formed, it can last one's life. School children acquire reading literacy through a variety of activities and experiences within different contexts. Therefore, in a situation of inadequate staffing, literacy activities are not taught effectively. Consequently, learners will not perform to the fullness of their learning potential.

5.1.3. Inadequate time of teaching literacy

Teachers explained that they had inadequate time in which to implement the classroom activities assigned to each lesson. The one hour allocated to each literacy lesson was inadequate to complete the literacy activities each day. Teachers felt as though they had to constantly rush through the literacy lessons. Even when learners did not understand, the teacher had no time to go back to the previous lessons because they constantly felt they would not have enough time to complete the syllabus. Time allocated for PLP does not allow teachers enough time to interact with the slow learners during literacy hours.

5.1.4. Primary Literacy Programme Approach

Some teachers appreciated the way PLP was structured. They believed that the structure was organised in a way that made it easier for the teacher to introduce the letter sounds using the phonemic approach.

This was done by first introducing the vowel sounds then consonants and syllables to form words. Teachers explained that they were in support of PLP because it enabled learners to easily learn how to read.

A lack of phonemic and phonological awareness may impede an individual's ability to acquire accurate and fluent word reading skills. This, it was noted, is a primary source of difficulty for children with reading disabilities (Torgesen, Wagner, and Rashotte, 1997). Research evidence has also shown that phonological awareness is critical to the acquisition of early decoding skills in children. If there is lack of these skills especially when the young learners make a transition to learning and reading and writing with comprehension in the ROC, there is a likelihood that the pupils may flounder. This point was noted by Matafwali (2005: 2010) who revealed that lack of phonological skills is a contributing factor to pupils' poor reading. In view of this, school managers should encourage teachers to have competence in PLP approach.

Under PLP approach to teaching literacy, teachers need phonic knowledge among other skills without which they would not be able to teach effectively and efficiently. In this case, it can be asserted that teachers low knowledge of phonic content and methodology had also contributed to pupil poor performance in phonological awareness tests. These findings are in agreement with Matafwali (2005:2010) who noted that when phonological awareness deficiency is identified as a major contributing factor to a child's reading and spelling difficulties, it is possible to make corrections. It is a system that can be taught and practised, especially in the early stages of reading development. Teachers can only be in a position to identify and remedy phonological irregularities if they are fully knowledgeable about it. This knowledge comes through intensive and extensive training which can be done through in-service and school based training sessions. This is in agreement with Torgesen, Wagner, and Rashotte (1997). Who stated that poor reading ability is due to lack of proper teacher training in the phonological awareness and lack of language competence.

In addition, the type of training offered to grade two teachers at the inception of the PLP was inadequate. Teachers were only subjected to short orientation programme at district and zonal level. This meant that teachers were not equipped with enough knowledge and skills needed in the teaching of reading skills.

The revelation above is similar to findings by Dixon and Nessel (1983), who argued that in order to learn sound-letter association, one must first be able to discriminate sound orally and then must learn to associate those sounds with letters.

These findings are consistent with Owino (1987) who noted that when the teachers are not fluent in certain African Languages, they make mistakes in teaching reading. Furthermore, Shroeder (2005) pointed out that, reading instructions depends in part on the teachers' knowledge and effective use of instructional methods. In this regard the role of a teacher is of great influence in as far as reading achievement is concerned.

5.2 The attitude of learners towards the learning of literacy

He further stated that pupils who were inconsistent with the class attendance were the ones who usually did not perform well as compared to the others that consistently attended classes.

One of the important factors that influence learners' ability to learn is the teacher. The teacher needs necessary skills and knowledge to teach children to read. The kind of knowledge required of a teacher who is expected to teach literacy in lower grade includes teaching methodologies, knowledge on child development and knowledge how to teach literacy. If the teacher lacks sufficient knowledge of teaching literacy, it may force the learners to lose interest in literacy.

The current study focused on two of the cognitive tests that were administered during the study, these are letter sound and reading aloud. The main aim of conducting this assessment was to establish what effect teachers have on the learning out-come of their learners and was used as a measure of literacy acquisition. Most of the learners had problems in identifying the sounds which led to poor reading.

