Teachers’ and Pupils’ Perceptions of Causes of Pupil Absenteeism During Grade 12 National Practical Examinations in Selected Practical Subjects: A Case Study of Selected High Schools of Kabwe District

By

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A Dissertation Submitted to the University of Zambia in Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements for the Award of the Degree of Master of Education in Education Administration

The University of Zambia

School of Education

Lusaka, Zambia 2012
DECLARATION

I, Florence Mwelwa Lubeya, declare that this dissertation is my own work and that it has not been previously submitted by anyone at the University of Zambia or at any other University.

Signed………………………………………………………………………

Date………………………………………………………………………
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Pupil absenteeism from national practical examinations has been and continues to be a major disciplinary problem amongst pupils in Zambian schools. It was thought that absenteeism from practical examinations could be seen as a consequence of an interaction of many factors, some of which include the individual, the government and society.

The study looked at teachers’ and pupils’ perceptions about the importance of practical subjects and the causes of pupil absenteeism during grade 12 national practical examinations in selected practical subjects. The specific objectives were to ascertain teachers’ and pupils’ perceptions of the importance of practical subjects, to establish the causes of pupil absenteeism in practical subjects, to establish the roles of high school administrators and teachers on the attendance of pupils to examinations, and to find out measures that could be undertaken to improve pupil attendance during examinations.

This study employed a descriptive survey design following both qualitative and quantitative techniques of data collection. The qualitative method used focus group discussions for pupils and interview schedules for heads of departments for practical subjects who were the key informants for the study. The quantitative method mainly relied on questionnaires for teachers. The sample consisted of 126 subjects drawn from 6 selected high schools which offered practical subjects. Quantitative data was analyzed using the statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS) to generate frequencies, graphs and other statistics. Qualitative data was analyzed through coding of emerging themes.

The results of the study revealed various factors which contributed to pupil absenteeism during national practical examinations and these were categorized in different areas such as those that relate to the attitude of pupils, teachers, parents and the school environment. These include pupil and teacher unpreparedness, lack of support from
school administration, parents and teachers, peer pressure, fear of the examinations, pupils’ laziness, inadequate provision of learning and teaching materials, poor infrastructure and unfavourable learning environment, poor teaching strategies by teachers, and low staffing levels. Suggestions and recommendations were made based on the findings to meet the objectives and these include: schools to conduct career talks on the importance of examinations, investigating each case of persistent cause of absenteeism, school managers should be more supportive to practical subjects and urge teachers to use a variety and interesting teaching strategies.
DEDICATION

This dissertation is dedicated to my late father, Mr. Dackson Ngosa Lubeya. Beloved father, your words of encouragement will still live on.

I also dedicate it to all scholars who wish to further their studies. The sky is the limit.
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<tr>
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<th>Full Form</th>
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<tr>
<td>CPD</td>
<td>Continuing Professional Development</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ECZ</td>
<td>Examinations Council of Zambia</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>FAWEZA</td>
<td>Forum for African Women Educationalists of Zambia</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>FGD</td>
<td>Focus Group Discussions</td>
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<td>GCE</td>
<td>General Certificate of Education</td>
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<td>HEAZ</td>
<td>Home Economics Association of Zambia</td>
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<td>JSSLE</td>
<td>Junior Secondary School Leaving Examinations</td>
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<tr>
<td>LMS</td>
<td>London Missionary Society</td>
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<td>MOE</td>
<td>Ministry of Education</td>
</tr>
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<td>MOFNP</td>
<td>Ministry of Finance and National Planning</td>
</tr>
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<td>OVC</td>
<td>Orphaned and Vulnerable Children</td>
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<tr>
<td>PTA</td>
<td>Parent Teachers Association</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SAQ</td>
<td>Self-Administered Questionnaire</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SC</td>
<td>School Certificate</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SHN</td>
<td>School Health and Nutrition</td>
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</table>
SPSS  Statistical Package for Social Sciences

SSI  Semi-structured Interview

TEVET  Technical Education and Vocational Entrepreneurship Training

ZATE  Zambia Association for Technology Education
CHAPTER ONE: INTRODUCTION

1.0 Background

Education is one of the largest industries in any country and affects everyone in the society. The provision of education entirely depends on the type of curriculum offered to the pupils to suit the needs of the nation. A long-standing educational goal in Zambia has been that every child that enters grade one should be able to complete grade 9. This aspiration goes to the time of the struggle for independence when the Nationalist Movement established the goal that every Zambian should be able to complete at least a junior secondary education (Ministry of Education, 1996). “Admission to high school is based on performance in the terminal examination called Junior Secondary School Leaving Examination (JSSLE), which pupils take at the end of grade 9” (Ministry of Education, 1996:50). These examinations are prepared and marked centrally by the Examinations Council of Zambia and qualifying candidates proceed to grade 10. At the end of grade 12, again pupils write National Examinations also prepared and marked by the same body. At the end of grade 12, candidates are awarded a school certificate which is equivalent to the British Ordinary Level (Ministry of Education, 1996). The Ministry of Education (1992), states that Public examinations have assumed an ever-growing importance and today they play a determinant role in the concerns of the public, in the lives of students and teachers, and in the academic work of the schools.

The rationale for examining pupils is to ensure that, pupils are qualified enough for further education and has acquired sound practical skills when pursuing a career or educational choice.
Examinations are used as an evaluation instrument for teachers, students and institutions and as a tool for guidance, as an incentive, for maintenance of the quality programmes, for the selection and placement, and for certification (Malambo, 1989).

Examinations are a permanent feature of the educational landscape in the sense that they send signals to teachers and students, stating out what they should regard as the important aspect of the curriculum. Examinations tell how successful schools and the entire educational system as a whole have been, in meeting the objectives which are laid down for them (Ministry of education, 1992). Absenteeism from various examinations in Zambia is noted to be on the increase and at least over 10% cases of absenteeism are recorded each year. If pupils do not present themselves during examinations their aim of learning is proved futile as they are cut off from the benefits that come with certification and placement for higher education or career opportunities. However, over the years, it has been observed that general absenteeism in various examinations in various subjects in the country has become a source of concern. In 2010 for example, the Examinations Council of Zambia statistics show an increase in the number of pupils being absent at grade 12 National Examinations as can be seen from Table 1 below.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>number entered</th>
<th>number sat</th>
<th>number absent</th>
<th>total absent</th>
</tr>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Boys</td>
<td>Girls</td>
<td>Boys</td>
<td>Girls</td>
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<tr>
<td>2006</td>
<td>27 091</td>
<td>19 411</td>
<td>26 478</td>
<td>18 890</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2007</td>
<td>29 909</td>
<td>22 381</td>
<td>29 138</td>
<td>21 806</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2008</td>
<td>33 448</td>
<td>25 321</td>
<td>32 585</td>
<td>24 544</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2009</td>
<td>31 714</td>
<td>32 530</td>
<td>24 014</td>
<td>23 403</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2010</td>
<td>47 359</td>
<td>33 583</td>
<td>42 253</td>
<td>32 777</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Source:** Examinations Council of Zambia Research and Test Development (2010)

The present high school curriculum consists of core subjects such as English, Mathematics, a science subject and a wide range of optional subjects. These include practical subjects like Industrial Arts: Woodwork, Metalwork and Geometrical Drawing, Art and Design; Home Economics: Food and Nutrition, Home Management and Fashion and Fabrics. Practical subjects have suffered from poor attendance at National Examinations despite the fact that everything that is on offer is essential in a general academic programme.
1.1 Statement of the Problem

It has been strongly argued that practical subjects give pupils skills for survival in the event of unemployment and in turn reduce the poverty levels and increase on national economic development. There is an observation that, most pupils in Zambia have a negative attitude towards optional subjects such as Home Economics, Industrial Arts, and Expressive Arts. The causes of this absenteeism have not been investigated and this has inspired the researcher to conduct this research.

1.2 Purpose of the Study

The purpose of this study is to investigate teachers’ and pupils’ perceptions of the importance of practical subjects and causes of pupil absenteeism in these practical subjects during Grade 12 examinations.

1.3 Research Objectives

The objectives of the study were:

i. To ascertain the teachers’ and pupils’ perceptions of the importance of practical subjects.

ii. To establish the causes of absenteeism in practical subjects at grade 12 National Examinations

iii. To find out the roles of school managers and teachers on the general attendance of pupils in practical subjects lessons and examinations

iv. To suggest measures that can be put in place to improve pupils’ attendance in practical examinations

1.4 Research Questions

This study was informed by the following research questions:
i. What are teachers’ and pupils’ perceptions of the importance of practical subjects?

ii. What are the causes of pupils’ absenteeism in practical subjects during final examinations?

iii. What is the role of school managers and teachers of practical subjects regarding the pupils’ attendance in lessons and examinations?

iv. What are the measures that the Ministry of Education, school managers, teachers and parents can put in place to improve pupils’ attendance during grade 12 final examinations?

1.5 Significance of the Study

It is hoped that the findings of this study will be used to formulate policies that will encourage more pupils to take practical subjects, and reduce absenteeism during final examinations. This study is significant in the sense that, the information generated will benefit all educational stakeholders and pupils in particular as it exposes the causes of pupil absenteeism in optional practical subjects as well as measures that can be put in place to redress the situation at hand.

1.6 Delimitation and Limitations of the study

Delimitation

This study was conducted in Kabwe District of Central Province. The high schools were purposively selected from within Kabwe urban. Since the study was undertaken in only one district in Zambia, the extent to which its findings may be generalized is limited.
Limitations of the study

While collecting data in the field, the researcher encountered a number of problems in that the collection of data was conducted during examination period. This meant that some of the respondents spent very little time in school and it was difficult to find them. The sample for the pupils was also affected because the grade 12 pupils were the major target but at the time of data collection most of them had completed writing their examinations.

1.7 Operational Definition of Terms

The following concepts used in this study and are defined as below:

**Absenteeism:** Failure to make oneself available for an activity.

**Attitude:** A way of feeling or thinking or behavior.

**Entrepreneur:** Someone who starts his/her own business, especially when this involves seeing a new opportunity.

**Grade 12:** The final grade of the secondary school system in Zambia after which pupils move to institutions of higher learning (tertiary) or go into employment.

**School Certificate:** The examination that all the Grade 12 pupils sit for at the end of October/December.

**School Resources:** The availability or non-availability of teaching materials equipment.

**Teacher Quality:** The Professional qualification of a teacher according to whether he/she is a Degree, Diploma or Certificate holder.
Skills: Ability to do something

Value: Principles and beliefs about what is important in life and how people should behave.

