ABSTRACT

Although the Zambian government has put in place the New Breakthrough to Literacy to help grade one pupils read local languages, studies show that some children who have gone through NBTL fail to break through to literacy. The questions on the mind of parents and scholars in Zambia is why is the situation like this, especially that NBTL was heralded as a success during the evaluation of the pilot stage in Northern Province. This study was conducted to establish the NBTL methods which were applied by grade one teachers in literacy classes in two schools in Lusaka. The study identified other general methods that grade one teachers used, besides NBTL methods, the challenges they faced when teaching initial literacy and the teaching aids that teachers used as they taught.

The study employed theoretical framework drawn from social constructivism, which assumes that meaning making and knowledge are socially constructed by learners as they socially interact. The research design was an interpretative case study and it was conducted in Lusaka District. The selection of two schools was guided by the principles of purposive sampling. Having randomly selected twenty schools from initial screening, two schools were purposively picked from the sample. One school was located in a high density area while the other was in a low density area.

Data was collected using observation (by means of observation schedule), interviews and document analysis. Data analysis was by means of inductive processes. The researcher drew patterns and themes, categories and sub categories from observation notes, interview scripts and document review.

The findings of this study revealed the following: some teachers preferred using traditional literacy teaching methods as opposed to the recommended NBTL methods; teaching and learning material were not enough in schools; large number of classes made the application of NBTL methods difficult; little time was allocated to teaching of literacy; poor class management and teachers lacked skills in NBTL methods.

Based on the findings, the study made recommendations for policy consideration and for further studies. At policy level the study recommends that schools should invest in the production of NBTL teaching materials using school grants, all grade one teachers need to be trained in NBTL in college or through school based CPD in order to effectively teach literacy. Four topics were identified for further studies.
DEDICATION

This Thesis is dedicated to

My husband Justin and children; Chisala, Bwite and Lumbanya, who endured my absence when I was busy working on this study. Through their support and encouragement, this work was made possible.

And

My Mum and Dad who are God’s greatest gift to me
ACKNOWLEDGEMENT

The study would not have been a success without the support of many individuals and institutions whose contributions inspired me. To begin with, I thank the teachers and administrators from the two schools, who spared their valuable time sharing their rich knowledge and experiences with me.

My sincere thanks go to the Norway Masters (NOMA) for awarding me a scholarship, through the University of Zambia. This enabled me carry out this M.Ed in literacy and Learning research. Further, I wish to thank the coordinator Dr J.R. Luangala.

I wish to pay special tribute to my supervisor, Dr John Simwina for his faith in me. Through his critical eye and guidance, I was able to come up with this study. I also wish to recognize the valuable guidance of my Lecturers under NOMA programme.

My gratitude goes to all my classmates- the NOMA students in my cohort of 2012 for their team spirit and the 2011 cohort for their assistance when I needed it.

I am indebted to Bridget Kagele, Chimbwe Ziba, Betty Musenge, Julia Chifulo, Exioda, Brian Mumba, Kalobwe, Restina Lupele, Connie, Evans Chisamba and many friends with whom I shared insights into professional growth through hard work and further studies. My special thanks goes to Sarah Lupele who took over my place in the kitchen when I came late from generating data, My Mum and Dad for their support and prayers, my friends at Church for their support when I became weary, My Pastor and his wife for their encouragement and prayers and My husband for his patience, love and for being my critical reader of this work.

Finally, I wish to acknowledge and glorify my God who made it possible for this work to be successful.
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CHAPTER ONE
INTRODUCTION

1.0 OVERVIEW
This chapter introduces the study on the application of NBTL methods by Grade one teachers when teaching initial literacy. The chapter begins with the contextual background to the teaching of literacy in Zambia. The background illuminates the historical trends and policies that led to the introduction of the New Breakthrough to Literacy (NBTL) programme. It further looks at the introduction of NBTL and the methods that are applied in a classroom situation by the teachers of Grade one. Thereafter, the chapter presents the problem under investigation, the purpose and objectives of the study as well as the specific questions through which the objectives are addressed. The chapter states the significance of the study and has defined some operational terms used in the study. It further discusses the theoretical framework for the study by exemplifying some theories that were drawn on and showing their significance to the study. The chapter also outlines some limitations and delimitation of the study. It ends by providing the structure of the thesis and the conclusion.

1.1 BACKGROUND

1.1.1 Contextual Background of the Study
Zambia has had a policy of using English in teaching literacy since the Education Act of 1966 was implemented. English was seen as a neutral language for education in a situation where there were a lot of vernacular languages (Simwinga, 2006). Studies on reading levels of pupils conducted in Zambia show that the reading proficiency is still low. Williams (1993) conducted a study and compared the reading levels in a sample of Zambian and Malawian school children in both English and selected local languages, Cinyanja in the case of Zambia and Chichewa in Malawi at Grade 3, 4 and 6. It was established that in Zambia, pupils on average could not read texts below their own grade level. However, in Malawi where the medium of instruction was Chichewa from Grade 1 to 4, reading was progressing at acceptable levels. In 1995, the Southern African Consortium for Monitoring Educational Quality (SACMEQ) showed that only 25% of
grade 6 pupils in Zambia could read at defined levels and only 3% could read at desirable levels (Nkamba & Kanyika, 1998).

In 1995, the Ministry of Education formed the National Reading Committee (NRC) with the mandate to improve reading levels of primary school going children. The task of the NRC was to raise awareness of the reading problem; seek solutions as a matter of urgency and to identify partners who would assist in implementing these solutions. The NRC resulted in the Primary Reading Program (PRP). The PRP put in place three courses that supported literacy. These were: *The Zambia New Breakthrough to literacy* (ZNBTL) for Grade one, the *Step In To English* literacy course for Grade two and the *Read On* literacy course for Grade three to seven. The PRP was to ensure that all primary schools applied new and more effective methods to reading throughout the seven years of primary education. Under PRP all pupils were taught initial reading skills in a familiar Zambian language in their first year of primary education. Pupils were then introduced to reading skills in English in their second year of primary school. This is where much of the work that was covered in Breakthrough to Literacy at Grade one was used except it was done in English (Kotze & Higgins, 1999).

The findings and general concern about low reading levels in the country presented above led the Government of Zambia to introduce a local language and literacy course known as New Breakthrough to Literacy (NBTL) in 2003 to improve literacy skills among the learners. The NBTL was first piloted in two districts of Kasama and Mungwi in 1998 in the Northern Province of Zambia before it was rolled out to all the basic government schools in Zambia. The NBTL course explores the learners’ language experiences as a basis for teaching them how to read and write (MOE, 2001). The assumption is that when learners are taught in the language that is familiar to them they learn better.

The course was heralded as a ‘great success’ in 1999, following its evaluation. One of the key findings was that children in Breakthrough to Literacy (BTL) classes were reading and writing at a level equivalent to grade four or higher in non-BTL classes (Kotze & Higgins, 1999). In 2000 the BTL (South African version) was revised and adapted to the Zambian Education system. The resultant course was dubbed the Zambian New Breakthrough to Literacy (Higgins, 2000).
Senior standards officers, headteachers, practicing teachers, curriculum specialists, lecturers and MOE officials were trained in the NBTL course by the team of Molteno Project staff from South Africa before the course was implemented.

However, studies that followed after the NBTL was implemented show that the low reading levels among learners have improved (Sampa, 2003). But Matafwali (2005, 2010), Kalindi (2006), Kelly (2000) and Luangala (2011) observe that children cannot read to the expected level at the lower and upper primary respectively. The assumption of this study is that teachers are not effective in the teaching of literacy, leading to low literacy achievements portrayed by learners at the lower primary school level. Teachers might be the ones not applying the recommended NBTL methods with reference to the National Reading Panel components of reading when teaching literacy to the Grade ones. This is what this study intends to find out.

### 1.1.2 Overview of NBTL Course

Breakthrough to Literacy (BTL) is a course which was designed in America in the early 1960s and became in use in the 1970s to support learners acquire early reading and writing skills (Horner, 1972). The BTL was designed to prepare teachers develop knowledge and skills in initial literacy teaching and learner centered class management both of which are applicable and transferable to other areas in the curriculum. It should be understood that unless learners gain competence, they are unable to access and understand any other subjects such as mathematics, science and technology.

In Africa, BTL was first developed by a South African non-governmental organization called Molteno Project in 1998. It versioned into fifty-one African languages and introduced in nine sub Saharan African countries such as South Africa, Angola, Ghana, Lesotho, Namibia, Malawi, Botswana, Uganda and Zambia. In all these countries, a local language is used to teach initial literacy to learners when they enter formal education. The BTL contends that learners be taught how to read and write in their familiar language.

In Zambia, the Molteno Project worked with a Zambian team of educators and curriculum developers on modifications after one year piloting in Northern Province. The results of the pilot were that some learners in grade 2 could read and write at a level equivalent to grade 4 or above.
The course was re-named Zambian New Breakthrough to Literacy (NBTL). The Ministry of Education believed this course would revolutionize reading standards among grade one learners in primary schools (MOE, 2001). It is a unique mother tongue literacy course for first year pupils in primary schools and it is based on a learner centered and language experience method. The language experience method starts from what the learners already know (their spoken language) to what they do not know (reading and writing). The oral-aural skills the child brings from home to school are a basis for learning to read and write. These skills are cardinal to a learner and they constitute a starting point in teaching of literacy through the methods for Breakthrough to Literacy (MOE, 2001).