5.2.1 Home Environment

The home environment was found not to be of assistance to learners due to lack of parental support to learners. Parents do not spare some time or have interest to interact with learners at home. Checking of learners' books and asking them questions about each day's lessons or finding out about home work would encourage learners to improve their performance. The home environment is supposed to be the basis for moral support and encouragement to learners so that they can have interest to attend school.

They should supervision from their parents who ensure that children do their school work and they go to school regularly. Humunyele (2010) explained that there is great need to encourage literacy rich home environment for children in order to inculcate in the

children early reading interest. It is also supported by (Stubbs,2000) who has noted that language teaching has to start from where the child is, because there is logically, nowhere else to start. Children recognize that squiggles on the printed page represent words to match the spoken words.

5.3 The causes of poor performance of learners in reading

5.3.1 Over-enrolment

Workload was mentioned in relation to the literacy curriculum learning activities which teachers were expected to conduct within the literacy hour. And other teachers have double class. The teachers expressed concern about their workload resulting in poor quality teaching and learning.

Having too many learners in a class was a factor contributing to poor performance of learners. The teachers explained that when there are too many learners in class, it was difficult for the teacher to teach and ensure that every learner has grasped the concepts that have been taught. This is supported by Kalindi (2005), who found that too large classes of lower primary learners had large numbers of poor readers.

5.3.2 PLP Methodology

The other problem was regarding Chitonga as a medium of instruction. The language of communication was found to be contributing factor to poor performance especially to the learner whose mother tongue is not Chitonga. This finding is in line with Thomas and Collier (1998) who argue that most children are not given enough time to learn their native languages. Children struggle, not as a result of having language difficulties, but because they are put in difficult situations in the school environment. The two further observes that in order to overcome such situations, children must be given up to 90% of the time to learn their first language in grade one.

The teaching of literacy in one of the seven local languages was a major concern. Teachers found it easier to teach literacy in their mother tongue. Information from teachers involved in teaching literacy using PLP methodology indicated that it was difficult for a teacher whose mother tongue is not Chitonga to teach in Chitonga. They

explained that this was very important as it affected quality teaching and learning of literacy.

Both the teachers and learners experienced challenges with Chitonga in teaching and learning literacy using PLP. Encouraging and supporting childrens' first languages and culture encourages them to quickly learn to read and write without any language impingement (Campbell, 1996). In Chibombo the language of play is not Chitonga but lenje. Although there are some similarities between Chitonga and Lenje, some major differences also exist. Teachers teach in Bemba or Nyanga but reading stories in Chitonga.

5.3.3 Inadequate Teaching Material

Teaching and learning materials was not adequate especially the learners' activity books. Teachers complained that they had to use their initiatives to have copies of learners' activity books. The learners needed these books for continuing reading even at home. Sharma (1978) stated that, for the child to know about the world and its environment, he /she should be reading books, newspapers, and other literature. Based on this fact, Panagrahi and Panda (1996) explained that once the child has been taught to read and develops love for books, such a child can explore for oneself the wealth of human experience and knowledge. The author further stated that children missing the opportunity of getting in touch with books at an early stage, find it difficult to learn reading skills at a later stage.

5.3.4 Poor Staffing

Teachers explained that shortage of teachers was a challenge which negatively affected effective teaching in grade two. Teachers were allocated more than one class to teach due shortage of staff. Therefore when teachers are over-worked, preparation of lesson plans and other teaching material is compromised in quality.

5.3.5. Time Allocation to Teaching of Literacy

Time allocated for teaching, reading / literacy was not adequate. Time table program was not followed during literacy lessons due to many literacy activities and learners were unable to finish their activities. This resulted in learners having no time to practice what they have learnt.

5.3.6. Home Environment

Based on the response the teacher gave, many of the teachers expressed concerned for the learners. They explained that many of the learners have challenges from the homes where they are coming from. Some learners are orphans and others are vulnerable. Where their parents or guidance cannot offer to support them in education. As teachers the view was to help the learners to educate them and even to interact with the parents to change their attitude and provide the child with support.

5.3.7 Poor Attendance

The pupils' poor attendance in school was one of the factors that the study cited as one of the major drawbacks to attaining desirable reading and writing levels. This was a retrogressive move towards the teaching of reading in the primary schools of Chibombo district.

5.5 Summary

The chapter discussed the findings of the study accounting for the objectives; the next chapter will conclude and make recommendations.