Vocational: Providing skills and education that prepares one for a job.
CHAPTER TWO: LITERATURE REVIEW

2.0 Overview

There is dearth of literature for this particular topic as no study has been conducted on the causes of pupil absenteeism from practical examinations. Nevertheless, the researcher read widely to come up with related studies on general absenteeism during lessons at various levels and stages of education at both international and national levels.

This chapter begins with the historical background of the Zambian education system which will include the origin and growth of practical and technical subjects, and related policies on these subjects. This is followed by the review of literature on the importance of practical and technical subjects, and causes of general absenteeism according to related studies. It will be summed up with the role of teachers and school managers on the attendance of pupils and then the suggested measures that should be undertaken by the relevant authorities to improve this attendance basing on the reviewed literature.

2.1 Historical background of the Zambian Education System

The education system in Zambia existed as long as the human societies lived. This is so because education is supposed to be seen as a condition for human survival. It is the means whereby one generation transmits the wisdom, knowledge and experience which prepares the next generation for life. The type of education that existed is referred to as traditional and was essentially practical in nature to enable the individual to play a useful role in society. Traditional education varied from tribe to tribe, both in content and methods used such that the environment nature of where the tribe had settled largely contributed to the type of education (Mwanakatwe, 1968). Government’s main area of interest was primary education which basically aimed at equipping learners with reading writing and arithmetic knowledge. Further, basic agriculture skills, carpentry, domestic science and needlework were taught (Mwanakatwe, 1974).
The apprenticeship at that time which was often practical training can be associated with the current technical and practical subjects. Practical subjects include technology and design, home economics, art and design, physical education and music. Learning is a life-long process. In commending traditional education before the coming of the missionaries, Snelson (1974:3) observes that:

For obvious limitations and crudities, traditional education was admirably suited to the society in which it was practiced. While western education was later accused of divorcing the African from his environment and of leading indirectly, if not directly, to unemployment, traditional education painstaking preparation of the young of the tribe for employment within their own environment and community. The concept of unemployment did not exist.

Practical and technical subjects (Home economics and Industrial Arts) were first introduced in Zambia by the London Missionary Society (LMS) at Mbereshi in Luapula Province in 1903. Snelson (1974) further reveals that this introduction was emphasised by the secretary of the London Mission Society when he wrote to the Reverend John May at Kawimbe in 1900. After the death of May, Bernard Turner worked at LMS and trained African youths in building, carpentry, metalwork and other crafts. Mabel Shaw pioneered the development of girls’ education in the country; teaching them various aspects of home craft and mother craft (Snelson, 1974).

The growth of Practical Education has been steady over the years. Snelson (1974) adds that despite the idea of white collar jobs, Practical Education was part of the school curriculum and had been strengthened upon the recommendation of Phelps Stokes Commission which visited the territory in the early 1920s. However, at some point, the development of Practical Education slowed down due to the fact that it was received with mixed feelings by some people owing to various factors. The Ministry of Education
(1977), reports that from 1962, Practical Education like carpentry was being discouraged or abandoned altogether because it was becoming unpopular. This observation was reinforced by the fact that only about the least academically gifted students were considered suitable to enter Trades Schools (Snelson, 1974). This idea was proved wrong because there was no human resource to work in industries.

In 1965, the government started to expand Technical Education at secondary level to prepare students who would study technology at the University. This expansion began with David Kaunda and Hillcrest Technical Schools (Mulenga, 2003). In their study Crackneil et al. (1994), reveal that after 1975, the reasons for the expansion of Practical Education at school level took a different turn. The reasons were not any more to prepare students for further studies but for the provision of self reliance attitude through the production activities in secondary schools.

### 2.2 Importance of Practical and Technical Education

Practical and technical subjects are very popular in the Zambian school curriculum today. The Ministry of Education (1996:35) justifies the inclusion of practical and technical education in the school curriculum among other claims by saying “they possess a potential relationship to the world of work, and hence may help to prepare pupils for post-school employment or vocational training”. Industrial Arts, Home Economics, Art and Design have the educational objectives in developing certain qualities in pupils and the content of the syllabus relate to domestic life, commercial activities and self employment attitude. The Ministry of Education has been trying to improve the quality and relevance of the high school curriculum in terms of knowledge and skills development.
The Ministry of Education (2003) states that:

The high school curriculum will be reviewed to make it more relevant and responsive and to enable graduates to acquire high level skills. In addition, stronger linkages will be developed between life skills, practical subjects in basic and high schools and the skills provided by institutions registered with teacher education and entrepreneurship authority.

The available literature review at the national level begins with the Ministry of Education acknowledging the importance of practical subjects in high schools. In the Ministry of Education (1996) policy document the government states that, when the appropriate programmes have been created certain schools will become specialist schools for technology, practical areas, business and commercial studies and the creative arts. For instance, there are more technical high schools in the country even to cater for girls such as Ndola girls’ Technical High school to mention but one. To support the importance of Practical Education (Snelson, 1974), argues that the aim was to contribute towards character training, helping to instill accuracy, neatness, general handiness and respect for manual work. Kalimaposo (2008) observes that the high population growth rates and the accompanying increases in the labour force have not been matched with corresponding increases in job creation. He further states that, the civil service and large multinational companies can absorb a limited fraction of the labour force; small enterprises generally use simple technologies and locally available materials. The promotion of small-scale enterprises is a way of generating employment and stimulating general economic development. In relation to this Mulenga (2003) points out the policy on industrial arts as stated in Ministry of Education (1996) that schools should become small businesses contributing to the economic competition, raising the level of popular participation in the economy and promotion growth and equity (World bank, 1978 and Obi, 1991) as cited by Mulenga, 2003 & Lungwagwa (1980) acknowledges the inclusion of technical subjects in the school curriculum that they have great value. To support this,
the Ministry of Education (2006:13) mentions among other Zambian aspirations “as strong entrepreneurial capabilities, self-reliant, outward looking and enterprising where nationals are ready to see and take advantage of potential and available opportunities”.

The importance of practical and technical subjects is acknowledged worldwide. Spear (1985) reports that in the United Kingdom, a paper presented on the school curriculum by the Department of Education and Science in 1981 attached special importance to technological society. In most countries, technical education at both school and tertiary levels is meant to train human resource for employment in industries and to some extent for self-employment (Karloson, 1991; Nguiri, 1987). It is important to point out the fact that Practical Education constitutes a form of knowing, experiencing and dealing with the physical world that every educated person should posses, and hence have intrinsic educational value (Ministry of Education, 1996). In addition, they also equip pupils with skills conducive to the constructive use of leisure time.

The relationship between practical education and entrepreneurship is very significant. This is supported by Kasonkomona (2009) who observes that, the informal sector which was born as a solution to the unemployment situation has received the entrepreneurship training in colleges positively. She further confirms that a lot of entrepreneurship training was going on in the informal sector and the starting point was the knowledge of the practical subjects and skills that are acquired at high school level. She notes that entrepreneurship should be appreciated and considered as a career alternative.

2.3 Teachers’ Perceptions of Factors Contributing to Absenteeism

In Thailand for example, rural schools recorded a high rate of absenteeism by both teachers and pupils. A considerable number of teachers considered it an insult to their professional integrity that they should be associated with potential failures. The type of training received by the pupils is somehow unsatisfactory from de-motivated teachers...
and this is still shown drastically in the poor attendance at national examinations and low performance at grade 12 level. Truancy by pupils is prevalent as a factor of absenteeism during final examinations in practical subjects even in Britain (Wildeen & Holborn 1990). Some pupils are seen to be lazy and would not be interested to do physical work for examinations as per the requirement. They would rather concentrate on subjects which will only demand them to do theory work.

It may be also realized that inappropriate curriculum in relation to examinations, badly trained teachers who have problems understanding the subject content, lead to pupil absenteeism. Teacher absenteeism especially in South Africa is noted to be linked to pupil absenteeism (Wadesango & Machingambi, 2011). Some teachers feel they are not motivated for the much work that is involved in practical subjects both during lessons and examinations. According to Enomoto (1997), when students perceive that lecturers do not care enough to follow up on absences from class, their motivation for attendance is not high. Williams (1999) observes that forcing older students to remain in school when they are not motivated will only increase their absenteeism. Furthermore, studies in South Africa indicate that absenteeism is caused by a number of factors summarized as; lack of interesting and challenging curriculum; a desire for hedonistic activities with peers; negative self-image and self-esteem; lack of subject interest; lack of personal interest in studies; the mental capacity of a student does not match with the subject opted; poor teaching skills of a teacher; lack of confidence in a teacher and inadequate relations between pupils and their lecturer (Mayer & Mitchell 1996; Weller 1996; Williams 2000; Marburger, 2001). Although these factors are generally talking about the general absenteeism in the universities of South Africa, they are likely to affect the attendance during examinations. In some cases textbooks are scarce. Namibia also records an overwhelming level of absenteeism due to laziness, dubious sick leave and poor work ethics (Williams, 2000).
Wanderings (2009), observes that parents ask their children to get involved in domestic work during class hours and that his worsened during the rice harvesting season, when rice ripens, children to take up other tasks and they end up leaving school for good. This shows how teachers are frustrated when they try to uplift the standards of a good school such that even brighter pupils drop out. The teachers of Rwanda added that the pupils went fishing as fish sold like 'hot cakes’ and made them earn money, so they could never be stopped.

In Kampala, the Ministry of Education report revealed that absenteeism among pupils and teachers has risen in Luweero district. The report attributes the problem to high child labour. Though there has been an increase in primary enrolment, only 55% of pupils attend school at the beginning of the term and during (Examinations Uganda National Examinations Board, 2003).

Ali (2012) reports the major causes of student absenteeism in selected schools in Kenya which include: Lack of school fees, sickness, family problems, with holding by parents, school based reasons, distance to school, temporary employment, truancy, community influence and community influence. Although the study looks at the general absenteeism to school, similar causes apply to pupil absenteeism during examinations.

Nakanyike et al (2003) also report that, absenteeism is an indication of several things which include: lack of interest in schooling by the child; the child’s ill health; lack of appreciation of the negative impact of absenteeism on child’s performance by the parents, the school, the community leaders and the government. It is further noted that such high levels of absenteeism leads to a wastage of person’s years; wastage of household and national resources, weakening the educational programmes and ultimately a failure to attain primary education for societal development (Nakanyike et al 2003).
According to Home Economics Association of Zambia (HEAZ) and Zambia Association of Technology (ZATE) (2000) lack of support by school Administrators was reported by the teachers as one major factor contributing to pupil absenteeism during practical examinations.

Indeed, this is very common in schools, as some school managers feel practical subjects are very expensive to run. If the pupils concentrate only on theory work without practical lessons to usher them to practical examinations, they feel inadequate to write or sit for the practical examination. HEAZ and ZATE (2009) further report that, if Administrators provided these departments with enough funds and materials for lessons to prepare pupils adequately and develop satisfactory skills by practicing, pupils would finish the course in the subject and then sit for practical examinations as well as theory as is required of them.