A one hour period is set aside each day for a teacher to teach literacy to Grade one learners. The learners are taught how to read and write easily and accurately in their familiar language. In parts of Lusaka Urban, the most familiar language used by teachers to teach initial literacy skills to a Grade one learner is Chinyanja. This language helps learners to see in printed form, words which they use every day when they are conversing with their parents at home or their friends at play. The teacher has a task to assist the learners understand with less difficult so that what they read can be represented in print. This makes NBTL course, a language experience method to the teaching of initial literacy. Learners are taught from the known to the unknown or simple to complex concepts (MOE, 2001). The first term of school work focuses on introducing learners to school life and learning.

In a NBTL class, learners are divided into four pace groups. The teacher attends to and teaches one group at a time for about 10-20 minutes only. When the teacher is attending to one group the other three groups are given activities at their level of performance from the activity book. The lesson routine is such that there is time to start, teach and share. The teacher starts in the teaching corner where activities are given to learners being attended to by the teacher and ends with sharing of what learners have learnt on the particular day. The teaching corner is situated close to the chalk board at the front of the class. Learners sit on a mat or carpet while the teacher sits on a chair. Each group has a leader whose responsibility is to give out exercise books, pencils and assist where necessary.
A reading corner where story books are displayed is established. Texts in local language add to the library and when learners are able to write stories, these stories are supposed to add up to the text in the library or displayed on the wall of the classroom to create an educative and interactive situation. The work of the teacher is to display core vocabulary and sentences that have already been introduced. Learners’ work is supposed to be displayed on the walls according to subject areas. These displays are changed regularly and are not displayed at a height where learners in the class could not see.

The course material include; a syllabus, guide, phonic flip chart, conversational poster, story books, learners’ activity books, the sentence maker, teachers’ and learners’ sentence holder plus word cards. The teachers’ guide contains the methodology of the course and it guides the teacher on how to teach each lesson in the teaching corner. The sentence maker holds all the word cards the teachers needs. The teacher and learner use this in the teaching corner. The sentence holder is two sets, one for the teacher and the other for the learners. It acts as a word stand because it holds word cards for both the teacher and the learners. Word cards are in two sizes, the teachers’ word cards look larger while the learners’ look smaller. A flip chart is used in the pre-reading activities. The conversation poster facilitates conversation on familiar themes such as school, home, farm and the town. The learners’ activity book contains graded learning activities. Learners use this when they are working independently, in pairs or in a group. When learners are working in pairs, group or independently, they do not write in these activity books but use their exercise books.

NBTL is organized around three levels which are, pre-reading, developmental and consolidation stages. Learners are drilled in the look and say (teaching learners to recognize words by use of flash cards), language experience (starting from what learners know to what they do not know), phonic (teaching learners letter sounds from which they can sound out the words all the new words they need), syllabic (teaching learners syllables from which they can build up and recognize new words) and use of real books methods (teaching learners about reading by letting them read books alone and with other readers such as teachers, parents and older learners). Learners have to learn to construct a link between sounds of speech and letters of print and they
must realize that speech can be segmented and blended into phonemic units and represent words in print (Horner, 1972).

This study has included the five areas of reading as recommended by the National reading Panel (2000) and these are; Phonemic awareness, fluency, phonics, comprehension and vocabulary. The Literacy Support Programme (LSP) designed by Room to Read a non-governmental organization (NGO) places its emphasis on these five NRP components coupled with oral language. To equip the learners in oral language skills, LSP has come up with activities focusing mainly on role play, mini drama and a lot of discussions. The LSP has been designed in a way that it does not replace NBTL methods but it is an intervention to the teaching methods in literacy (Jere, Mkangaza, Musuku, Muyebba, Mwansa, and Tembo, 2010).

For learners to benefit from phonics instruction they need phonemic awareness because they would recognize words which begin with the same sound, they could isolate and say the first or last sound in a word and they could break and segment a word into separate sounds. Fluency has been co-opted in because in NBTL course, the teacher in the teaching corner teaches core vocabulary words and when these words are re-taught, learners are able to read texts on their own and as a result develop the skill of being fluent readers. Comprehension develops learners when they are being taught vocabulary. Vocabulary in the NBTL course is taught orally and aurally when the teaching of reading and re-reading a story to the learners is in session. Learners use the words they have heard at home to make sense of the words they see in print. Learners develop word knowledge at deep and more complex levels as they are discussing pictures from the conversation poster. According to the NRP (2000) the strategies that support comprehension include using prior knowledge and this is seen when teachers in NBTL course have to use the language experience method. Reading aloud provides an opportunity for learners to hear a story and respond to its content, the characters, their feelings and motivations and setting relate to their own experiences. The NRP findings show that literature helps a learner build a sense of story and they develop vocabulary and comprehension. Discussions based on literature allow for more interesting and relevant discussions and deepen the learners’ comprehension.

When learners are taught how to read words using the two authorities of reading; the NBTL and the NRP, the ability to recognize words and master printed items would not be crucial for them.
Many poor readers have difficulties in reading because they do not possess much of vocabulary learnt and they labour to read many of the words in the story books. However teachers should apply all the NBTL methods as recommended by the MOE to make sure learners tackle words taught with less difficult when reading.

The assumption is that NBTL methods are taught to student teachers in colleges of education. Thus by the end of the training period, new teachers are expected to have acquired skills and knowledge to apply the five teaching methods and the five reading components of the National Reading Panel (2000) in their work. However, the reality is that very little if any, NBTL methods are taught in some colleges of education (Kamangala 2009). The fact that trainee teachers who are expected to teach literacy using NBTL methods could confirm. Therefore this study attempts to establish whether or not Grade one teachers were applying the appropriate teaching NBTL methods correctly in their classrooms.

1.2 STATEMENT OF THE PROBLEM

Although the Zambian government has put in place the New Breakthrough to Literacy Course to ensure that learners at the end of the programme would be able to read simple texts fluently and effectively, write their own stories legibly, neatly and in straight line and develop collaborative and independent learning skills, this intention has not been achieved as some of the learners are failing to breakthrough. Studies by Luangala and Mulenga (2010), Matafwali (2010) suspect that the low reading levels by learners could be lack of competence by teachers. Stated as a question, the problem investigated in this study was: are teachers applying the NBTL teaching methods when teaching initial literacy to Grade Ones classes?

1.3 PURPOSE OF THE STUDY

The purpose of this study was to establish whether or not Grade one teachers were adhering to the recommended NBTL teaching strategies.

1.4 RESEARCH OBJECTIVES

The study sought to:

1. identify the general teaching methods employed by teachers in literacy classes;
2. identify the recommended NBTL methods employed by teachers in literacy classes;

3. establish the recommended NBTL methods not employed by teachers in literacy classes

4. establish the teaching aids used to support NBTL teaching methods; and

5. identify challenges faced by teachers in teaching literacy using the NBTL methods.

1.5 **MAIN RESEARCH QUESTION**

To what extent do Grade one teachers apply the NBTL teaching methods in their literacy classes?

1.6 **SPECIFIC RESEARCH QUESTIONS**

1. What general teaching methods do teachers employ in literacy classes?

2. Which recommended NBTL methods do teachers employ in literacy classes?

3. What recommended NBTL methods do teachers fail to employ in literacy classes?

4. What teaching aids do teachers use to support NBTL teaching methods; and

5. What challenges do teachers face in teaching initial literacy using the NBTL methods?

1.7 **SIGNIFICANCE OF THE STUDY**

While a lot of research has been done on NBTL, to the researcher’s knowledge and literature search, adequate attention has not been paid to how NBTL teaching methods are applied by teachers in Grade one classes. This study focuses on the teacher and teaching methods and not the learner as is common in many studies on literacy, having been motivated by the established fact that children’s success in school is mostly determined by their literacy achievement (Adams, 1990). The significance of this study is that, it may provide evidence on the extent to which teachers apply or do not apply the recommended NBTL teaching methods. These findings might be used by initial literacy curriculum specialists and materials writers to either re-enforce or incorporate the recommended NBTL methods in the teachers’ guide to ensure that teachers apply these teaching methods. The findings will also enhance awareness by relevant officials of the
challenges faced by teachers in their attempt to apply the recommended NBTL methods thereby prompting them to develop appropriate strategies to mitigate the challenges. It is the case, therefore, that the findings of this study may be useful for transforming and revitalizing the teaching of literacy in schools and teacher training colleges as well as teacher professional development in the teaching of literacy.

1.8 DEFINITION OF OPERATIONAL TERMS

The following are the operational terms as used in this study:

**Method**
Is a general or specific way in which an activity is conducted

**New Breakthrough to Literacy**
Is a method and course that support children learn to read fluently and write easily as well as accurately in their local language.

**Mother tongue**
is the first language which a child learns to speak at home with proficiency- could mean indigenous or native language.

**Familiar language**
The language of play in the child’s surroundings

**Local language**
Is a language which is officially accepted as a language of instruction in initial literacy teaching.

**Literacy**
Is a minimum skill required by an individual in order to read fluently and write legibly for mutual communication to take place between two or more people.

**Initial literacy**
This is the first basic reading as well as writing skills which a child learns in Grade one.

**Whole word Method**
Is teaching children to recognize words in isolation from stories.
Whole Language Method  Is a method of teaching children to read by recognizing words as whole pieces of language.

Phonemic awareness  Is identifying and manipulating individual sounds in words

Phonics  Is a relationship between the letters of written language and the individual sounds of spoken language.

Fluency  Is the ability to read a text accurately and quickly.

Vocabulary  Refers to words which are known for communication purposes.

1.10  DELIMITATION
This study was conducted in Lusaka Province and specifically in Lusaka City. Two schools were involved in the study.

1.11  LIMITATIONS OF THE STUDY
The study was conducted in two schools with Grade one teachers. Thus results and conclusions of the study, like any other case study, may not be generalized to all Grade one teachers in other schools but are only limited to Grade One teachers in the two schools.