From the discussion it can be concluded that most pupils could not recognize the letter-sounds. Pupils could not give correct sounds of the letters showing that they had not mastered the skill of associating letters with their sounds. They also had difficulties in reading sentences and comprehending texts.

CHAPTER SIX

6.0 Overview

This chapter presents the conclusion and recommendations of the study.

6.1 Conclusion

The study sought to explore the cause of poor learner performance among grade two pupils. Qualitative methods of data collection and analysis were used in this study. The study investigated the cause of poor performance among grade two pupils and observed that these pupils were not reading according to their grade level. This situation was attributed to shortage of teaching and learning materials, poor staffing levels, over-enrolment, pupils not able to read while in grade one and inadequate time allocated for literacy / reading lessons.

Other factors that contributed to grade two learners' inability to read according to their grade level include unfamiliar language of instruction, too many learning activities in literacy and inadequate monitoring and supervision of teachers by the school management.

Teachers should be closely supervised and monitored by the school management in order to ensure that they prepare adequately and follow strictly PLP methodology and content delivery in teaching literacy. Teachers for grades one and two should be adequately trained in PLP methodologies in order that even the pupils who are not able to read in grade one are assisted to read in grade two.

According to the findings from the performance analysis, grade two pupils in the schools under study had difficulties in letter-sound and reading comprehension. This proved that learners had not adequately mastered the knowledge and skills of reading. At the end of grade one pupils are supposed to easily recognise frequently encountered words in prints. The number of words that could be read fluently would later increase steadily across the school calendar year.

As for the causes of poor performance of learners in reading, the study concluded that over-enrolment of pupils made it difficult for teachers to interact and know individual needs of learners so as to conduct remedial work.

The findings on the attitude learners towards learning literacy revealed that parents did not spare time or have interest to interact with pupils such as finding out about class work at home.

6.2 Recommendations

This section presents recommendations to improve reading levels among grade two learners. Given that the study revealed some factors affecting learner performance, recommendations have been made as follows:

The school management (head teachers) should closely supervise and monitor grade two teachers and ensure they adequately prepare PLP methodologies in teaching. Management should also control over-enrolment of pupils in lower grades in order to provide suitable learning environment for all pupils.

School management should regularly hold professional meetings aimed at identifying major challenges teachers face in teaching literacy in early grade such as grade two. Particular focus should be on phonics and other approaches necessary in teaching of literacy skills. During such school – based workshop, experiences should be shared, intervention suggested later implemented, monitored and evaluated in order to address difficulties associated with early literacy teaching local language.

The teachers feel that the government should produce more teaching and learning materials especially for the learner's activity books which are not enough in their schools for effective teaching and learning. .

Teacher training for literacy and teaching methodology are very important. The knowledge should also focus on the development of the child and methodology knowledge. These two are necessary components.

School management should facilitate close link between grade two teachers and pupils. This will enable teachers to identify and resolve some challenges faced by the pupils at home. Eventually pupils will be encouraged to attend school more regularly.

Staffing level should be improved in schools so that there could be two teachers per lesson in grade one and two. This would be an ideal situation to cater for implementation and monitoring of the many learning activities in PLP activities.

Competent teachers who are conversant in Chitonga and skilled in PLP methodology should be allocated to grades one and two classes.

PLP should be included and be taught in colleges as part of the syllabus. This will help literacy to be effective in school.

The amount of time allocated for teaching literacy should be increased. One hour is not adequate following the number of literacy teaching activities that teachers are expected to conduct for each lesson. Increase time will give teachers more time to complete their activities and learners will have more time to participate in the literacy activities and exercises.

Teachers should consider the EGRA tool as an important tool that could be used to enhance phonemic awareness levels for both teachers and learners.

6.3 Suggestions for Further Research

The study focused on selected schools in Chibombo district and therefore the possibility of generalization is limited. There is need for in-depth studies involving many schools. Furthermore studies can be done involving or comparing urban and rural schools.