Another dimension that is recognized is that there is no uniformity in the subjects offered in the schools in Zambia. This dimension prevails because the Ministry of Education policy (1996) allows schools to offer any approved subjects in the general curriculum. Furthermore, the availability of facilities, learning materials and qualified teachers tend to disadvantage rural schools in that they generally lack teachers with sufficient knowledge of the subject matter and facilities. This entails that even the few pupils entered to write practical examinations stay away.

2.4 Pupils’ Perceptions

Literature revealed that many pupils resign themselves to the status of inferior being placed into a class with optional practical subjects (UNESCO, 2005) This is re-in forced by certain misguided administrators who still consider optional subjects as task-worthy for the least intelligent group of pupils. So even when they are by chance forced to attend lessons, they stay away from the final examinations.
Pupils are de-motivated when they are told that they are going to be self employed since they are not capable of doing anything else. This undermines pupils’ morale (UNESCO, 2005). However, the key manifestations of poverty in the education in terms of improving completion rates learning achievements, pupil and teacher attendance, health and nutrition, and overall quality (Ministry of Education, 2003).

There are various factors that lead to absenteeism according to literature such as: distance, economic challenges, not understanding the importance of examinations and pupil unpreparedness which maybe as a result of inadequacy of subject content by the teachers (Wanderings, 2009)

2.5 The Role of High School Administrators and High School Teachers in General Attendance of Pupils

Literature review identified and summarized the role of the high school administrators and teachers that they have a major role to play on the general attendance to both lessons and examinations for pupils. Essel (2001:13) suggests that “teachers should work hard and improve their competencies in handling practical lessons so as to develop confidence in the pupils. She further states that teachers should not neglect the pupils who stay away from lessons but encourage them as much as possible to reach the final stage of examinations. Furthermore, administrators are encouraged to emphasise to the pupils the importance of these practical and technical subjects in the curriculum and their benefits for self employment (Mulenga, 2003). Practical and technical subjects should also be given a considerable emphasis just like language, mathematics and science. They should provide an environment which is conducive to teaching practical subjects, enough funds to conduct practical examinations by the school administrators would be a great achievement to reduce the levels of absenteeism in these subjects (HEAZ & ZATE, 2009).
2.6 Suggested Measures to Improve Pupils’ Attendance

Some of the measures which were identified in the related literature were summarized as follows:

- The introduction of clubs and involving the pupils in fundraising ventures using the skills that they have acquired. Thereafter, giving them incentives when they raise funds for their club (HEAZ & ZATE, 2009)
- Teachers should come up with pamphlets for notes and questions for easy understanding of the subject content. These would be an added advantage to both the teachers and the pupils (HEAZ & ZATE, 2009)
- The Guidance and counseling department in schools should be involved to give motivational talks on the importance of all the subjects in the curriculum and examinations (Wanderings, 2009)
- The children suggest that the Ministry of education should provide scholastic requirements and sensitize parents about the provision of proper medical care and reducing children’s workload (Williams, 2000)

Conclusion

However, there is a big challenge for education in Zambia because a good number of pupils absent themselves during national examinations especially in practical subjects at grade twelve. Issues of pupil absenteeism at grade twelve final examinations in practical and technical subjects support the need for the study in teachers and pupils perceptions on factors contributing to the situation. Absenteeism throughout most of the nations has heightened interest according to literature.
CHAPTER THREE: METHODOLOGY

3.0 Overview

This chapter discusses the research methods which were employed in this study. It describes the research design, target population, sample size and sampling procedure, data collection techniques, data analysis, data interpretation and ethical considerations.

3.1 Research Design

A research design is defined as, ‘the planning of any scientific research from the first to the last step. It is a specification of the most adequate operations to be performed in order to test a specific hypothesis under given conditions’ (Bless & Achola, 1988:54). A descriptive survey design was used to conduct this research. Both qualitative and quantitative techniques of data collection and analysis were employed. This was to ensure that the gaps that were left by one approach were covered by the other.

3.2 Target Population

In the context of research the term “target population” has been defined as all members of any well defined class of people, events, or objects which have been designated as being the focus of an investigation. It is also known as a universe. It is called special universe in order to distinguish it from the general universe or population to which the study’s findings can be generalized (Bless & Achola, 1988). Whereas, population is defined as “all those people about whom a researcher wishes to make statements” (Finch, 2008:37). The target population for this study was all heads of departments for practical subjects, teachers of practical subjects and pupils taking practical subjects.

3.3 Sample Size

The sample size comprised 7 heads of departments, 35 teachers for practical subjects, and 84 pupils taking practical subjects.
3.4 Sampling procedure

Purposive sampling of schools was used to select six (6) schools which participated in this study. Purposive sampling was used because it allowed the researcher to select or handpick supposedly typical or interesting cases (Blaxter et al, 2006). At each school, probability sampling technique was used to determine teachers and pupils who should participate in the study. This sampling method gives every element in the sampling frame an equal chance of being included in the sample (Kombo & Tromp, 2006).

3.5 Data Collection Techniques

Data was collected through semi-structured interviews (SSI) for the head of departments, Self Administered Questionnaires (SAQ) for teachers, focused group discussions (FGD) for pupils and an observation check list.

3.6 Data Analysis

Both quantitative and qualitative methods of data analysis were employed in this study. The quantitative data from questionnaires were analysed using the Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS). The computer generated tables of frequencies and percentages were used in describing distributions of the variables which were presented in the form of tables. Qualitative data which was obtained through interviews and Focus Group Discussions was analysed by coding and grouping the emerging themes.

3.7 Data Interpretation

Quantitative and qualitative data were gathered in this research. Interpretation of quantitative data included mainly the use of tables of frequencies and in some cases percentages. The general views from the respondents were derived from responses with the highest frequencies or percentages. Qualitative data from semi-structured interviews were interpreted by considering the most significant categories of themes which were actually the views of the respondents.
3.8 Ethical Considerations

Participants were assured that data collected from them would be used for academic purposes only. The researcher was responsible for the ethical standards to which the study adheres. It was therefore clearly stated that all the information collected from schools would not be exposed hence confidentiality of their identity was guaranteed.

Finally, there was informed consent by the respondents to participate willingly in the research and exercise their right to be part of this research.
CHAPTER FOUR: PRESENTATION OF FINDINGS

4.0 Overview

This chapter presents the findings of the research aimed at investigating teachers’ and pupils’ perceptions on pupil absenteeism during grade 12 national examinations in practical subjects in selected high schools of Kabwe district. Objectives of the study were to: ascertain the teachers’ and pupils’ perceptions about the importance of practical subjects; establish the causes of pupil absenteeism in practical subjects during grade 12 national examinations; find out the roles of the high school administrators and teachers about pupil attendance to lessons and examinations; and suggest measures that should be undertaken to improve pupil attendance during examinations.

The findings are presented according to the emerging begin with, teachers, followed by heads of departments, and end with pupils. The headings are sub divided into broad areas as follows: characteristics of respondents, the respondents’ perceptions about the importance of practical subjects, causes of pupil absenteeism, the role of the school managers and teachers on improving the pupil attendance, and recommended measures which the ministry of education, school managers, and parents should undertake to improve pupil attendance during practical examinations.

4.1 Findings from the teachers

This section presents findings from teachers of practical subjects. The self-administered questionnaire was employed to ensure that the necessary information was given freely and in confidence.
4.1.1 Characteristics of respondents

There were 20 male (57.1%) and 15 (42.9%) female respondents. Four respondents were aged between 20 and 25 years, whereas 12 were aged between 26 and 30 years while 19 were aged above 30 years.

The findings revealed that 27 obtained the secondary teachers’ diploma, 3 obtained an advanced secondary teachers’ diploma while 2 obtained a university degree. Ten respondents had been working for 1-5 years, while 14 had worked for 6-10 years, 2 had worked for 11-15 years, and 9 respondents had worked for 16 years and above.

Thirty four (97.1%) respondents had at one time been involved in the conduction of practical examinations. Only 1 respondent had never been involved in the conduction of practical examinations. Nineteen (54.3) respondents were involved in the capacity of invigilator, 1 had worked in the capacity of supervisor, 4 (11.4%) participated in the marking of scripts only and 14(40.0%) had been involved in all the three capacities.

Grades that are taught at high school are 10, 11 and 12. The findings showed that 28 (80%) respondents taught all the grades (10, 11 and 12), whereas 3 taught grade 11 and 3 taught grade 10 only. From the findings, Home economics scored the highest number of respondents who taught this practical subject and these were 18 (51.1%) followed by industrial arts with 13 (37.1%) respondents, 3 respondents taught Art and design and 1 respondent taught music. It should be noted here that, art and design and music may be in the group of expressive arts but for some schools they form part of the practical subjects department depending on the arrangement of individual schools.

Besides teaching, some of the respondents were attached to other responsibilities such as head of section department, sitting on various school committees such as Preventive Maintenance, Production Unit and School Health and Nutrition (SHN). Seven of the
respondents were heads of section, 8 were members of the School Health and Nutrition, whereas 4 were members of the Preventive Maintenance Committee and 3 were members of the Production Unit. Four respondents were involved in the Disciplinary Committee, Sports, Cadet, and Drama.

4.1.2 The importance of practical subjects

The findings revealed that all the respondents were of the opinion that practical subjects were very important in the curriculum. The supporting factors to show their importance were listed as follows: they prepare pupils for self employment after school; train human resource for employment in industries; give strong entrepreneurial skills to pupils; and constructive use of leisure time.

The study sought to find out whether tools and teaching/learning materials were available and sufficient for the teachers and their pupils for use or not. Of the 35 respondents, 21 (60.0%) indicated that the tools were available for use although not sufficient enough to cater for the large numbers of pupils in some classes, whereas 14 (40.0%) did not have access to the tools. The findings also revealed that, 21 (60.0%) respondents who indicated that they tools for use also said that they received funding to facilitate both practical lessons and examinations. The 14 (40.0%) respondents, who said that they did not have tools to use, did not receive funds for practical lessons as well, except during examinations. However, 33 (94.3%) respondents revealed that they had adequate support from the school administration and only 2 respondents indicated that they were not supported adequately. In terms of the type of support the teachers received from the school administration, 14(40.0%) said that they received material support while 18 (51.4%) indicated that they received financial support and 7 of them said they received both material and financial support. Only 1 respondent indicated receiving moral support.
Besides the support received from the school administration, practical subjects were expected to raise funds to enable them conduct practical lessons. The findings showed that 26 (74.3%) of the respondents said that most of the schools did not conduct fundraising activities, while 9 (25.7%) schools conducted fundraising activities. Various reasons were stated for non conduction of fundraising activities and these include; lack of commitment by the administration and the teachers, lack of capital, negligence and lack of time. The findings also revealed that 19 (54.2%) respondents did not conduct fundraising due to lack of capital, 10 (28.5%) respondents stated that they lacked commitment, while five (5) respondents indicated that they did not engage in fundraising due to negligence and lack of time. Three (3) respondents stated that they were members of the fundraising committee for the school, not necessarily for practical subjects department but still the school did not conduct fundraising activities and while 2 respondents felt that they were not supported even when they proposed the projects.