1.12  STRUCTURE OF THE THESIS
This thesis consists of six chapters. The first chapter introduces the study by providing background information to the study and stating the specific problem under investigation. The chapter also discusses the purpose and objectives of the study and the specific questions within which the study was undertaken by defining the concepts and context relating to the study.

The second chapter reviews some available literature that was considered to be of direct relevance to the present study in order to place the investigation within the context of similar studies and providing justification for it.

The third chapter describes the methodology used to collect data in order to provide answers to research questions. The chapter shows how research design was employed in the study, the study
area and sample size, the data collection procedures and instruments as well as the way data was analyzed.

The fourth chapter presents the findings of the study as elicited and analyzed from data collected. The findings are presented as themes and sub-themes of the research questions as set in chapter one of this study.

The fifth chapter discusses the findings of how NBTL methods are applied by teachers who teach literacy to the Grade ones. The discussion is informed by the research objectives of the study. Thus the research objectives provide the framework for discussing the findings of the study.

The sixth chapter presents the summary of the findings of whether or not teachers apply the NBTL methods when teaching literacy to the Grade one pupils. Based on the findings, the chapter has drawn recommendations and further research for the future.

1.13 SUMMARY

This chapter has introduced the application of NBTL methods by Grade one teachers to teaching literacy. The presentation began with the introduction, followed by the background of the study. This is where the historical background of literacy teaching was discussed. Thereafter the chapter presented the problem under investigation, the objectives and the specific research questions through which objectives were addressed. The chapter concluded with the outline of the structure of the thesis. The next chapter reviews the available literature that is considered to be of direct relevance to the study in order to place the investigation within the context of similar studies.
CHAPTER TWO

LITERATURE REVIEW

2.0 OVERVIEW

This chapter presents the theoretical framework of the study and reviews literature related to the teaching of literacy that focuses on methods and strategies used in the teaching of literacy to early graders in schools. The literature review focuses on methods and strategies that have been used to interpret particular literacy policies and programmes, and how these have evolved over time. At international level, examples are drawn from Scottish, English, Chinese, Japanese, Russian, Ireland, United States of America and Nigerian experiences in the teaching of literacy to early graders. The chapter also reviews the discussions and findings of the National Reading Panel. At the local level, the study reviews literature on the National Education Policy, Educating Our Future (1996); Primary Reading Programme (PRP), New Break Through to Literacy (NBTL) and other local scholarly work. This chapter subsequently highlights some of the gaps (in the light of this study) in the existing literature.

2.1 THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

The theoretical framework of this study was based on the concept of social constructivism (Bruner 1990; Vygotsky 1978; Piaget 1977; Lave and Wenger 1991) which assumes that meaning making and knowledge are socially constructed by human beings when interacting with one another. Social constructivism emphasizes the role played by culture, context and language in shaping the way in which pupils learn. The learning process of the learners in their social milieu is scaffolded by the teachers or elderly people. Bruner (1986) refers to scaffolding as the process by which the teacher initially gives support to the learners in the learning process before they master the content and take responsibility.

Slavin (1994) views scaffolding as support for learning revealed through clues, reminders, encouragement, breaking the problem down into steps, providing anything else that allows a pupil to grow and become independent as a learner. Teachers are expected to devise pace groups for children to learn and continue encouraging reading and writing by showing the book of the
best writer to his/her friends. In this study, scaffolding provided the basis upon which the teachers supported pupils to learn.

2.2 GENERAL METHODS USED IN READING

Reading experts (Irwin, 1967; Goodman, 1965; and Doman, 1989) advocated various methods over the years that were believed to be the best methods for teaching children to learn to read. During 1930s and 1940s, emphasis was placed on reading to gain meaning using the look and say method. In the 1960s and 1970s, the emphasis changed to skill development, which meant using tools, such as phonics and other word decoding skills. The 1980s introduced the whole language method, which focused on reading for meaning (ibid). This method expanded on the whole word method by integrating the four components of language with literature, reading, and writing, listening and speaking. The basic belief of using this method was that children could learn to speak, read from exposure to reading skills using literature without direct instruction in specific isolated reading skills. The whole language method instead advocated the use of indirect instruction where phonics and sight vocabulary are taught through literature. Unlike the whole language method, the whole word recognized words in isolation from stories. Children were taught to read words as a whole rather than as a part (Doman, 1989). The whole word method was founded upon the conviction that learning is a natural instinctive urge in young children that is curbed either by neglect and lack of exposure to compulsory teaching. Irwin (1967) writes that today, teaching reading incorporates the integration of the four components of language which are; reading, writing, speaking and listening in other subjects of the curriculum. This study relates to the four components of reading by Irwin which are; reading, writing, speaking and listening. There is evidence that the 1940s and 1930s methods of teaching referred above are still used in the schools in Zambia today. These have been promoted by the training programmes such as the Zambia Primary Course (ZPC) for teachers.

In recent teaching methodologies, there has been a shift towards the use of phonics. Phonics has been used as a general term in the literacy debate to describe a reading method in which learners developed an understanding of the relationship between sounds and symbols in language (Ehri, 1979). Incorporated into a phonic method were aspects such as the development of phonemic awareness (understanding the sound structure of words), linguistic awareness (awareness of the
structure of language) and graphophonic awareness (understanding the patterns of language and the sounds they represent) (Hill, 2006; Winch; Ross, March & Holliday, 2005). The *Look and Say method* was introduced in the 1930s (Austey & Bull, 2004; Marsh, 1994). It was believed that learners learnt to read through exposure to words rather than the parts of the word (Beck & Juel, 1994).

During this study, the researcher was mindful of the fact that there are many impediments to reading. Snow, Burns and Griffens (1998) identified three stumbling blocks in reading. These are;

- difficulty in understanding and using the alphabetic principle,
- failure to transfer the comprehension skills of spoken language to reading and
- Lack of motivation and appreciation for reading.

They further added that children who face early reading problems, lack prior knowledge and relevant skills such as the ability to produce words, to distinguish sounds and master the mechanics of reading and the ability to identify letters (Snow *et al.*, 1998). With the forgoing in mind, this chapter reviews studies and literature that discuss methods that can be used by Grade one teachers to make the pupils read. The study highlights some important landmarks that came out of the National Reading Panel. It then draws on examples of international level (studies done outside Zambia) and local (studies and programmes done within Zambia).

### 2.3 NATIONAL READING PANEL

The National Reading Panel (NRP) began in 1997, when the United States of America congress asked the National Institute of Child Health and Human Development (NICHD) along with the United States Department of Education to review research done on how children learn to read and determine which methods of teaching reading are most effective based on the research evidence. The focus on the application of methods of teaching reading resonates with the overall objective of this study. The Federal Government brought up this because they became concerned with the problems children had in learning to read.
The National Reading Panel (NRP, 2000) identified studies published in the 1970s that compared some teaching methods to others for their impact on reading ability. It was noted that systematic phonics instruction produces significant benefits for pupils in pre-school through to the sixth grade and for children having difficult to read. Many studies conducted to find out if the synthetic instruction has a positive effect showed that many classes that had teachers from different backgrounds that used this method had many of their pupils gaining reading fluently.

The NRP further states that for teaching to be effective, a teacher has to be provided with appropriate and intensive training to ensure that they know when and how to teach using specific methods (NRP, 2000). Morrow (2005) commends that teachers should incorporate visual, auditory, olfactory and tactile experiences - these are experiences that include seeing, hearing, smelling and touching when teaching reading to early primary grades. This of course includes the Grade ones.

Oxford (1990) emphasizes the need for teachers to help pupils to view reading as a problem solving task that necessitates use of thinking. Justice and Pencer (2005) suggest that a learner should be explained to, in reading by the teacher who intentionally encourages and supports them in the engagement and participation as they expand ideas and gather meaning and constructs knowledge.

Evidence submitted to the NRP by supporters of phonics as a teaching method demonstrates that the school that used this type of method achieved significant improvement in performance in west England. Llyod cited in NRP (2005) showed that the school achieved 6% reaching only level three or below, compared to 15% nationally and 0% reaching level two or below, compared to 7% nationally. In cases where phonics was used almost 100% of pupils achieved key stage test results of the level expected of their age or better and some schools showed reduction in percentage of children identified as having special educational needs. Morrow (2005), notes that learners who are exposed to new material by use of visual clues for example learn well when it is repeated and practiced.
The NRP (2005) findings showed that the learners’ first language and level of first language literacy have a role to play in relation to learners’ phonemic awareness. The following are the main highlights of the findings of the NRP (2000:p5-30):

- during the Kindergarten and first year, Phonemic awareness is acquired naturally through exposure to print. Strategies that support comprehension include using prior knowledge of learners; literature helps children build a sense of story and they develop vocabulary and comprehension;

- discussions based on literature allow for more interesting and relevant discussion and deepen a child’s basic comprehension;

- by engaging in a discussion around the text, the reader is exposed to multiple views of interpretation and is forced to create a deeper personal connection with the text;

- effective reading interventions for monolingual struggling readers should be systematic, explicit, and intense and they should focus on phonemic awareness, phonic skills, fluency, vocabulary and comprehension;

- All the five components (Phonics, Phonemic awareness, comprehension, fluency and vocabulary) of reading are important and dependent on one another.

The results of the NRP form the premise upon which the NBTL was developed, and subsequently this study.