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APPENDICES

APPENDIX A

INTERVIEW GUIDE FOR GRADES 1 TO 4 TEACHERS

1. What are the social factors responsible for the poor performance in reading by learners?
2. How is the occurrence of social factors responsible for the poor performance in reading by learners?
3. What are some of pedagogical factors responsible for the poor performance in reading by learners?
4. At what stage of teaching do pedagogical factors affect learners?
5. Can pedagogical factors affect learners and lead to poor performance in reading by learners?
6. What are some of the effective remedial pedagogical strategies to cater for the needs of the learners?
7. At what stage of teaching are these pedagogical strategies applied to cater for the needs of the learners?
8. Who is the target in the application of the effective remedial pedagogical strategies to cater for the needs of the learners?
9. Have these pedagogical strategies to cater for the needs of the learners been successful?
10. How would you recommend application of these pedagogical strategies to cater for the needs of the learners?
11. What is teaching of literacy?
12. What is your attitude towards the teaching of literacy?
13. How do you associate your attitude towards teaching?
14. Can the attitude of the teachers towards the teaching of literacy affect the learners?
15. What can be suggested to help teachers improve their attitude towards the teaching of literacy?

16. What is the purpose of learning literacy by pupils?
17. Can a teacher establish the attitude of learners towards learning of literacy?
18. How can the attitude of a learner towards learning affect learning of literacy?
19. What do you associate the learners attitude towards learning and especially learning literacy?
20. What recommendation can you give to help learners improve their attitudes towards learning especially learning literacy?

APPENDIX B

ASSESSMENT TOOL FOR GRADE TWO

TASK 1: Letter-Sound Knowledge

E	U	y	V	m	A	cc	s	T	A
A	B	b	N	j	a	i	u	f	bb
A	O	L	O	k	i	l	s	e	u
K	U	D	O	A	E	e	p	i	w
T	B	u	I	s	b	n	k	m	a
A	A	m	N	N	i	hh	z	i	W
U	E	y	Kk	n	m	u	z	A	U
W	E	n	A	N	M	C	B	g	I
O	Y	l	K	i	a	n	H	t	C
B	G	O	K	d	e	k	Y	i	v

TASK 2: Oral Passage Reading

Muzovwu wakaambila a nsilibi. Muzovwu wakaambila nsilibi kuti kakali kasyoon buyo. Wakali kukonzya kwiisowela ansi akwiilyatauka. Nsilibi yakati muzommwu taakali kukonzya kwiilyatauka. Yakati nokuba kuti yakajisi mubili musyoonto, yakali jisi nguzu kwiinda muzovwu. Muzovwa wakanyema. Wakanyo nsilibi amubombo wakwe kuti ayiwaalile ansi. Nsilibi yakamuluma kumubombo. Muzovwu wakazuza oku akooku kuunya mubombo wakwe kuzyisamu. Yalo nsilibi yakali lumide. Limwi muzovwu wakakatala kapati. Kuzwa buzuba oobo muzovwu wakatalil kwiiyoowa nsilibi.

		Correct	Not correct	No response
1	Muzovwu bakazwangana ani (ansilibi)			
2	Nsilibi yakajisi mubili uuli buti (Musyoonto)			
3	Nguni wakaa nyeema, (Muzovwu)			
4	Muzovwu wakabelesya nzi kunyamuna nsilibi (mubombo)			
5	Nkaambo nzi muzovwu ncaakatalike kwiiyoowa nsilibi (nkambo yakamuluma)			

SCHOOLS THAT PROVIDED DATA

S/N	SCHOOL	STATUS OF SCHOOL	NUMBER OF TEACHERS	NUMBER OF LEARNERS	AREA
01	Chibmbo Primary school	1 – 9	4	11	Rural
02	Kafululu Primary School	1 – 9	4	11	Rural
03	Mufwambe Primary School	1 – 9	4	10	Rural, remote
04	Shampande Primary School	1 – 9	4	10	Rural, remote
05	Mwamuyamba Primary School	1 – 7	4	10	Rural
06	Mukuni Primary School	1 – 7	4	10	Rural
07	Okada Primary School	1 – 7	3	10	Rural
08	Kansase Community School	1 – 7	3	10	Rural, remote
09	Kakuka Community School	1 – 7	3	10	Rural, remote
10	Lyansa Community School	1 – 7	2	10	Rural, remote

AGE OF LEARNERS

AGE (years)	5	6	7	8	9	10
PUPILS	Nil	15	24	31	19	13
SEX	Nil	M F 6 9	M F 10 14	M F 18 12	M F 11 8	M F 10 3