4.1.3 Causes of pupil absenteeism during final practical examinations

Table 2 shows the teachers’ perceptions on the causes of pupil absenteeism during examinations and these include; Pupil unpreparedness, laziness, poor subject combination, inferiority complex, and negative attitude. Pupil unpreparedness scored the highest as indicated by 26 (36.6%) respondents. This was followed by negative attitude and laziness 14 (19.7%) respondents. Thirteen (18.3%) respondents were of the opinion that pupils had inferiority complex towards the subject and the least was conflict in the combination of optional subjects as revealed by 4 respondents. It should be pointed out here that some respondents gave more than one response thus affecting the total for the frequency (Table 2).
Table 2: Teachers’ perceptions on the causes of absenteeism

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Causes</th>
<th>Frequency</th>
<th>Percent</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Pupil unpreparedness</td>
<td>26</td>
<td>36.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Laziness</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>19.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Negative attitude</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>19.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Inferiority complex</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>18.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Conflict in subject combination</td>
<td>04</td>
<td>5.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>71</td>
<td>99.9</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

N.B: This was a multiple response question

The findings also revealed that 22 (62.9%) respondents were of the opinion that not all the subjects in the curriculum received equal treatment and practical subjects were noted to be part of such subjects, whereas 12 (34.3%) respondents were of the view that all the subjects on offer were given equal and sufficient attention by the school management. This information was necessary for the researcher to establish whether the treatment could be one of the attributes among other causes contributing to pupil absenteeism during practical examinations. If some subjects were perceived to be less important in the curriculum and receive less attention it is very likely that even the pupils would not take such subjects seriously and there did not mind whether they missed the examinations or not.
The findings revealed that, there were variations in the feeling of the respondents on pupil attendance to mock and final practical examinations. Twenty (57.1%) respondents indicated that the attendance of pupils during mock and final practical examinations was unsatisfactory while 15 (42.8%) respondents stated that it was satisfactory. However, all the respondents admitted that they recorded pupil absenteeism during final practical examinations.

Eighteen (51.4%) respondents were of the view that the same pupils who stayed away from mock examinations did not avail themselves even to final practical examinations. Seventeen (48.6%) respondents were of the opinion that it was totally a different group of pupils which were in the habit of shunning the practical examinations.

Respondents were asked to indicate whether teacher unpreparedness was a contributing factor to pupil absenteeism during practical examinations. Table 2 shows their responses. The findings showed that 25 (71.4%) of them agreed while 10 (35.0%) disagreed as can be seen from Table 2.

Teachers were further asked to indicate the factors which contributed to teacher unpreparedness. Table 3 shows their responses. The table shows factors which included: lack of teaching materials, lack of experience and knowledge, inadequate funding, lack of adequate support by the administrators, poor infrastructure, and inadequate funding. Lack of teaching materials scored the highest followed by lack of experience and inadequate funding. The other factors mentioned were lack of sufficient support by administrators and poor infrastructure.
Table 3: Factors that contribute to teacher unpreparedness

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Factors</th>
<th>Frequency</th>
<th>Percent</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Lack of teaching materials</td>
<td>23</td>
<td>26.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Inadequate funding</td>
<td>21</td>
<td>23.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lack of experience</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>22.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lack of support by Admin.</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>15.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Poor infrastructure</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>11.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>88</td>
<td>99.8</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

N.B: This was a multiple response question

4.1.4 The role of teachers and school managers on pupil attendance

The respondents were asked to suggest some roles which teachers should play to improve the pupil attendance in lessons, mock, and final practical examinations. These included the following roles: counseling and guiding pupils, and preparing pupils adequately. According to the findings, 28 (80%) respondents were of the view that counseling and guiding pupils was their major role. This was followed by adequate preparation of pupils as 26 (74.3%) respondents stated.
The roles of school managers on the general attendance of pupils to lessons and examinations the study included the following; providing necessary teaching materials as stated by 6 (15%) respondents. One respondent suggested that the school managers should award the teachers for practical subjects. Four (10%) respondents indicated it was the duty of the school manager to ensure that there are adequate funds for practical lessons and examinations. One respondent was for the idea that the school manager should promote the teaching of practical subjects by educating the teacher on the importance of vocational and entrepreneurship skills. The majority of respondents 28 (70%) indicated that all the factors mentioned were the roles of school managers on the attendance of pupils to practical lessons and examinations see table 4.

Table 4: The roles of school managers on attendance

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Roles</th>
<th>Frequency</th>
<th>Percent</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Provide teaching material</td>
<td>06</td>
<td>15</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Award teachers</td>
<td>01</td>
<td>2.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Provide adequate funds</td>
<td>04</td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Train teachers</td>
<td>01</td>
<td>2.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>All the above</td>
<td>28</td>
<td>70</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>40</td>
<td>100.0</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

N.B: This was a multiple response question
The study required the respondents to give their opinion as to whether there was hope for improvement on the attendance of pupils during practical examinations or not. The study revealed that 26 teacher respondents were of the view that they saw an improvement on the attendance of pupils while, 10 teachers believe that through career talks, guidance and counseling; while 5 indicated that practical subjects gave pupils skills for survival. Other reasons given were that: pupils were encouraged by doing more practical work other than theory, recruiting well trained teachers to work closely with pupils and the provision of adequate equipment, and that pupils have realized the importance of practical subjects in relation to entrepreneurship.

However, 10 respondents were of the view that, there was no hope of improvement in attendance by pupils to practical examinations. They gave following reasons: lack of commitment and laziness by pupils, depending on the type of practical subject some pupils felt they were not important, some school administrators thought the subjects were costly and difficult for pupils to grasp certain concepts.

4.1.5 Suggested measures to undertake to improve pupil attendance

The respondents made various suggestions to be undertaken by the authorities to improve pupil attendance as presented below:

4.1.5.1 Ministry of Education

On the suggested measures to be put in place to improve pupils’ attendance during practical examinations by the ministry of education, majority 23 (34.4%) of the respondents were of the view that the Ministry of Education revise for funding, provide relevant and adequate infrastructure and teaching materials to facilitate quality practical lessons. Some respondents suggested that the curriculum be revised and streamlined to
encourage pupils attend practical lessons and in turn practical examinations. One respondent indicated that the Ministry of Education should include an allowance to motivate teachers of practical subjects because practical lessons were too involving. Two respondents stated that teachers for practical subjects should be trained on how to handle practical lessons and examinations so that they instill confidence in pupils in return.

The findings revealed that, in industrial arts/technical subjects, the highest qualification for the respondents was a secondary teachers’ diploma and some respondents were of the view that there was need to introduce a degree program for these subjects.

Furthermore, some respondents lamented that, there was also need to stress the importance of practical subjects and that they should be offered in all schools at an early stage. Although practical subjects were offered in some schools at lower primary they were not examinable.
Table 5: Suggested measures which MOE should undertake to improve attendance

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Measures</th>
<th>Frequency</th>
<th>Percent</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Provide teaching materials and improved funding</td>
<td>23</td>
<td>34.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Provide infrastructure</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>30.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Revise curriculum</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>9.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Introducing degree programmes for teachers</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>6.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Introduce stiff punishment</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Practical lessons on TV</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Offer the practical subjects at an early age</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Introduce retention allowance for teachers of practical subjects</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sensitize teachers about the educational policy on practical subjects</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Train teachers on how to handle practical examinations</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>66</td>
<td>99.6</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
4.1.5.2 School managers

The respondents were of the view that school managers should provide adequate funds and support for practical subjects by giving these departments priority when distributing the available funds. They further noted that these funds and teaching materials be availed in time. Some respondents revealed that the practical subjects departments were not sufficiently supervised and supported, and were of the opinion that school managers should take note of this concern.

Table 6: Suggested measures which school managers should undertake to improve attendance

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Measures</th>
<th>Frequency</th>
<th>Percent</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Adequate support for practical subjects</td>
<td>27</td>
<td>42.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Provide sufficient funds, teaching and learning materials</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>31.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Adequate supervision of practical subjects departments</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>6.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Encourage fundraising ventures</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>instill confidence in teachers</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Introduce practical subjects to more classes</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Introduce exhibitions at school level</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Give incentives to practical subjects teachers</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Suspend pupils who miss practical lessons</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>63</td>
<td>99.4</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
4.1.5.3 Parents

As regards suggested measures to improve attendance in practical lessons and examinations, 24 of them indicated that parents needed to encourage their children and appreciate the importance of taking practical and give pupils moral support. Twenty four respondents indicated that parents needed to encourage their children appreciate the importance of taking practical subjects and give them moral support. However, two (2) respondents were of the view that parents should always help check the work of the children and guide them where necessary. In support of this, 1 respondent also suggested that it would be a good idea if parents worked hand in hand with teachers and if possible donate some equipment and utensils for practical subjects.

Table 7: Suggested measures which parents should undertake to improve attendance

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Measure</th>
<th>Frequency</th>
<th>Percent</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Encourage their children to work hard and appreciate the importance of practical subjects</td>
<td>22</td>
<td>62.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Give their children moral support</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>11.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Check the work of their children</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>8.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Guide their children not to have a negative attitude towards practical subjects</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>5.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Network with teachers</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>5.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Donate equipment and utensils for practical subjects</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>5.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>35</td>
<td>99.8</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
4.2 Findings from heads of departments

This section presents findings from heads of departments. The heads of departments acted as key informants in this study. It is in this regard that semi-structured interviews were employed to help bring out the required information using probing questions on the subject under study.

4.2.1 Number of pupils in class and criteria for allocation

All the 35 respondents (heads of departments) indicated that they had over 30 pupils in each class for practical subjects. However, various criteria were stated as to how the pupils were allocated to these classes which included selecting pupils at random, asking pupils to choose the classes and splitting a full class by half. Three (3) respondents used pupils’ grade 9 statements of results to select pupils with a background of practical subjects at junior level.

4.2.2 Importance of practical subjects

The respondents had a wide range of factors that made practical subjects important. In addition to factors stated by the teacher respondents in their questionnaires, the heads of departments had the following factors: ‘practical subjects sharpen pupils’ thinking capacity and their minds and offer permanent skills’ noted 2 respondents. Three (3) respondents also indicated that pupils were made able to use their hands and brains anytime and fill the gap between the manufacturer and the consumer. “These practical subjects act as an eye opener into the technological world especially in the current era of technology” emphasized 1 respondent.