2.4 STUDIES OUTSIDE AFRICA

Johnson and Watson (2005) studied 300 children in the first year of Scottish Primary School system and compared the effectiveness of different teaching methods. These were synthetic phonics, analytic phonics and an analytic phonics that included systematic phonemic awareness teaching. At the end of the programme, their findings were that, pupils who were taught using the synthetic phonics were found to be seven (7) months ahead of the other two (2) groups that were not taught using this method. When this method was used on the other groups, children achieved significantly higher levels in word reading and spelling. The other two (2) groups that
did not do well were given the synthetic phonic programme as well and the progress of all the children was followed for seven (7) years. At the end of this period all the children were tested and found to be achieving higher levels in word reading and spelling that would be expected at their age. It is important to note that among the many methods used, synthetic phonics is seen to have captured the minds of the children as their teachers used it well. While this study compared the effectiveness of different methods, it did not discuss the application of NBTL teaching methods by Grade one teachers. This study endeavors to establish the application of NBTL methods by Grade one teachers.

Ashmore, Farrier, Paulson and Chu (2003) studied and tested the effectiveness of phonemic awareness drills on phonological awareness and word reading on the Chinese students in Primary Schools of English learning and their analysis was that explicit instruction in phonemic awareness worked well on the Chinese pupils. They were able to analyze spoken language into its component sounds (phonemes) and perform mental operations on these smaller linguistic units. Children who are taught phonemic awareness and have it all the time are able to understand that sounds in words can be moved, removed or replaced to make new words, sounds in words can be counted, represented with many different letters and that words have small sounds that can be pulled apart and put back together (Heilman, 2002). From this example, one would be able to see that children who are taught using phonemic awareness (Which is also encouraged in NBTL) perform better in their reading progress. Ehri (1998) suggests that when learners appreciate how the alphabet is designed to represent speech, which is when most phonemic awareness development occurs. While the above study tested the effectiveness of phonemic awareness drill on Chinese students in primary schools of English learning, NBTL has more methods to the teaching of literacy. Therefore this study explores other literacy teaching methods applied by Grade one teachers in two Zambian schools, within the framework of NBTL.

In Australia, a longitudinal study on mapping the literacy progress of one hundred students began in 1996 (Hill, Comber, Louden, Rivalland and Reid, 1998). The study tracked student progress from beginning school to the age ten, It identified some features that were important considerations for the developing literacy programs and the monitoring student progress and informed the national plan for literacy (Hill et al, 1998). The findings of the study were that,
there was a wide difference between student’s ranges of achievement in the first year of schooling - though a slight difference in literacy levels before starting school was noticed. Another finding of this study was that students require different literacy strategies at different stages of schooling. NBTL responds to this observation as it provides a basket of methods that a teacher can choose from. The study identified that literacy methods which included data-driven teaching strategies and built upon students’ home experience were effective.

In the 1996 survey (Hill et al, 1998), found that thirty percent of Australian primary students failed to reach the standard in reading and writing. It was observed that there was a difference of five levels between the top percent and the bottom ten percent of literacy achievement in students studied (Masters and Forster, 1997). The modified programme of “success for all” (SFA) which began in America and Australia, tried in schools in Baltimore (Slavin & Madden, 2000) showed effectiveness in assisting students who struggled to read (Hurley, Chamberlain, Slavin & Madden, 2001). Holm and Dodd (1996) conducted a study on University students from China, Hong Kong, Vietnam and Australia. They compared a series of tasks that assessed phonological awareness, reading and spelling in English. The results indicated that Hong Kong students (with non alphabetic first language literacy) had limited phonological awareness compared to students with alphabetic first language literacy. The students from Hong Kong were said to have performed badly because they had difficulty processing words due to poor phonological awareness. While these studies looked at effectiveness in assisting students who struggled to read in English, teachers did not apply the NBTL teaching methods when teaching initial literacy.

An enquiry into methods of teaching children to read was done by the National Literacy Strategy (NLS) in London and it was rolled out in all Schools of England in 1998. The aim of the study was to raise standards of literacy throughout Primary School age range. The findings of the study were that through the use of correct methods when teaching in 1997, 67% of the 11 year olds achieved the expected level for their age in reading and 63% in English in the National Curriculum tests. This study did not address the appropriate teaching methods when teaching initial literacy instead it looked at use of correct teaching methods and it was established that the expected level of reading was achieved. In the case of this study, to find ‘correct methods’
maybe problematic as the term ‘correct’ is relative and it is context and culture specific. Thus the focus of this study has been to examine the application of NBTL methods as teachers deem them appropriate in given situations.

In the United Kingdom, Rose (2006) emphasized that students in early years of schooling, were best supported through systematic teaching of phonics. She further stated that the acquisition of skills in phonics was essential for decoding, comprehension and spelling. Snyder (2008) argued that a balanced method had a wider school and community support than a single method to literacy such as *phonics*. This argument resonates with the NBTL methods (and with the aim of this study) where apart from teaching *phonics* other methods are also employed.

In another study done in the five states of America, Pressley, Rankin, and Yokoi (1996) surveyed primary level teachers who had been nominated as outstanding in promoting literacy achievement by their language art supervisors. In general, these teachers reported balancing many literacy instructional practices. They demonstrated effective primary-level literacy instruction as involving the creation of literate classroom practices modeling and teaching both lower- order (decoding) and higher order (comprehension) processes, extensive and diverse types of reading such as guided, shared and independent reading. Wray, Medwell, Fox and Poulson (2000) support modeling and demonstration when teaching. In their study, they compared teaching practices of teachers who had been identified as effective teachers of literacy against the teachers who had been identified as non effective. They found that effective teachers had salient characteristics of the teaching practices that were not present in the instruction styles of other literacy teachers in general. The authors found that teaching a range of literacy skills and knowledge at the word, sentence and text levels within the context of work of shared texts was one of the most salient of practices of effective teachers. Wray *et al* (2000) study resonates with the aims and objectives of this study whose focus is on the teacher, and how well the teachers teach literacy. Pressley, Rankin and Yokoi (1996) surveyed teachers who balanced literacy instructions when teaching. From the study it is not clear if the literacy instructions they used were similar to those in NBTL.

Juel (1988) conducted a longitudinal study in United States of America that tracked learners reading levels from first grade to fourth grade. The results of the study showed that learners who
had poor decoding skills by second grade did not achieve the average levels of decoding expected in the fourth grade. It demonstrated that underachieving learners often developed a dislike for reading and a sense of failure within the first four years of schooling (Beck & Juel, 1994). Jackson and Coltheart (2001) and Saxby (1993) found out that an important factor in developing literacy was learners having appropriate access to literature. Jackson and Coltheart (2001) argued that learners needed exposure to literature in order to develop oral vocabulary and verbal knowledge. Classrooms that provide a variety and a lot of materials for learners, support engagement with reading and the classroom that is rich with reading materials such as story books, is a motivation to learners and learning is very high (Allington & McGill-Franzen, 1993; Gambrell, 1993, Morrow 1992, Neuman & Celiano, 2001). In support of this, Brown (1998) and Hiebert (1998) noted that learners needed a high frequency words and prediction. Learners at bottom levels of literacy rarely read other materials than what was given to them and thus their literacy process slows due to lack of motivation to read (Johnston, 1997). This was supported by Brophy (2004) who said that, when learners experience difficult in learning to read, their perceived success in learning to read plummets. Gambrell’s (1996) observation show that children who select their own books to read from their classroom library become more interested and motivated in reading than those who do not choose books for themselves. The above are examples of studies that focus on the learner, without looking at the teacher’s application of appropriate literacy teaching methods as this study was set to do.

Wharton-McDonald, Pressley and Hampton (1998) analyzed the teaching of first graders by nine teachers who varied in their effectiveness in promoting literacy. The best teachers in their sample had classrooms that engaged mostly in reading and writing much of the time. By the end of the year, most of the pupils in these classes were reading books that were at or above end-first-grade reading level. Wharton-McDonald et al (1998) observe that classrooms with learners, who are highly motivated to read, do it well. They further note that teachers who manage their classroom well have few discipline encounters because learners were so much engaged with in class work. While this study analyzed the teaching of first graders by teachers who varied in their effectiveness in promoting literacy, it did not look at the application of literacy teaching methods as those embedded in NBTL.
Wade-Wolley (1999) studied a group of Japanese English as second language (ESL) learners at a Canadian University and a group of Russian ESL learners at an Israeli University. The students were given a number of word level reading and decoding tests to complete. The two groups were similar in respect of ages, gender, distribution, reading ability in their first language (were both successful readers in either Russian or Japanese) and exposure to English. The main difference between the two groups was the first language. Both languages are different from English and each uses a different writing system. “… Russian uses a phonologically based alphabet and Japanese use syllable (Kana) and a logographic system (kanji) …” (Wade-Wolley, 1999, p.1). The study showed that the Japanese group was faster and more accurate on tasks involving orthographic patterns while the Russian group was faster and more accurate in deleting phonemes from words. This suggests that different learners would make use of different strategies when reading words that are most important in their first languages. In the light of the above observation, the question is which of the NBTL teaching methods will be appropriate in the two schools? This is one of the answers that this study attempts to provide.

