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APPROVAL

This thesis of SAASA VIVIEN MONDE MWAEKWA is approved as fulfilling the partial requirements for the award of the degree of Master of Education in Literacy and Learning by the University of Zambia.

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DEDICATION

This study is dedicated to my children: Amukena, Manga, Nangana, Waluka, Monde and Masiye, and also to my brother Clement Saasa. My brother supported me both morally and financially throughout the time I was studying. My children kept on encouraging me and sometimes typing my work when I felt fatigued.
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ACRONYMS/ABBREVIATIONS

BASAT ........................ Basic Skills Assessment Tool
BTL ............................... Breakthrough To Literacy
EFA ............................. Education For A
ECZ ............................... Examinations Council of Zambia
L1 ................................. Local Language or First Language
LEA ............................... Language Experience Approach
MoE ............................... Ministry of Education
NALS ............................. National Adults Literacy Survey
NAEP ............................ National Assessment of Education Progress
NAEYC ........................... National Association for the Education of Young Children
NRC ............................... National Research Council
NRP ............................... National Reading Panel
NBTL ............................. New Breakthrough To Literacy
PRP ............................... Primary Reading Programme
RAN ............................... Rapid Automatized Naming
ROC ............................... Read On Course
SACMEQ ....................... Southern Africa Consortium for Monitoring Educational Quality
SIC ............................... School In-service Coordinator
SITE ............................. Step In To English
SPSS ............................. Statistical Package for the Social Sciences
UNESCO ....................... United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization
UNICEF ........................ United Nations Children's Fund
ZIC ............................... Zonal In-Service Coordinator
ABSTRACT

The definition of reading adopted for this research is that it is a deliberate process of looking at and understanding written language. The focus of the research was to find out factors that affect reading levels in Chitonga among Grade 3 pupils in selected schools from Livingstone and Kazungula districts of Southern Province. This was basically to examine the extent to which pupils understood relatively simple texts (comprehension - whereby the reader obtains meaning from the text), letter identification and phonemic recognition and spellings. The Pupils were from government primary schools and Chitonga was used because it is the official Local language in the province.

The researcher chose Grade 3 pupils in Term 1 because they had just completed grade 2, meaning, they had learnt adequate reading skills in Chitonga. The investigation was done using three types of instruments, these were sub-tests derived from the Basic Skills Assessment Tool (BASAT), Interviews with Pupils and also from questionnaires which were administered to 14 Grade 3 Teachers and 3 School In-service Coordinators (SICS. Pupils were tested in letter naming, letter-sound association, phonological tasks (initial and ending sound identification, syllable segmentation), reading words, sentences and reading for comprehension – which was pictorial reading comprehension. The other sub-test was on writing spelling dictation of words and sentences. All the tests were in Chitonga and were administered to 80 pupils.

The children were subjected to naming all the letters of the alphabet and their phonemes, reading one, two, and three-syllable words, reading sentences, reading comprehension - where they were to match what they read with pictures, writing spelling dictation of one and two syllable words and writing dictation of short sentences. The results suggested that the majority of Grades 3 pupils, in both urban and rural schools, had difficulties with all the exercises. The biggest challenge was encountered in writing spelling where many of them could not manage to write any item correctly.

The study concluded that grade 3 pupils in the selected schools had challenges in letter identification, letter-sound association, phonological awareness, reading and writing spellings, and comprehending simple texts. In terms of preference on reading materials, results showed that grade 3 pupils read more English books than Chitonga ones. The reading habits indicated that they read more at school than any other place.

Based on these findings a number of recommendations were made to different levels of stakeholders so as to address the challenges raised from the findings.

Some of the recommendations made were to the Ministry of Education to enhance the implementation of Language Policy in institutions of Learning and to regularly provide the Primary Reading Programme Kits to Basic Schools to ensure continuity in teaching reading skills to pupils. The recommendation to the District Education Office is to intensify teacher monitoring and pupils’ reading performance as often as possible. For Headteachers was to give priority to pupils’ reading materials as they procure books for the school.
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