Gaining entrepreneurial skills was highly stressed by all the respondents due to high levels of unemployment the country was undergoing.
The respondents were of the view that practical subjects were not given equal treatment as the other subjects in the curriculum despite the importance attached to them. This attitude had an impact on the pupils’ attitude towards the subject and therefore not minding missing the examination for these subjects. The respondents also observed that administrators wanted to maintain the perception that practical subjects were demanding and that they were inferior subjects as they were optional. Other respondents argued that these subjects were highly perceived as subjects for the below average pupils although they are seemingly difficult for the intended pupils.

4.2.3 Causes of pupil absenteeism during final practical examinations

During the interview, the heads of department pointed out more factors that led to pupil absenteeism besides teachers’ responses. All the respondents were of the view that there was a lot of pressure from their peers, apathy, truancy, and fear of the practical examinations. Four respondents observed that some pupils perceived the subjects to be challenging and less important. Furthermore, the respondents were concerned about the aspect of quality of teaching by especially under experienced teachers. Such teachers discouraged pupils to gain confidence and face the final practical examinations, the respondents observed.

4.2.4 Challenges faced by practical subjects departments

As key informants, the respondents were asked to give an overview of the challenges that they faced in the teaching and running of the practical subjects departments. The respondents observed that there was a great deal of opposition from other teachers who felt that the subjects were less important. Two respondents stated that, “Some teachers have a negative attitude towards us when they see that there was a lot of practical work going on in our department. They think we are making our own profits”. Two respondents were of the opinion that the number of periods allocated to teach practical subjects was not sufficient to adequately conduct satisfactory lessons and that they were made to create their own free time for extra work. They went on to say “we share some
rooms with non practical subjects and this makes our work even more challenging as
continuity and quality is compromised.” Three respondents observed that they had more
problems with pupils who lacked the background of the subject knowledge in the cases
where pupils were allocated at random. Moreover, some of the classes were over
enrolled and the available equipment was not equivalent to this enrolment.

4.2.5 Suggested measures to be undertaken to improve pupil attendance

This sub section presents the recommended measures by the respondents, which the
authorities should undertake to improve pupil attendance in the following order:
Ministry of Education, School Managers, and Parents.

4.2.6.1 Ministry of Education

Two respondents were of the view that there should be a deliberate sensitization on the
existing policy on practical subjects as this would compel all pupils to attend and write
practical examinations thereby reducing absenteeism. One respondent suggested that if
it were possible there should be more in-service programs for the teachers of practical
subjects.

4.2.6.2 School managers

During the interview with the heads of departments, they also indicated that head
teachers should be taught to put great importance to practical subjects and recommend
teachers with practical subjects’ background to head schools. In the same vein, the
respondents were of the opinion that the school managers should encourage departments
to conduct school based continuing Professional Development (CPD) especially the
lesson study cycles.
4.2.6.3 Parents

Four respondents supported the idea of parents donating equipment, utensils and necessary tools to schools to facilitate practical lessons. Two heads of departments were of the opinion that schools and parents network together in partnership in the improvement of pupil attendance to practical lessons and examinations. One respondent suggested that parents should come up with a strategy to give moral support and incentives to hardworking teachers in the practical subjects departments.

The research required the respondents to state whether the attendance of pupils was likely to improve or not. Six respondents who were interviewed indicated that there was hope for improvement on the attendance of pupils to final practical examinations as they observed that more pupils were enrolling for practical subjects even as external candidates. This was due to the good results obtained by candidates who sat for the subjects.

4.3 Findings from the pupils

This section presents findings from the pupils who formed part of the sample in the study. The focus group discussions were appropriate for them so as to probe further and thus obtain the required information for the topic at hand.

4.3.1 Criteria for allocating pupils to classes for practical optional subject

During their focus group discussions pupils stated various methods that were used to allocate them to classes with optional practical subjects. Pupils indicated the following methods: giving them assessment tests and using elimination method, raffle draws depending on the situation and others were forced to take the subjects regardless of either their background or interest.
4.3.2 Pupils’ perceptions on the Importance of practical

Pupils acknowledged the fact that practical subjects were very important and various factors were depicted during their focus group discussions. It was observed that most of these factors were in line with those that were revealed by the teachers and heads of department in their questionnaire and semi structured interview schedules respectively. These factors include: preparing pupils for work in adult life and self- employment, assist them to acquire skills for survival and become skillful, innovative, and resourceful and use their hands wisely. One pupil stated that ‘‘Practical subjects make us prove that we have learnt real and tangible things and we become experienced through practice’’.

Furthermore, some discussants were of the opinion that practical subjects help pupils relate to understand theory. According to the respondents taking Home economics subjects, pupils feel that they acquire skills and tips on how to handle nutritional related disorders and minor ailments thereby improve on the acceptable healthy standards of living in society and learn to manage time.

4.3.3 Causes of pupil absenteeism during practical examinations

In their focus group discussions, pupils outlined a good number of causes and factors that led to failure to attend final practical examinations by their colleagues. The outstanding causes such as teacher and pupil unpreparedness, negative attitude towards the subjects, laziness and lack of interest, insufficient funding, and lack of learning and teaching materials for practical lessons, inferiority complex and fear of practical examinations were also noted by the teachers and heads of department in their self-administered questionnaires and semi structured interviews respectively.

The discussant expressed concern on the high level of drop outs, teenage pregnancies by female pupils and lack of seriousness towards school work among pupils in general.
Furthermore, they noted that some of the questions in the examinations were too involving and some of the teachers were not adequately experienced to prepare them to face such challenging questions during final practical examinations. One respondent stated that “We need serious, well trained and experienced teachers who would guide us in the preparation for practical examinations”. However, one of the groups pointed out that some of their colleagues lacked the background of the subjects and exposure to the laboratories or workshops and this made them stay away from practical examinations. In addition to this, some pupils were vulnerable such that they could not afford to contribute any kind of materials and ingredients whenever they were required to do so and they ended up losing interest in practical subjects.

4.3.4 Challenges faced by pupils when learning practical subjects

Generally, the respondents stated that there were a number of challenges encountered when learning practical subjects and some of which were earlier alluded to by the heads of departments. Pupils observed the following: shortage of apparatus and protective clothing, inadequate and inexperienced teaching staff, lack of guidance from the teachers of the practical subjects, insufficient time allocated to learn practical lessons and overcrowded classes.

4.3.5 Suggested measures to improve pupils’ attendance to final practical examinations

From the focus group discussions, the discussants also gave various measures to improve attendance to practical examinations although most of the measures were in line with the suggestions made by the other respondents. The following were the measures that the pupils came up with:
• Adequately trained and serious teachers should be employed. These teachers should use a variety of methods in the approach and make lessons more interesting.

• Schools should come up with a serious strategy to assist the orphaned and vulnerable children (OVC) in order to retain them in schools and participate even in subjects which were demanding like practical subjects.

• Schools should provide adequate and improved learning and teaching materials, learning environment which is conducive and relevant textbooks and on the other, guidelines on the requirements for practical examinations should be availed to pupils.

• Furthermore, pupils noted that there was need for educational tours which were related to practical subjects to be included in the curriculum. They gave examples of visiting industries in various sectors.

• The pupils recommended that there should be practical work during end of term examinations and these would make them a lot confident when they write final practical examinations.

4.4 Summary

The general findings with regards to the teachers’ and pupils’ perceptions on factors contributing to pupils’ absenteeism during grade 12 national examinations in selected practical subjects were quite similar. All the respondents in the three categories acknowledged the importance of practical subjects to the pupils, which included: preparing pupils to work in industries and or self employment thereby empowering them economically give pupils entrepreneurship skills and constructive use of leisure time.

The teachers emphasized on the fact that practical subjects acted as an eye opener for the technological world and that pupils were made able to use their brains and hands anytime to fill the gap between the manufacturer and the consumer.
The findings also revealed the causes of pupils’ absenteeism in final practical examinations. The major causes identified were: lack of support from various sectors such as parents, teachers and the government, lack of preparation by the teachers and the pupils, negative attitude, laziness and lack of interest. Other causes were peer pressure, fear of the examination to mention but a few.

The roles of the high school administrators and teachers on the general attendance of pupils to both lessons and final practical examinations were also discussed. The stated roles were basically to determine the way forward for practical subjects as they are offered on the basis of being optional. For instance, counseling and guiding pupils, preparing pupils adequately and in some cases punishing them would help improve the attendance.

As regards recommendations to be undertaken by the stakeholders to improve the attendance of pupils the study revealed the following; provide infrastructure, teaching materials, sensitize teachers and pupils about the policy of practical subjects, train teachers on how to handle practical examinations and encourage fundraising ventures.
CHAPTER FIVE: DISCUSSION OF FINDINGS

5.0 Overview

This chapter presents discussion of the findings as presented in line with the objectives of the study.

- To ascertain the teachers’ and pupils’ perceptions of the importance of practical subjects
- To establish the causes of pupil absenteeism in practical subjects at grade 12 National examinations
- To find out the role of high school administrators and teachers on the attendance of pupils to lessons and examinations?
- To suggest measures which can be put in place to improve pupil attendance in practical examinations

5.1 Heads of department Teachers’ and Pupils’ perceptions about the importance of practical subjects

The responses from all the participants suggest that practical subjects are vital in the curriculum and thus play an important role in the future of the pupils. The respondents pointed out similar factors which include: preparing pupils for self-employment after school/giving them strong entrepreneurial skills, helping train human resource for employment in industries, equipping pupils with skills conducive to constructive use of leisure time, and sharpening pupils’ thinking capacity and their minds. These findings are in line with the Ministry of Education (1996) justifying the inclusion of practical subjects in the school curriculum claiming that they possess a potential relationship to the world of work and hence may help prepare pupils for post employment or vocational training. The relevance of practical subjects to the job market is linked to one starting up their own business and consequently become self employed.
5.1.1 Preparing pupils for self-employment/giving them entrepreneurial skills

Self-employment can be referred to as a person who works for himself/herself instead of an employer but drawing income from a trade or business that they operate personally. To be self-employed is not necessarily the same as being a business owner (Wikipedia 2011). Through practical subjects pupils are likely to be prepared psychologically and physically, and face the challenges of lack of formal employment in the sense that the skills acquired may be utilized to manage their own firms.