Hall, Bowmen and Myers (2000) conducted a study with sixty, nine year olds in Ireland to examine Metacognition and reading. Metacognition is defined as the consciousness of one’s cognitive process, in other words an awareness of what’s going on in ones’ mind while one is doing something (Fisher, 2002). During this study students were asked to describe themselves as readers. The students who gave more detailed responses about their ability were marked as better readers and when asked what strategies they used when encountering difficult texts, the better readers were able to explain the strategies there teachers employed, where as the weaker readers could only list the strategies. The interviews with students helped give a detailed description of how classroom instruction had led to the development of these strategies. From this study, Hall, et al (2000) concludes that learners ought to be helped when reading and not just to learn to read, but to become aware of how they learn to read. The above study ignored the power of social interactions, as demonstrated in NBTL methodologies, in teaching reading and writing. It instead concentrated on learning that results from individual cognitive processes.
2.5 STUDIES WITHIN AFRICA

A study done in Nigeria in one school where researchers wanted to find out the relative effect of Jolly Phonics as a fast track strategy in enhancing pupil’s reading skills showed that pupils can achieve high reading rate if they are properly taught (Omojuwa, 2005). Tinuoye (1991) and Omojuwa (2005) indicate that most children in Nigerian schools fail to read their languages because of poor teaching methods utilized. Most teachers fail to supplement or adapt teaching materials to suit learners’ reading needs. This could be true in the case of Zambia where teachers fail to apply appropriate NBTL methods. Omojuwa (2005) observes that some teachers worsen children’s lack of reading because of their incompetence in helping their learners master the reading skills. The two groups that were studied upon showed that those who were in the control group could not read any simple word after studying for one year in school. But those who were in the treatment group had gained. The learners who were in the control group were exposed to traditional classroom situation and methods while those in the treatment group were exposed to jolly phonics reading strategies. Omojuwa (2005) notes that the consequences of not helping learners master the reading skills is that some learners just memorize some words with no clue to how the words are formed or pronounced. The words taught are forced in the learners’ memory through constant drill and memorizations (ibid). This is not the case with NBTL teaching methods which take the learner from known to unknown or simple to complex ideas.

Chihana (2012) conducted a study in schools in Malawi to see challenges teachers face when using the Malawian Breakthrough to Literacy, The revelation was that learners whose teachers used a familiar language gained in terms of literacy learning. Inadequate knowledge about Malawi Breakthrough to Literacy course teaching was identified together with over enrollment in classrooms was recorded as challenges in schools. Chihana (ibid) notes that a large class poses a challenge to a teacher because the teacher has no space to make movements when it comes to monitoring learners in their various pace groups. While Chihana addressed the challenges teachers face when teaching the Malawi Breakthrough to Literacy course, her study did not examine how teachers applied NBTL teaching methods by Grade one teachers.

The centerpiece of NBTL is teaching learners in their local language. Chilora (2001) cited in Chihana (2012) agrees with this notion when he suggests that learners who are taught by a
teacher who speaks their (pupils’) language seem to grasp the skill of reading fast and with ease. The fact that this study is looking at how teachers applied the NBTL teaching methodologies, the use of a local language cardinal as this is what the pupils use to learn initial literacy.

In Uganda, Letshabo (2002) conducted a study to evaluate Breakthrough to Literacy Uganda, the study revealed that the level of preparation by teachers was good but the only set back was that the preparation was not sufficient. The study further reported that many teachers had problems on how to follow stages in teaching of literacy to their learners especially the difference between stage 2 and 3 activities. It was established that where learners were supposed to be in a different pace groups and stage in terms of activities, they were given activities that were suitable for learners at a lower stage or a higher stage. While Letshabo (2002) study evaluated the breakthrough to literacy in Uganda, methods teachers used when teaching initial literacy were not addressed and this is the focus of this study.

2.6 STUDIES CONDUCTED IN ZAMBIA

In Zambia, literacy teaching can be traced as far back as the time of missionaries establishing mission station in different areas of Northern Rhodesia by then. The missionaries who settled in various areas of the country set up churches, hospitals and schools where they used local languages to enhance their missionary work. Local languages were used in the teaching of reading and numeracy. Manchishi (2004, p1) states,

…the drive for evangelism proved extremely successful because the missionaries used local languages. The Bible and other Christian literature were translated into local languages. The local people chanted hymns in the language they understood best i.e. their own local languages, and even in the schools, the medium of instruction was in their own local languages at least up to fourth grade.

This period is believed to have marked the beginning of a more formalized language policy in education involving the use of both English and local languages as a medium of instruction in a classroom.
2.6.1 National Educational Policies and Literacy

Focus on Learning

The 1992 Education Policy Document (Focus on Learning) advocates that English be used as a language of instruction from grade one upwards as stated below:

… A further major issue in the primary school curriculum is the policy that English should be the language of instruction from grade one. The policy has the educational advantage of emphasizing from the outset of schooling the need for competence in the official language. The materials that developed in the new English primary course were being designed so that they continue to be suitable even if there is a change in the policy of using English as a medium of instruction from grade one (MOE 1992: p27).

After the implementation of this policy, it was noted that the policy had weaknesses such as isolation of the school from the community and looking down on local languages. As a result of this, the Phelps stock commission recommended that a review of the primary school curriculum about use of the local language as a medium of instruction from grade one to grade four be done. Simwinga (2006) observes that by 1992, it was clear that the use of English as a language of instruction was not working well especially at primary school level.

Educating Our Future

The 1996 education Policy Document (Educating our Future) came as a result of serious concerns to the focus and relevance of the curriculum at all grades. Grades 1-4 failed to exhibit expected reading, writing and numeracy skills. The policy bemoaned the fact that:

…for almost thirty years, children who have very little contact with English outside school were required to learn to read and to write in a language alien to them. They have also been required to learn content-subjects through this medium (MOE, 1996, p39).

The policy further stated that the fact that initial reading skills are taught in and through a language that is not familiar to the majority of the children is believed to be a major contributory factor to the backwardness in reading by many Zambian children. The policy acknowledges that there is a strong evidence that children learn literacy more easily and successfully through their
mother tongue and they are able to transfer these skills quickly and easily unlike in another language like English (MOE, 1996).

Based on research findings, *Educating Our Future* suggests that the language of initial literacy at grade one be in a familiar language which has the most influence on a child. It states “… officially English will be used as the language of instruction, but the language used for initial literacy learning in grade 1 to grade 4 will be one that seems best suited to promote meaningful learning by children” (MOE 1996, p45).

Since the *Educating Our Future* education policy document, a number of efforts have been made to improve the teaching of literacy. Key among these efforts has been the Primary Reading Programme (PRP) and the New Breakthrough to Literacy and this adds to the focus of this study.

### 2.6.2 Primary Reading Programme (PRP)

The Primary Reading Programme (PRP) was introduced by the Ministry of Education after observations that children in schools and those who had completed Grade 12 were not fluent in reading or writing clearly. Results of a reading test that was conducted by Williams cited in Sampa (2003), showed low reading proficiency by pupils in both English and Chinyanja. The results of the study indicated that only use of functional literacy skills was evident. The remedy for this observation was to improve reading and writing levels in all primary schools through the introduction of the PRP.

PRP is a programme that has been added to the curriculum reform as stated in the national education policy document, *Educating Our Future*, (MOE, 1996): “… the Ministry’s first priority for lower and middle basic education is to ensure that pupils master essential literacy and numeracy skills” (MOE, 1996, p45).

PRP developed an oral English course called the “Pathway to English” which is taught for one hour twenty minutes (120 minutes) per week in grade one. The fast-track reading and writing skills was built to a level of spoken English that would allow skills develop in the local language that would be transferable to English at grade two.
A study conducted among children in grade one to grade six in both local language and English in Zambia proved that children were reading two grade levels below their own level in English and local language (Sampa, 2003). In 2004, it was reported that pupils in PRP pilot schools performed better than pupils in other government schools and community schools (Kanyika, 2004).

Matafwali (2005) studied grade three learners. She observes that a large proportion of children face difficulties acquiring grade level reading skills. This observation was said to have been corroborated by teachers who were said to have confirmed the low reading performance among their learners. Matafwali (2010) in her study of Eastern, Northern, Southern and North Western province schools underscores the relevance of PRP in improving literacy standards among the grade one and two pupils. She argues that NBTL, under the new language policy requires that children in grade one is taught to read in a familiar language preferably their mother tongue. She also observes that PRP’s week long training was too short to equip teachers with sound pedagogical skills in early literacy. Matafwali (2010) study establishes that the initial language was the hallmark for poor reading and writing observed in majority of Zambian children. The findings would imply that if children in Lusaka district are not proficient in standard Nyanja recognized in schools, they would be experiencing problems to grasp what they are being taught by their teacher. While these studies looked at reading difficulties in the third grade and oral language in the acquisition of early literacy skills, they did not discuss choice and application of NBTL teaching methods by Grade one teachers, the focus of this study.

Kalindi (2006) involved sixty grade two poor readers who were identified by their teachers from selected schools in Northern Province. Only thirteen percent of these learners could read syllable words and about eight percent could identify some letters of the alphabet. One of the reasons the learners could not read was contributed to unsatisfactory progress in teaching instructions by their teachers and poor attendance patterns to school. Luangala (2011) noted that some children could not read because they do not consistently attend classes for various reasons. This study primed absenteeism as the cause of the inability to read among learners. Both Kalindi (2006) and Luangala (2011) studies did not address the application of NBTL teaching methods by Grade one teachers. They looked at issues related to low reading levels by pupils. As much as
absenteeism is a factor in the reading skills acquisitions, this study contends that the application of NBTL methods also contributes to literacy teaching.

### 2.6.3 New Break Through to Literacy

There is a growing awareness within the Ministry of Education that reading and writing were better developed first in a language which children were familiar with, for example, their spoken language, and use this to help them learn new things such as reading and writing (MOE, 1996). A non-governmental organization known as Room to Read has designed the literacy support programme (LSP) to support government efforts to equip learners with literacy skills and support teachers’ instruction as they endeavor to teach the grade ones. This programme was designed to support and not to replace the current literacy instruction which take place in a grade one classroom through the NBTL. The Literacy Support Programme is *phonics, oral and writing* program and it is delivered in the language period for thirty minutes every week and NBTL operates during the literacy hour as earlier designed (Jere *et al*, 2010).