Policy makers increasingly view self-employment in the form of youth entrepreneurship as a possible solution to youth unemployment crisis (Wikipedia, 2011). According to (Encarta Dictionary, 2009) an entrepreneur is a risk-taking business person or somebody who initiates or finances new commercial enterprises. A business is an organized approach of providing customers with the goods and services. This implies that, pupils acquire entrepreneurial skills to produce their own products for sell such as furniture, food stuffs, clothing etc, depending on the type of practical subject area of specialisation. With sufficient practice in their lessons pupils gain confidence and courage to even face examinations and most importantly the post school era when they are not in formal employment.

5.1.2 Helping train human resource for employment in industries

The wish of every employer is to have a workforce with a sound background and solid foundation. This implies that as pupils learn practical subjects during their practical lessons they are being trained to be responsible and active citizens. Technological developments for instance necessitate new skills in many industries leaving those with outdated skills without a job. Therefore, this suggests that practical subjects may be seen to advantage the pupils with the knowledge of practical education even at the selection stage for technical courses at tertiary education under Technical Educational and Vocational, Entrepreneurship Training (TEVET), to be further employed in industries.
5.1.3 Equipping pupils with skills conducive to constructive use of leisure time

It should be pointed here that pupils tend to misuse their leisure time indulging in unproductive and unacceptable activities in society. But with the skills learnt from practical subjects there is hope that they may be kept busy doing sensible work and their minds may be always occupied. This is confirmed by the National Assessment Survey Report (2008:28) which states that “the importance of life skills education lay in the fact that most of the young people nowadays are exposed to various influences with little or no guidance on how to cope and make informed decisions”.

5.1.4 Sharpening pupils’ minds and thinking capacity

This could be confirmed by the pupil respondents who acknowledged that practical subjects prove that they had learnt real and tangible things and become skillful, innovative, creative and resourceful, using their brains and hands, from the basics that they learn in practical lessons. Their minds are indeed sharpened with no doubt when they practice to make items and improve on the knowledge they have acquired and come up with new and advanced ideas.

5.1.5 Other factors

Other factors about the importance of practical subjects noted by pupils were that they may not perform well in theory but better in practical work and the important concepts acquired would be grasped while they practiced. This suggests that a number of pupils are beginning to appreciate the importance of practical subjects because better grades could be obtained in practical examinations and cushion the poor grades obtained from the theory examination papers.
To strengthen the understanding of practical subjects all the respondents attached great importance to practical subjects from the overwhelming positive response when asked about the relevance of practical subjects in the curriculum.

5.2 Method of allocating pupils to classes with practical subjects

The findings presented the methods and the number of pupils in the classes with practical subjects as options from the heads of practical subjects departments and the pupils. Various methods and processes were indicated by the respondents and most of them were similar. Nevertheless, the processes used by the schools show the lack of appropriate procedure for determining the needs of all pupils. In some cases it was observed that the allocations were done at random and not necessarily considering the pupils’ interests especially in such instances where pupils were forced to take up the subjects. The administration seems to be oblivious to the personal and social expectations placed on pupils which affect their behavior and influence their aspirations. This could be another dimension that attribute to pupil absenteeism during practical examinations.

5.2.1 Respondents’ perceptions on the factors contributing to pupil absenteeism during final practical examinations

The findings revealed that almost all the respondents had at one time been involved in the conduction of practical subjects for both mock and final practical examinations, in different capacities. It should be pointed here that, all schools understudy recorded absenteeism by pupils during practical examinations. The indication from the findings was that, there were a number of factors that led to this absenteeism. These factors could be categorized in areas such as those that relate to the attitude of pupils, teachers, parents and school environment.
5.3 The attitude of pupils

The attitude of pupils involves many factors which include: pupil unpreparedness, laziness, truancy, lack of interest, inferiority complex, negative attitude and, teenage pregnancies/early marriages.

5.3.1 Pupil unpreparedness

This maybe attributed by laziness and truancy where the pupil decides not study and prepare for the examinations. To some extent, this could be caused by weak relationships that exist between pupils and the teacher of a particular subject. When the teacher does not relate well with his/her pupils, attempts to care for their difficulties may prove futile. In such cases pupils may not prepare for the examinations adequately and consequently they fear to face the examinations hence absenteeism.

5.3.2 Lack of interest

Lack of interest is seen as a result of forcing pupils to take particular subjects at the allocation stage. Suitable methods of allocating pupils to these classes should be employed so that pupils’ interests are considered. This is to ensure that pupils are taking the subjects which they are interested in, thereby reducing the rate of pupil absenteeism during practical examinations. This idea is supported by Essel (2001:2) who states that “Every school going child has been endowed with special abilities whether the child is clever or not”. If a pupil is not capable of handling certain pressures involved in practical subjects, alternative optional subjects may be suitable for such a pupil.

5.3.3 Inferiority complex

In most cases inferiority complex is influenced by the pressure from their peers who may continually discourage them especially those that may not have appreciated the importance of practical subjects. Some pupils look down upon practical subjects and feel that they are inferior subjects especially home economics. Such attitudes have an impact on the pupils taking the subjects thus leading to absenteeism.
5.3.4 Negative attitude

The negative attitude in pupils will call for a lot of sensitization for all the pupils and teachers on the relevance of education and examinations and this may change the thinking of the pupils taking practical subjects. The implication could be a feeling of discouragement in the face of academic failure, the value pupils place on education and practical subjects in particular and the way they see themselves.

5.3.5 Teenage pregnancies/ early marriages

Teenage pregnancies and early marriages are notable factors contributing to female pupil absenteeism and were highly discussed by pupils in their focus group discussions as another source of concern. The high incidences of school girls in Zambia falling pregnant at an early age is beginning to take its toll on society, thereby exerting pressure on various stakeholders who have to call for an urgent solution to the problem (Times of Zambia, 2011). For instance, one school recorded 68 pregnancies in 2010 as reported by Times of Zambia. The 68 girls getting pregnant at a learning institution is such a huge number to comprehend. While the re-entry policy is in place to assist the child it should not be abused by the girls since they are allowed to go back to school. Young girls should adhere to messages of abstinence religiously without allowing themselves to be swayed by those weak morals. They should remain focused and Forum for African Women Educationalist in Zambia (FAWEZA) has initiated some programmes meant to sensitize the girl child on how to be assertive in life and learn to say no to sexual advances which learners should take advantage of. Some pregnant pupils who may be due to deliver are granted maternity leave but this might be the time they are expected to sit for their examinations thus recorded as absent. However, they are free to resume classes thereafter. Although this is the case, some pupils do not have the courage to utilize this opportunity and resort to completely stay away from school.
5.4 Teachers’ influence

The teachers’ influence on the factors contributing to pupil absenteeism includes teacher unpreparedness which includes: lack of experience and confidence, lack of teaching materials and inadequate funding, lack of support by the administration, and lack of commitment.

5.4.1 Lack of teaching materials and inadequate funding

Teaching materials are the major resources for successful lessons. The findings revealed that lack of teaching materials and inadequate funding had a significant bearing on the teachers’ preparation for his or her lessons thereby affecting pupils’ attitude to such lessons. Teachers admitted that when it came to examinations, many pupils may have poor results or even stay away from examinations because they did not have access to books outside of school to study. Practical subjects need materials and tools other than books to facilitate their practical lessons. However, the findings indicated that the only time when departments received funds was during examinations. This implies that there was literally no adequate preparation for these examinations causing pupils to stay away.

5.4.2 Lack of experience

The findings revealed that lack of experience by some teachers was a factor worth discussion. Some teachers are ushered into the system with neither induction nor orientation to help them gain some courage to handle practical lessons and examinations beforehand. Such teachers have difficulties with teaching even if they are trained and this tends to discourage the pupils. The teacher’s ability to explain clearly will enable the pupils to understand what he teaches as well as take part in the lesson. By doing so pupils are prepared adequately to face the examinations. Although, some teachers face challenges to deliver even when they are trained adequately and have enough experience and this may be due to their natural negative attitude towards work in them.
5.4.3 Lack of support by the administration

Administrative support is required for pupils and teachers in order to achieve high quality discipline. The findings revealed that some administrators do not support their members of staff adequately especially those who are in need of moral support. This implies that teachers are left own their own to do their work without the input of the school manager. The consequences may be a negative attitude thereby affecting the teacher pupil relationship. Once teachers and pupils are not in a sound relationship there is no grip on the discipline of pupils leading to absenteeism in some cases.

5.5 School environment

The findings revealed that the school environment has an influence on the teachers and pupils attitude. This includes poor infrastructure where the facilities are not available such as workshops and equipment. Over enrolment may have an impact also on the attitude of the pupils and teachers. The implication here is that the classroom space available for practical lessons and examinations may not be sufficient to accommodate large numbers of pupils in classes therefore the quality of learning is compromised. Most of these schools have limited equipment to carter for these large numbers in the classes and pupils are made to share the only equipment available.

Low staffing levels form part of the school environment meaning the limited number of teachers may be overwhelmed with work and would not have time to prepare for their lessons adequately. This also means that teachers will not have sufficient time to attend to individual pupils or pupils in their smaller groups especially those that may need remedial work outside learning hours.

The time allocated to teach practical lessons also is another factor that merit mention. The number of periods are far too less to ensure that practical lessons are taught successfully. This may call for adjustment in the curriculum to include a reasonable number of subjects considering the needs of particular schools.
5.6 Parents

Parents influence the attitudes of their children towards individual school subject areas in various ways. These influences are determined by, the economic status and also parents’ educational background. The findings revealed that some pupils had challenges when it came to contributing ingredients and materials for practical lessons. In view of this factor, it implies that their parents may not afford to give them any money to buy these ingredients and materials due to their low economic status or in some cases some children maybe orphaned. Such children may be living on their own in such instances fending for themselves (child headed households).

In some other cases, some parents may exert pressure on their children to look down on practical subjects to the extent of imposing subjects contrary to their child’s needs and interests. Such situations lead to conflicts and pupils tend to suffer from indecision not knowing whether to continue with the subjects in question or not.

5.7 The role of teachers and school managers on the attendance of pupils

The findings support the view that teachers and school managers play a major role on the attendance of pupils to both practical lessons and examinations. The teachers’ roles included: counseling and guiding pupils, preparing them adequately and in some instances punishing them. These roles implied that the teachers should exercise professional skills and acceptable qualities which would encourage the pupils to stay in class and learn. In support of this, Essel (2001:4) states that “a good teacher should be able to counsel/help his pupils adjust better when problems arise.” She goes on to say “he must be able to control the class effectively and willing to ensure that there is discipline in his class.” The pupil spends nearly half of his time in school and this means that the teacher has to work in the interest of the pupils while he is with them. This requires a sense of responsibility towards the pupils who have been placed in his care. A teacher must therefore be confident when teaching and must be able to explain concepts to the pupils quickly (Essel, 2001). The teacher’s ability to explain clearly will enable
the pupils to understand all what he teaches as well as take active part in the lesson. By doing so, the pupils are prepared adequately to face the examinations.

The teachers’ work naturally involves other people like school managers, pupils, parents and other teachers. The major roles for the school managers being providing teaching and learning materials, awarding teachers, providing sufficient funds and educating and sensitizing teachers and pupils about the benefits of practical subjects in the curriculum. It could be deduced here that, if teachers, school managers, parents and pupils played their role, no pupil would wish to miss a single lesson and or practical examination using ‘artificial’ excuses.

5.8 Suggested measures to be undertaken

From the findings, respondents suggested some measures which should be undertaken by relevant authorities such as Ministry of Education, School managers and parents. These are discussed in the respected order.

5.8.1 Ministry of Education

The study revealed the measures which the Ministry of Education should undertake to improve the attendance of pupils to practical examinations. These include: the provision of infrastructure, adequate teaching and learning materials and improved funding, the revision of the curriculum, and introduction of degree programmes for industrial arts teachers. This meant that for government to achieve its goals and aims of quality education, it should ensure that such issues are addressed. However, it should be pointed out that, this arrangement should not affect schools’ rights to provide these funds using Parent-Teacher Association (PTA) or other funds to enable them conduct practical lessons and examinations.

The revision of the curriculum and syllabus was noted by some respondents. This implied that the existing curriculum was too broad to be covered in the limited period.
Meaning that, the syllabus should be streamlined so as not scare away the pupils. Encarta dictionary (2009) describes a curriculum as “subjects taught or elements of subjects: the subjects taught at an educational institution, or the topics taught with in a subject. A syllabus is summarized by Brophy (1984) as the specification of work of a particular department of school or college which has been organized in sub sections defining the work of a particular group or class.

As indicated in the findings that the highest qualification for most of the teachers of practical subjects including heads of departments was a secondary teachers’ diploma especially in industrial arts (technical education). The respondents suggested that the introduction of degree programmes for such teachers would enable them gain the expected confidence even to handle practical lessons and examinations successfully and with ease.

It was further noted that reinforcing the existing curriculum on practical subjects at an early stage would add value to the subjects. Possibly these subjects should be examinable even at primary level to provide a solid foundation on the part of the pupils.

5.8.2 School Managers

School managers were noted to play a major role on the attendance of pupils. It is in this vein that the respondents suggested and noted measures which the school manager should undertake in order to help improve pupil attendance. Some of the measures were somehow similar to those that should be undertaken by the Ministry of Education but may be handled differently at school level. For instance, when schools are funded the managers would at some point not consider funding practical subjects departments to facilitate for their lessons, as a priority. They should be encouraged to provide these funds in time as suggested by some respondents.

As with regards to supervision, school managers were noted be relaxed and did not supervise the departments sufficiently. With adequate supervision, there could be some
improvement on the attendance of pupils because only then would the pupils and teachers take the subjects seriously.

School managers should encourage teachers to go for in-service training or even hold workshops at school level in form of Continuous Professional Development (CPD) especially the lesson study cycle where demo lessons should be emphasized. These help the weaker teachers to learn how to handle challenging topics from their colleagues.

5.8.3 Parents

The study further revealed the involvement of parents in the improvement of attendance of pupils to practical examinations. Among other measures which parents should undertake, encouraging their children to appreciate the importance and benefits of practical subjects scored highest in the frequency. Some positive outlooks noted by the respondents were that parents should give their children moral support, check the work of their children and network with teachers. Many parents would be grateful to have their children get some education and consequently be economically empowered even in the absence of a decent job through entrepreneurship. It is quite apparent that parents should also look at other areas like donating equipment and materials for practical lessons apart from just giving moral support to their children.

The involvement of parents would positively enhance the improved pupil attendance during practical examinations.
CHAPTER SIX: CONCLUSION, RECOMMENDATIONS AND AREAS OF FUTURE RESEARCH

6.0 Overview

This chapter presents the conclusion of the study in line with the discussion of the findings followed by the recommendations and end with the areas of future research.

6.1 Conclusion

The general conclusion is that practical subjects are relevant in various aspects of life and especially to the job market and as a career alternative to the pupils after school. It should be realized that once the mindset of the pupils become entrepreneurial, they make valuable decisions even in the public service thereby contributing to the economic development of the nation.

The causes of absenteeism in practical subjects examinations maybe categorized in areas such as the attitude of: pupils, teachers, parents and the school environment. Basing on the findings, these include, teacher/pupil unpreparedness, fear of examinations and lack of interest by the pupils, poor teacher/pupil interaction, inappropriate training of teachers and low staffing levels, lack of moral support from the parents, poor infrastructure and inadequate provisions of teaching and learning materials and funds by government.

However, there is a significance challenge for education in Zambia because the findings revealed that pupil absenteeism during examinations especially in practical subjects is a major disciplinary concern.

Furthermore, measures to be undertaken which include the roles for school managers, teachers, parents and the Ministry of Education. Roles which include, counseling and guiding pupils, preparing pupils adequately before the examinations and providing teaching and learning materials in advance. The Ministry of Education should revise and streamline the curriculum and introduce degree programmes for industrial arts teachers.
and provide sufficient funds for practical lessons. These measures may help reduce unnecessary absenteeism. These measures call for the stakeholders and authorities to work hand in hand and make Zambia a well disciplined nation regarding truancy by pupils.

6.2 Recommendations

Based on the findings from the study, the following recommendations are made:

- Schools should help pupils understand that education does help an individual to cope with the rapid social changes taking place in society. Examinations, whether they like it or not are the tools used to assess how well one has acquired the knowledge.
- Schools should encourage careers talks on the importance of examinations in general particularly emphasise on practical subjects.
- Heads of departments should encourage registration for each lesson to ensure that culprits are booked and disciplined thereby reducing the rate of absenteeism.
- Each case of persistent cause of absenteeism should be investigated thoroughly by the relevant authorities.
- School managers should be more supportive to practical subjects departments by providing materials and moral support to the teachers in order to motivate them.
- School managers should encourage fundraising activities by providing initial capital.
- There should be orientation for school managers to understand the relevance of practical subjects and the benefits involved
- The teachers’ training curriculum should reinforce the inclusion of entrepreneurship as a topic.
- Continuing Professional Development and demo lessons should be encouraged to help the new teachers handle challenging topics with ease.
- Teachers should be urged to use a variety of methods in the approach and make practical lessons more interesting.
• Schools should encourage educational tours which are related to practical subjects such as visiting industries and possibly some business institutions.
• Standard officers should strengthen the monitoring component.
• Government should increase funding to prepare worn out tools and equipment in schools.
• Parents should be more responsive to their children’s requirements, provide them with more positive caution and counseling on the importance of education
6.3 Areas of future research

The following were identified as areas of possible future research:

1. There is need to conduct the same study at national level to obtain and establish the major factors that lead to pupil absenteeism to national practical examinations.

2. Research maybe conducted to find out which subjects are largely affected by absenteeism at School Certificate (SC) and General Certificate of Education (G.C.E).

3. Research may be conducted to find out which gender is highly affected by absenteeism at school certificate (S.C) and General Certificate of Education (G.C.E)
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Appendix I: SEMI STRUCTURED INTERVIEW (SSI) SCHEDULE FOR HEADS OF DEPARTMENT PRACTICAL SUBJECTS

Dear respondent,

I am a Post graduate student from the University of Zambia, conducting a research on Teachers’ and Pupils’ Perceptions on Factors Contributing to Pupils’ Absenteeism during Grade Twelve National Examinations Practical Subjects. This study is purely academic therefore all responses will be treated as confidential.

Thank you for your time.

PART ONE DEMOGRAPHIC INFORMATION

1. Name of your School

..........................................................

2. What is your highest qualification?
   a. Diploma [ ]
   b. Degree [ ]
   c. Masters degree [ ]
   d. Other (specify) .................................

3. How long have you served as Head of Department?
   a. 1-5 years [ ]
   b. 6-10 years [ ]
   c. 11 years and above [ ]

4. How many practical subjects do you have at this school?
   a. Two [ ]
   b. Three [ ]
   c. Four [ ]
   d. More than five [ ]
5. State the number of pupils in each class taking practical subjects
   a. 15 [ ]
   b. 20 [ ]
   c. 25 [ ]
   d. Above 30 [ ]

6. What criteria does the school use to allocate pupils in the classes for practical subjects?
   a. By choice [ ]
   b. Forced [ ]
   c. Picked at random [ ]
   d. Splitting class by half [ ]
   e. Other specify  ---------------------------------------------------------------

PART TWO: OBJECTIVES

7. Are all the subjects in the curriculum at your school treated equally?
   a. Yes [ ]
   b. No [ ]

6. If the answer is no to question 7, what is the reason?

........................................................................................................................................

8. State the importance of Practical subjects.
   ........................................................................................................................................
   ........................................................................................................................................
   ........................................................................................................................................
   ........................................................................................................................................

9. Does the school receive any teaching/learning resources for practical lessons and examinations from the Ministry of Education?
   a. Yes [ ]
   b. No [ ]

10. If the answer to question 9 is yes, what kind of resources?
    a. Financial resources [ ]
    b. Material [ ]
    c. Other (please specify) -------------------------------------------------------------
11. If the answer to question 9 is yes, what are the reasons?
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12. How often do you receive the following resources?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Type of resource</th>
<th>Once per year</th>
<th>Twice per year</th>
<th>Once per term</th>
<th>Twice per term</th>
<th>Once in a while</th>
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<tr>
<td>Financial resources</td>
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<td>Material resources</td>
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<tr>
<td>Other resources</td>
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</table>

13. Who provides these resources?
   a. School P.T.A/Board       [ ]
   b. Ministry of Education    [ ]
   c. Both School and Ministry of Education [ ]
   d. Other (specify) -------------------------------------------------------------

14. Do you have other means of raising funds for teaching and learning resources?
   a. Yes [ ]
   b. No [ ]

15. If the answer is yes to question 14, mention the means.
   -----------------------------------------------------------------------------
   -----------------------------------------------------------------------------
   -----------------------------------------------------------------------------

16. Does the School Manager visit your department?
   a. Yes [ ]
   b. No [ ]
17. If the answer to question 16 is yes, how often does he/she visit your department?
   a. Once per week [   ]  b. once per month [   ]  c. once per term [   ]

18. If the answer to question 16 is no, what are the reasons?
   ………………………………………………………………………………………
   ………………………………………………………………………………………
   ………………………………………………………………………………………

19. Generally, how is the attendance of pupils during practical examinations?
   a. Excellent [   ]
   b. Very Good [   ]
   c. Satisfactory [   ]
   d. Unsatisfactory [   ]

20. Does your school experience pupil absenteeism during practical examinations?
   a. Yes [   ]  b. No [   ]

21. If the answer to question 20 is yes, what could be the causes of absenteeism in practical examinations?
   ………………………………………………………………………………………
   ………………………………………………………………………………………
   ………………………………………………………………………………………

22. As head of practical subjects department, what is your role in the general attendance of pupils to lessons and examinations?
   a. Provide necessary teaching materials [   ]
   b. Motivate Teachers and pupils [   ]
   c. Encourage pupils to attend [   ]
   d. All the above [   ]
   e. Other (please specify) -------------------------------

23. What challenges do you face in the teaching of practical subjects?
   ………………………………………………………………………………………
   ………………………………………………………………………………………
   ………………………………………………………………………………………

24. Recommend measures that can be put in place to improve pupil’s attendance by:
   a. Ministry of Education
   ………………………………………………………………………………………
   ………………………………………………………………………………………

65
b. School Administration
........................................................................................................
........................................................................................................
c. Parents
........................................................................................................
........................................................................................................