Cummins (2000) notes that, schools that build on the experience and knowledge of the learners brings to the classroom prior knowledge, which is a good starting point for teaching reading. Instructions by the teacher in a local language promote learners’ abilities and talents. Thus the NBTL starts from the known (L1) to unknown (L2) and learning something is by adding new information bit by bit to what is already known.

The NBTL uses a combination of methods based on the language experience method. These are:

- **phonic**: teaching learners’ letter sounds from which they can sound out all the new words they need.
- **syllabic**: teaching learners syllables from which they can build up and recognize new words.
- **look and say**: teaching learners to recognize words by use of flash cards use of real books: Use of real books is teaching learners about reading by letting them read books alone, with their parents, teachers and other older readers.

The NBTL uses methods such as language experience method, *look and say, syllabic, phonics* and ‘*use of real books*’. The Language Experience Method is an integrated reading and writing
method (Mckay, Thompson & Schaub 1979). The philosophical basis of break through to literacy is that children who enter Grade 1 have already developed listening and speaking capabilities in the home language. Literacy learning then takes the form of translating spoken language into written code and to read written words. The breakthrough to literacy applies the fundamental pedagogical principle of moving from the known to unknown in that it uses the child’s life experiences and knowledge of language to help young learners acquire functional literacy. The language experience method allows children to interact with text on multiple levels simultaneously. Teachers are allowed to teach a variety of language arts lessons using the learners’ own words and language.

Maliyunda (2009) underscores the importance of training teachers in NBTL methodology prior to giving them classes to teach initial literacy. He argues that a teacher who has not received adequate orientation in NBTL methodology would face a lot of difficulties in delivering lessons to learners. He further argues that several student teachers do not get adequately trained during pre-service training in NBTL methodology because time of one year is committed for training in college (Ibid).

Kamangala (2009) in his study states that training of teachers is done in two categories by the lecturers. According to his findings some lecturers concentrated on teaching pre-reading activities while some taught NBTL methodologies. The lecturers that taught pre-reading activities focused on what is known as stage one in teaching cycle of NBTL. To describe these activities MOE (2001) states that learners are taught specific pre-reading skills using pre-reading posters in the teaching corner. These tasks include good reading posture, reading from left to right, top to bottom and sorting of familiar items and tracing simple patterns (Richards & Rodgers, 1986). Other lecturers taught NBTL in conformity with Steeves (1964:3) argument that; “… the method of the teacher is what results when he organizes what he knows about all these factors in some kind of coherent arrangement for teaching and learning through a systematic classroom process.” Kamangala’s study looked at teacher preparedness in teachers’ colleges, but it did not address the application of NBTL teaching methods by Grade one teachers.

According to Kamangala (2009) most students complained they had not grasped useful NBTL methodologies which were central to the teaching of initial literacy in a local language as
lecturers did not teach the NBTL methodology as prescribed in the PRP curriculum. Kamangala (2009) notes that most lecturers were not consistent in the way they delivered the main content of the course. This observation is very important to this study which looks at the grade one teachers’ application of NBTL methods.

Tambulukani (2004) suggests that there is need for an effective training programme for teachers, headteachers and other senior education officers. These officers needed orientation in the course materials and the methodology used in course books. Tambulukani further states that the strength of the programme lies in these methods in order to prepare them to use them when teaching initial literacy.

Luangala and Mulenga (2010) in their study observe that teacher in-competence is rife in most schools of Zambia. The teacher is supposed to lay a solid foundation for a learner to acquire intellectual skills but teachers do not seem to show or utilize strategies that would induce learning in a child. One thing cited in this study is the teacher failing to engage and help the learners to appreciate the relevance of knowledge and skills targeted to their real life. Their main finding was that instructional procedures teachers use would not qualify to be called teacher centered.

2.7 SUMMARY
This chapter has presented an overview of the broader context, the theoretical framework of the study and literature that informed the study in NBTL methodologies teachers use in teaching grade ones in two schools in Lusaka. The chapter has highlighted some of the global and local influences and literature that shaped the research. The researcher has attempted to draw on wide range of literature to demonstrate the scope and practice of teaching literacy locally and internationally. The researcher has also drawn on how policy on teaching of literacy is interpreted at the point of delivery – the classroom level. From the review of the literature, it has been observed that reading methods are cardinal in the teaching of literacy. The exemplars of various studies reviewed in this chapter, it is evident that for a child to read he/she has to be taught how to do it by some elderly people and these include teachers, members of the family and capable peers. To our knowledge no study in Zambia has focused on the application of
NBTL teaching methods by Grade one teachers when teaching initial literacy. This is found to be a gap this study sought to fill. The next chapter looks at the methodology that the study used.
CHAPTER THREE
METHODOLOGY

3.0 OVERVIEW
This chapter introduces the research design and processes used in this study. The chapter explains the research methods, data collection technique, data organization and data analysis used. It examines data analysis and the methods that were used. According to Cohen, Manion and Morrison, (2001) methods are the basis for inferences, interpretations and explanations and inform the way in which the thesis unfolds. The study adopted a case study method to research into the application of NBTL teaching methods by Grade one teachers in two schools in Lusaka.

Case studies strive to portray ‘what is like to be in a particular situation, to catch the close up reality and ‘thick description’ of participants lived experiences (Cohen, Manion & Morrison 2001).

3.1 RESEARCH DESIGN
The research design was mainly an interpretative case study as the researcher sought to interpret her observation and the respondents’ views to establish the NBTL methods used by Grade One teachers when teaching literacy in the two sample schools. Manion and Cohen (1994) outline characteristics of qualitative research and some of these include:

- understanding actions or meanings,
- emphasis on interpretation of phenomena,
- Interest in individual perspectives and a concern with the process.

In qualitative research such as this one, the interest is in establishing negotiated meanings, definitions of situations, context and descriptive data. In addition, the events or occurrences and the context within which they take place are influenced by the interests and experiences of the researcher. In effect, the researcher is part of the research process.
Patton (1990) postulates that there are essentially three main research techniques in qualitative research. These are observation, interviews and document analysis. Each of these techniques can take a variety of forms and how they are used depends on the objectives and research questions of the study. This study employed all the three data gathering techniques to respond to the research questions.

A qualitative case study method is specific, bounded and unique to a given situation. Findings from a particular case (s) cannot be generalized to other cases. However, lessons can be drawn from one case to the other. The uniqueness of each case makes it intrinsically valuable (Stake, 1995). It may possess features that can justify its study to see how these features may relate to other similar cases. Further a case study mainly gains insights into an issue. It can help to arrive at an understanding to a research question.

3.2 POPULATION

The population in this study comprised all the Grade one teachers in public basic schools in Lusaka district.

3.3 SAMPLE SIZE

According to Stake (1995), a case in education research may be simple or complex and whatever it may be, it can be studied for a duration ranging from a day, a week, a month or a year. This study took eight weeks of intensive observations and interviews. The two schools were purposively selected to represent schools in high and medium density areas respectively. Both schools were located in residential areas where cinyanja, the language of play in Lusaka, is used as medium of instruction in the teaching of literacy. Thus the two schools provided an unparallel and in-depth study of the use of NBTL methods in the teaching of literacy to Grade ones. The cases provided opportunities to illuminate or gain insight about the topic of study. The case study was chosen in this study because it is flexible and it takes into account the process of the study, context and complexity of the setting.

The sample size comprised six teachers and four administrators. Three hundred and fifty four (354) school pupils were part of the classroom environment where observations took place.
Information on the pupils at the two study sites and the sample structure for teachers is presented below;

Table 1: Total number of pupils in the study sites

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Number of Classes</th>
<th>Number of pupils by Gender</th>
<th>Total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Boys</td>
<td>Girls</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>38</td>
<td>32</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>31</td>
<td>37</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>33</td>
<td>35</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>30</td>
<td>35</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>22</td>
<td>18</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>20</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>354</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 2: Qualification of teachers in the study sites

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Highest Qualification</th>
<th>Male</th>
<th>Female</th>
<th>Total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Untrained teachers</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Zambia Primary Course Certificate</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Zambia Basic Course Certificate</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Zambia Teacher Course Certificate</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Teaching Diploma</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Degree</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

3.3.1 Sampling Techniques

As stated earlier, the selection of schools was guided by the principles of purposive sampling (Patton 1990; Miles & Huberman 1994). The process involved an initial screening of potential schools in Lusaka urban based on the following criteria:

- Willingness to sign a consent form by teachers
- Willingness to participate in the research
- Familiarity with NBTL methods
- Willingness for teachers to teach and be observed
Having randomly selected 20 schools from the initial screening using the above criteria, two schools were purposively selected from this sample. Purposive sampling is used to target a group of subjects; a researcher believes to be reliable for a study (Kombo & Tromp 2006).

3.4 DATA COLLECTION.

Data collection for this study started in February, 2012. To begin with, permission was sought from the headteachers of both schools to carry out research in their schools. Teachers were asked to sign a consent form for their willingness to participate in the study. The process of data collection took eight weeks in the two sampled basic schools in Lusaka. Data was collected by means of the following techniques/methods:

3.4.1 Classroom observation

These were done using classroom observation protocols developed by the researcher at the beginning of the study. A sample of an observation protocol is presented in appendix 3. Creswell, (2003) recommends that in taking notes when observing the behavior and activities of teachers and their pupils, the researcher needs to develop a structured schedule beforehand indicating what aspects she intends to observe. The researcher observed the teaching of literacy to grade ones by each of the six teachers in the sample. Most of the observations were consistent with privileged observer method (Wolcott, 1988). This means that when the researcher was in a classroom she tried to be unobtrusive minimizing the interactions with teachers and pupils. Of course, there were times when she would occasionally question the teachers during the transitions when she needed clarification and as pupils became familiar with the researcher, there were some exchanges with them. Patton (1990) argues that the most fundamental distinction that differentiates observational strategies is the extent to which the observer is a participant in the setting being observed. He notes that the extent of participation can change over time.

The data was collected during classroom visits were complemented by data collected from a formal interview. The interview questions were formulated to be informative about aspects of what methods were mostly used, what recommended NBTL methods where employed by teachers, how and what type of teaching aids were used to support NBTL teaching methods and what challenges teachers faced in teaching literacy using the NBTL methods.
3.4.2 Interviews

In social science and education research three types of interviews have been identified. These include structured, semi-structured and unstructured interviews (Koul, 1984; Chambers, 1994; Milkkelsen, 1995). Structured interviews are standardized and pre-determined; the interviewer follows the interview schedule strictly (Milkkelsen, 1995). Unstructured interviews do not have a particular structure or procedure to follow. However, a series of questions maybe thought through beforehand. The interviewer has greater flexibility about the items, order, form and timing in which the questions are asked (Koul, 1984). Therefore between the structured and unstructured is the semi-structured interview. In this study, the researcher worked primarily with semi-structured interviews as they provided opportunities to probe some responses further (Frey and Fontana, 1991). Frey and Fontana (1991) argue that semi-structured and (unstructured) interviews provide greater breadth of data than structured interviews. The researcher did not however, use unstructured interviews as they tend to be long winded and lose focus. In order to get more in-depth detail, most of the interviews (with permission from the interviewee) were tape-recorded and transcribed for the purpose of data analysis (Patton, 1990). Through the use of semi-structured interviews, the researcher was able to follow leads on how teaching of literacy is achieved through use of NBTL methods. In some instances, it was difficult to regulate the extent to which a question was answered as some respondents elaborated on what they perceived as important information for this study. Not wanting to be rude, the researcher allowed them complete their angle of reasoning.

Although the interview schedules were developed in advance, more questions were added to the already prepared schedule to probe certain answers given by the interviewee further. For example the researcher asked the teachers questions such as, “Kindly explain how you ensure pupils in groups are doing the right thing?” Or “how do you make sure every pupil is attentive when you are teaching?” (This type of a question was asked to teachers from school 1 which had a big number of pupils in their classroom). But there were variations in the way questions were asked from school to school.

3.4.3 Document review and analysis

The following documents were analyzed:
3.4.4 Field notes

All the field notes were recorded in the researcher’s personal dairy and research note book. Throughout the research period, the researcher recorded data that she thought was worth remembering (Patton, 1990). The field notes included the researcher’s own reflections, observations and interpretations of activities and occurrences in the teaching experience. These helped to record insights for the research process. Data from field notes was used to triangulate the validated data from other sources. The observations provided the researcher with further insight into the research process especially as the researcher read through some of the records from informal discussions with teachers. Although Creswell (2003) recommends that in taking field notes (observation) on behavior and activities of individuals, the researcher needs to develop a structured schedule beforehand indicating what aspects he or she needs to observe, this was followed to the later by this researcher.

3.5 DATA ORGANIZATION

Patton (1990) observes that if data is not well organized it could prove problematic during analysis. The researcher drew on the caution of researchers who emphasize the need for good organization of data before analysis (Burroughs, 1975; Stenhouse, 1978; Patton, 1990). Berg (2004) also observes that the raw data is not immediately available for analysis but requires some organization and processing before they can actually be analyzed. The first method to data organization was the coding of the research participants and transcribing and coding of all transcripts.
Further, all tape recorded interviews were transcribed and typed for easy analysis and so were the observation notes.

3.6 DATA ANALYSIS AND INTERPRETATION

Data was analyzed qualitatively and it began during the data collection stage through interview scripts and document analysis. The data collected were analyzed to determine whether teachers applied the NBTL teaching methods when teaching literacy to the grade ones. All teachers remained anonymous and codes were used instead of their real names. Data analysis was carried out by using an inductive process (White, 2003). This means that the researcher had done specific observations, formulated one or more tentative hypotheses and finally developed general conclusions and theories. Transcribing data then followed and summarizing and organizing the data according to categories. Data analysis was also derived from the following documents used in the school context:

- Lesson plans,
- schemes of work,
- teaching and learning aids,
- assessment sheets,
- story books for pupils and
- Pupils exercise books.

The researcher made interpretations of the observations and responses at the final stage.

3.6.1 Data from Interviews

In preparation for data analysis, all interviews were transcribed verbatim as soon as interviews were conducted. The transcripts were edited. This involved playing back the interview for inconsistencies in scripts. However, the process of editing and incorporating to the scripts provided the researcher with insights into the research questions. This became the basis for developing new dimensions in the questioning techniques and improving the process of asking
questions and the depth of probing in subsequent interviews. Patton (2002), notes that, transcribing offers another point of transition between data collection and analysis.

3.6.2 Data from Observation and field notes

All the hand written notes were typed and edited in preparation for data analysis. Typing and organizing hand written field notes offered the Researcher an opportunity to be immersed in the data before analyzing it (Patton, 2002). The notes refreshed the researcher’s mind on some observation that she had forgotten especially on the procedures that had taken place in class.

3.7 VALIDITY

Historically, validity has been associated with experimental research where experimentalists sought to establish the trustworthiness of inferences drawn from data such as measurements and interaction effects between maturation and selection effects on results (LeCompte, Millory & Preissle, 1992). Based on the experimental method to validity, researchers in qualitative research such as Goetz and LeCompte (1984), Lincoln and Guba (1985) have proposed alternative ways of looking at validity within social science (by extension educational research). For instance, they argue that experimentalist procedures for external validity cannot apply to qualitative research.

McCormick and James (1983) suggest that:

> In view of the apparently subjective nature of much qualitative interpretation, validation is achieved when others, particularly the subjects, recognize its authenticity. One way of doing this is for the researcher to write out his \ her analysis for the subjects of the research in terms that they will understand, and then record their reactions to it (McCormick & James, 1983:241).

The work of McCormick and James (1983) influenced the researcher’s choice of data collection techniques. Most of the data was collected by visiting the two schools, observing and talking to respondents. A variety of data collection technique was employed and combining of methods such; observation, interviews and document analysis was used. The different sources of data helped validate and cross-check findings (Patton, 1990). Each type of data and sources had
strengths and weaknesses and using them in combination increased validity as strengths of one method compensated the weaknesses of another method (Marshall & Rossman, 1989).

3.8 **ETHICAL ISSUES**

The study took into consideration ethical issues. As earlier stated, the researcher sought permission from the headteachers of the two schools, the teachers and all the study participants, to allow her conduct the study. All the interviewees were coded as T1, T2, T3, T4, T5 and T6 respectively. This was to maintain confidentiality. Administrators such as head teachers, deputy head teachers and senior teachers who were interviewed were coded as administrators or just senior teacher, and schools were coded school 1 and school 2. This again was to maintain confidentiality. There wasn’t any name of the respondent or the school of the respondent published in the findings.

3.9 **SUMMARY**

This chapter has discussed the methodology that was used to collect data. The researcher used classroom observation, interviews with grade one teachers and administrators in the two schools under study. The data collection was also informed by document analysis from the policy documents and classroom documents such as pupils’ books and teachers’ preparation books. The next chapter is presenting the findings of the study.
CHAPTER FOUR
PRESENTATION OF FINDINGS

4.0 OVERVIEW

This chapter presents the main findings of the study. The findings emerged from data analysis as themes and sub themes. The findings in this chapter are presented under the following thematic categories; teachers’ profile, general teaching methods, common teaching methods, Teaching Aids used, and challenges of teaching using NBTL.

The above categories provide answers to the research questions in this study which were:

i. What general teaching methods do teachers employ in NBTL classes?

ii. Which recommended NBTL teaching methods do teachers employ in NBTL classes?

iii. What teaching aids do teachers use to support NBTL methods; and

iv. What challenges do teachers face in teaching literacy using the NBTL methods?

4.1 TEACHERS’ PROFILE

This section looks at the profile of each teacher who was observed and interviewed for the purpose of this study. The profile highlights where each teacher was trained, the programme they trained in, their qualification, experience of teaching NBTL and their personal interests in teaching NBTL. These are presented in Table 3.

Table 3: Teachers’ Profiles

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Teacher</th>
<th>College of Education trained at</th>
<th>Programme</th>
<th>Qualification</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>T1</td>
<td>Charles Lwanga</td>
<td>ZATEC</td>
<td>Primary Teachers’ Certificate</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>T2</td>
<td>Kitwe</td>
<td>ZATEC</td>
<td>Primary Teachers’ Certificate</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>T3</td>
<td>Immaculate Private</td>
<td>ZATEC</td>
<td>Primary Teachers’ Certificate</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>T4</td>
<td>Mufulira</td>
<td>ZATEC</td>
<td>Primary Teachers’ Certificate</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Out of the six teachers who participated in the study, four of them did ZATEC, one did ZBEC and another one did ZPC.

One of the characteristics of the teachers who were involved in the study, which was cardinal to the teaching of literacy, was whether or not they had been trained in NBTL. Each of the six teachers learned NBTL from one of the following; college, zonal resource centre or school based CPD. Table 4 presents results of where the teachers trained NBTL methods.