25. In your opinion, do you see an improvement in the attendance of pupils to practical examinations?
a. Yes [ ] b. No [ ]

26. Give two reasons for your answer
........................................................................................................
........................................................................................................
........................................................................................................

Thank you for your time.
Appendix II: SELF-ADMINISTERED QUESTIONNAIRE FOR TEACHERS (SAQ)

Dear Respondent,

I am a Post Graduate Student at the University of Zambia. I have the pleasure to inform you that you have been selected to participate in this study. You are required to give relevant and objective information which would assist in investigating Teachers’ and pupils’ perceptions on factors contributing to pupils’ absenteeism during grade twelve National Examinations practical subjects. I am asking you to be open and provide sincere responses that will reflect a true picture of the study. This study is purely academic therefore all responses will be treated as confidential.

Thank you.

THIS QUESTIONNAIRE IS CONFIDENTIAL AND YOU DO NOT NEED TO WRITE YOUR NAME.

Instructions

The questionnaire comprises three parts, namely Identification data, Background data, and Questions based on the objectives of the study.

The questionnaire requires you to either tick or supply a short answer in the spaces provided.

PART ONE- IDENTIFICATION DATA

1. Name of your school ---------------------------------------------

   a. Bwacha high school [ ] d. Kalonga High School [ ]
   b. Highridge High School [ ] e. Mukobeko High School [ ]
   c. Kabwe High School [ ] f. Raphael Kombe High School [ ]

2. Name of district--------------------------
3. State the location of your school
   a. Urban [ ]
   b. Peri-urban [ ]
   c. Rural [ ]

4. School type
   a. Day co-education [ ]
   b. Day Girls’ school [ ]
   c. Day Boys’ school [ ]

**PART TWO: BACKGROUND DATA**

5. What is your gender?
   a. Male [ ]
   b. Female [ ]

6. State your age
   a. 20-25 [ ]
   b. 26 - 30 [ ]
   c. 31 and above [ ]

7. What is your highest qualification?
   a. Secondary Teachers’ Diploma [ ]
   b. Advanced Diploma [ ]
   c. University Degree [ ]
   d. Other (please specify) ...........................................................

8. Indicate your teaching experience.
   a. 1- 5 years [ ]
   b. 6- 10 years [ ]
   c. 11-15 years [ ]
   d. 16 and above [ ]
9. What grades do you teach?

a. Grade 10  [  ]

b. Grade 12  [  ]

c. Grade 11  [  ]

d. All grades  [  ]

10. Which Practical subject(s) do you teach?

a. Industrial arts subjects (technology subjects)  [  ]

b. Home economics subjects  [  ]

c. Art and Design  [  ]

d. Music  [  ]

e. Other (specify) -------------------------------------------------------------

11. Apart from teaching what other responsibilities are you attached to?

a. Section head of department  [  ]

b. Production unit  [  ]

c. Preventive maintenance  [  ]

d. School Health and Nutrition committee member  [  ]

e. Other  [ specify] -------------------------------
PART THREE – QUESTIONS BASED ON OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY

SECTION A

The Importance of Practical Subjects.

12. How many subjects are offered in your school?
   a. 7          [   ]    c. 9          [   ]
   b. 8          [   ]    d. 10         [   ]

13. State the practical option subjects that are offered at your school.
   a. Industrial arts  [   ]
   c. Art and design  [   ]
   d. Home economics [   ]
   e. Music          [   ]
   f. All the above  [   ]

14. Are all the subjects offered in the curriculum at your school treated as important?
   a. Yes  [   ]            b. No  [   ]

15. If the answer to question 14 is ‘yes’, state the importance of Practical subjects.
   a. Preparing pupils for self employment after school.  [   ]
   b. Training human resources for employment in industries [   ]
   c. Giving strong entrepreneurial skills for pupils      [   ]
   d. Equipping pupils with skills conducive to the constructive use of time [   ]
   e. All the above [   ]
   f. Other (specify) ----------------------------------------

16. Are the tools and teaching/learning materials readily available to you and your pupils for use?
   a. Yes  [   ]            b. No  [   ]

17. Does your school receive any funding from the Ministry of Education to facilitate both practical lessons and Examinations?
   a. Yes  [   ]            b. No  [   ]

18. If the answer to question 17 is ‘yes’, how often?
   a. Once per month  [   ]
   b. Once per term    [   ]
   c. Once per year    [   ]
19. If the answer to question 17 is ‘no’, what are the reasons?
   a. Negligence [ ]
   b. Lack of resources [ ]
   c. Lack of support [ ]
   d. All the above [ ]

20. Does the school administration support practical subjects department?
   a. Yes [ ]
   b. No [ ]

21. If the answer to question 20 is ‘yes’ what kind of support are you given?
   a. Material [ ]
   b. Financial [ ]
   c. Moral [ ]
   d. Other [ ]

22. Do you undertake fundraising activities in your department?
   a. Yes [ ]
   b. No [ ]

23. If the answer to question 22 is ‘yes’, who organizes them?
   a. Head of department [ ]
   b. Committee appointed by head of department [ ]
   c. Individual teachers [ ]
   d. N/A [ ]

24. If the answer to question 22 is ‘no’ in 11, what is the reason?
   a. Lack of commitment [ ]
   b. Lack of capital [ ]
   c. Negligence [ ]
   d. Lack of time [ ]
   e. Other (specify) ---------------------------------------

SECTION B

Causes of pupil absenteeism during practical examinations.

25. Have you ever been involved in conducting practical examinations?
   a. Yes [ ]

   b. No [ ]
26. If your answer to question 25 is ‘yes,’ in which capacity were you involved?
   a. Invigilator [ ]
   b. Supervisor [ ]
   c. Marker [ ]
   d. All the above [ ]

27. Which type of examination?
   a. Mock Examinations [ ]
   b. Final Examinations [ ]
   c. Both Mock and Final Examinations [ ]

28. Generally, how is the attendance of pupils during mock practical examinations?
   a. Excellent [ ]
   b. Very Good [ ]
   c. Satisfactory [ ]
   d. Unsatisfactory [ ]

29. In your opinion, are pupils keen in attending practical lessons, mock examinations and final examinations?
   a. Very keen [ ]
   b. Quite keen [ ]
   c. Not so keen [ ]

30. Do you record absenteeism of pupils during final practical examinations?
   a. Yes [ ]
   b. No [ ]

31. Are they the same pupils that absent themselves from mock practical examinations?
   a. Yes [ ]
   b. No [ ]

32. What are the causes of pupil this absenteeism in practical examinations?
   a. Pupils’ unpreparedness [ ]
   b. Laziness [ ]
   c. Poor subject combination [ ]
   d. Inferiority complex [ ]
   e. Negative attitude [ ]
f. Other (specify) ..........................................................

33. (a) In your opinion, does teacher unpreparedness contribute to pupil absenteeism?
   a. Yes [ ]                 b. No [ ]

33. (b) What Factors contribute to Teacher unpreparedness?
   a. Lack of teaching materials [ ]
   b. Lack of support by the Administrators [ ]
   c. Lack of Experience/ knowledge [ ]
   d. Poor infrastructure [ ]
   e. Inadequate Funding [ ]
   f. Any other [ ]

34. As a teacher what is role (s) on the general attendance of pupils to practical lessons, mock and final examination.
   a. Counseling and guiding pupils [ ]
   b. Preparing pupils adequately [ ]
   c. Punishing them [ ]
   d. No role to play [ ]

SECTION C

The role of School Managers in promoting the importance of practical education and the general attendance to lessons and examinations.

35. What are the roles of the School Managers on the general attendance of pupils to lessons and examinations?
   a. Provide necessary teaching materials [ ]
   b. Award teachers and pupils [ ]
   c. Provide adequate funds for lessons [ ]
   d. Educate Teachers on the importance of Vocational and Entrepreneurship skill [ ]
   e. All the above [ ]
SECTION D

Suggested measures that can be put in place to improve pupils’ attendance

36. In your opinion, what measures should the Ministry of Education, School Managers and parents put in place to improve pupils’ attendance during grade 12 national examinations in practical subjects?

   a) Ministry of Education.................................................................
   b) School managers.................................................................
   c) Parents ..................................................................................

37. In your opinion has there been any improvement in the attendance of pupils to practical examinations?

   a. Yes [ ]  b. No [ ]

38. Please give one reason (s) for your answer to question 37 above.

........................................................................................................

Thank you for your valuable time and cooperation.
Appendix III: FOCUS GROUP DISCUSSION FOR PUPILS

It has been observed that there is a lot of absenteeism from examinations in practical subjects by some pupils.

1. As pupils taking practical subjects, what is the importance of these practical subjects?

2. What challenges do you face when learning practical subjects?

3. What do you think are the causes of absenteeism during practical examination?

4. What method is used to allocate you into classes with practical subjects as options?

5. Suggest measures that can be put in place to improve on the attendance to lessons, and practical examinations.
Appendix IV: OBSERVATION SHEET

District: -----------------------------------------------

School: -----------------------------------------------

Date: -----------------------------------------------

Look for the following things to check whether or not they are being attended to

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Item</th>
<th>1</th>
<th>2</th>
<th>3</th>
<th>4</th>
<th>5</th>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Very good</td>
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<td>fair</td>
<td>poor</td>
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<td>2.</td>
<td>Care of tools</td>
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<td>3.</td>
<td>Cleanliness of workshops</td>
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<tr>
<th>S/N</th>
<th>Industrial arts</th>
<th>No</th>
<th>Home Economics</th>
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</table>
Were the following documents available?

a) Departmental meetings minutes
   a. Yes [ ] b. No [ ]

b) Pupils’ attendance registers
   a. Yes [ ] b. No [ ]

c) Examination analysis
   a. Yes [ ] b. No [ ]

d) Stock books and evidence of stock taking
   a. Yes [ ] b. No [ ]

Any other comments

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