**Table 4: Shows where teachers in the study trained in NBTL methods.**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Teacher</th>
<th>College</th>
<th>Zonal Workshops</th>
<th>CPD in School</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>T1</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>T2</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>T3</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Yes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>T4</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>T5</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>T6</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

From Table 4 above, only two teachers (T1 and T2) were trained in NBTL methods at the colleges of education. Teachers 4, 5, and 6 learned NBTL methods through CPD programme at zonal level. T3 learned the methodology during the GRACE (Grade Meeting at Resource Centre) at school.

The study also established the teachers experience in teaching grade ones using NBTL methods. Results of this question are presented in Table 5.

**Table 5: Teachers experience of teaching Grade ones using NBTL methods.**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Teacher</th>
<th>Experience of using NBTL</th>
<th>Teacher’s comment</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>T1</td>
<td>First time</td>
<td><em>This is my first year of teaching using NBTL. and so far I would say am enjoying my teaching especially when I see a lot of change in the pupils such as reading words taught to them for example; atate (father), Amai (Mother) but am still struggling to see them write these words unaided.</em></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>---</td>
<td>---</td>
<td>---</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>T2</td>
<td>Four years</td>
<td><em>The first class I taught, I had forty-five pupils and about three quarters of the class broke through. The second one that I was given half the class were able to read and write short stories in the second term of the year. The third class had a big number of pupils something like sixty-seven just like this one I have. Only a handful broke through. I noticed a lot of absenteeism in my last year’s class. I noticed that the pupils those breakthroughs to literacy are those that come to school regularly.</em></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>T3</td>
<td>First time</td>
<td><em>I am meeting the NBTL methods for the first time. We were not taught at the college but I would say am coping. Where I do not understand or where am not sure I consult my colleagues who have taught grade one for a long time. Sometimes I just read from the handbook and I apply that in my teaching.</em></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>T4</td>
<td>First time</td>
<td><em>I have a big challenge teaching the Grade ones because I cannot speak Chinyanja fluently. I feel I don’t do much for the children because I can’t even pronounce some words correctly. Sometimes I mix; I use English to give instruction, a thing which is not supposed to be done in a literacy class.</em></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>T5</td>
<td>Three Years</td>
<td><em>I attended a workshop on NBTL at the zonal school Muleya Basic School. In my experience of teaching the grade ones, I find it to be too involving. There is too much work when teaching NBTL and the time given to teach it is short. But I feel good when I see the children who could not read when they started school read fluently. It encourages me a lot.</em></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>T6</td>
<td>Four Years</td>
<td><em>I have been teaching NBTL for four years now. I don’t find it a problem because I was taught all the methods at college. I use some of them that I have found to be very effective such as Look and say and phonics. It is quite a good experience to see children come to school and cannot read, but after some time they start to show signs of being good readers.</em></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 5 shows how long the participants had taught Grade one using the NBTL methods. From the table above T2, T5 and T6 had taught for not less than two years. The individual comments
indicated that the majority were happy to teach literacy using NBTL, except for T4 who was not familiar with the language NBTL was to be taught in.

4.3 WHAT GENERAL TEACHING METHODS DO TEACHERS EMPLOY IN LITERACY CLASSES?

The general methods used by the teachers in the study included whole word method, whole language method, alphabet and discussion method. These are discussed in details in the sections that follow:

4.3.1 Whole Word

Out of the six (6) teachers observed, two teachers used the whole word method. Asked why they prefer using it, T5 said:

*I do use the whole word method because I believe the children have to be exposed to a lot of methods. I was trained in the whole method era; the only difference is that am using a local language unlike that time we were trained to teach English words as wholes instead of parts. The children who were exposed to this that time could read. So I believe even these can read words as a whole at times and I feel I should not neglect this method, it works.*

Another teacher had this to say about use of the whole word method:

*I have used the whole word method from the time I started teaching grade one. I feel this method is a base for reading. What I mean is that when the children entre grade one the first thing they are exposed to is their name. In fact some of these children can write their names before they come to school, so I believe they are exposed to a whole word. They become familiar with the words they learn and they are able to read it in no time. Of course not all pupils can read using this method, only a few.*

In spite the respondents using the whole word method, findings of this study show that some learners cannot cope with it. The rest of the respondents indicated they were not familiar with the whole word method.
4.3.2 Whole Language

The whole language method views language as a whole and incorporate both reading and writing as a whole (Goodman, 1965). This method was used by all the teachers who took part in this study. In all the lessons observed, the teacher would put up an illustration or a picture and then would ask learners what they saw in the picture. Each learner said what they saw. After that, the teacher drew a picture on the board and wrote a caption in form of a sentence to accompany it underneath. The teachers told the learners to copy and write the sentence in their books.

4.3.3 Use of the alphabet

Only one teacher (Teacher 2) out of six used this method. She said:

*I use the alphabet to teach my children how to spell words. I have found that use of the alphabet works well when I am introducing spellings to my pupils. I have used this in all the grade one classes I have taught. After I have taught core vocabulary, I start having spelling with the children. I tell them to write the word then before they do the writing I spell it out using letters of the alphabet and they write as I spell. After they have written I repeat the word and they read after me. I go on until up to five words. I collect their books and we go through the spellings one word at a time. I make sure they write the words on the board. After marking, I emphasise they correct their work if at all they did not get everything right. This has really helped me and the pupils.*

Teacher 2 has used this method for four years and she has found it to be effective.

4.3.3 Discussion Method

This method was used by all the teachers that took part in the study but Teacher 3 had this to say:

*When I use discussion method, my class becomes active. After I have read a story to my class, I ask the children questions and they respond favorably. I give them chance to ask me questions based on what I read to them and I answer. I have seen that this discussion goes on and on because each child would like to ask a question or to answer to show me that they listened to the story and they enjoyed it.*
Teacher 3 has used *discussion* to supplement other methods. She was quick to point out that the discussions help learners become free with her and they answer questions without fearing to be bullied or laughed at by their friends. She said that through discussions, a friendly atmosphere has been created in her class. She sees this when learners participate.

### 4.4 WHICH RECOMMENDED NBTL METHODS DO TEACHERS EMPLOY IN LITERACY CLASSES?

The recommended methods of NBTL are *look and say, phonics language experience method, real books and syllabic but phonemic awareness, fluency, comprehension, phonics* and *vocabulary* are considered when teaching NBTL (See Section 2.5.3). The recommended methods refer to the best or useful methods. In this study the focus was mainly on the use of recommended methods by MOE (2000) in Zambia though reference was also made to the five components of reading (NRP, 2000).

#### 4.4.1 Common NBTL methods used

Lesson observations by the researcher revealed that teachers used certain common literacy methods. These are; *language experience method, syllabic, look and say, real books, phonic, phonemic awareness, vocabulary, comprehension and fluency*.

Table 6 below shows the literacy methods commonly used and the number of teachers who used them.

Table 6: Methods that were commonly used

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Literacy methods commonly used</th>
<th>Number of teachers who used them</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Language Experience Method</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Phonic</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Look and Say</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Real books</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Syllabic</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Vocabulary</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fluency</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Phonemic awareness</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
The literacy methods which were used by all the six teachers in the study were; language experience method, phonic, look and say, vocabulary and fluency. Only two out of the six teachers each used real books and syllabic methods to teach literacy.

4.4.2 Methods teachers claimed were effective

Teachers rated language experience, phonic and vocabulary methods as being effective. They said that these methods were helpful and should not be done away with. Teacher 4 commented:

*I have found the language experience method to be effective because these children know some of the words and things that happen at home already and what makes a difference is that children are taught how to write the words they know and when I ask them to do so, some write while some struggle.*

Teacher 6 had this to say:

*I have found phonics and vocabulary to be effective because after I have taught a new word to the children, they have to read through and master it. When teaching phonics I emphasize on what sounds letters make and I read for the children. In their pace groups I teach them how to sound the letters and they seem to find reading new words a bit easy when they are able to sound the letters. Those who concentrate read and master the words quickly.*

Table 7 shows the methods that teachers claimed were effective in their teaching of literacy to grade ones.

**Table 7: Methods teachers claimed were effective**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Effective methods</th>
<th>Number of teachers that used</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Language Experience Method</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Phonic</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Look and Say</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>real books</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Syllabic</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Vocabulary</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fluency</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Phonemic awareness</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
From Table 7 above it is shown that *language experience method, phonic and vocabulary* was very effective for all the teachers. Three teachers felt *Look and say* was effective. *Real books, syllabic and fluency* was effective to some teachers while only one teacher felt *phonemic awareness* was effective in the teaching of literacy.

### 4.5 WHAT TEACHING AND LEARNING MATERIALS DO TEACHERS USE TO SUPPORT NBTL TEACHING METHODS?

In this section the study looks at the recommended NBTL teaching and learning materials and the teachers who used them. The materials such as teachers guide, Chinyanja story books, learners’ activity book, phonic flip chart, conversation poster and exercise books were commonly used. Teachers’ sentence holder, learners’ sentence holder, breakthrough assessment sheet and sentence makers were rarely used by some teachers during this study.

Table 8: Materials used in NBTL

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Recommended NBTL Materials</th>
<th>Teachers who used the teaching aid</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Teacher’s Guide (TG)</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Teacher’s sentence holder</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Learners’ assessment sheet</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Breakthrough assessment sheet</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Chinyanja story books</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Learners’ Activity Book (LAB)</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sentence Maker</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Word cards</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Learners’ sentence holder</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Phonic flip chart</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Conversation Poster</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Group Slates</td>
<td>None</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Exercise books</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

In all the classrooms observed at both schools, all the teachers had a teacher’s guide where they got instructions for that particular day’s work. At school 1, NBTL recommended materials were scarce. The researcher did not see any teacher use teacher’s sentence holder or a sentence maker. When she asked why a sentence maker was not being used, all the teachers at different times
responded that they had three which were incomplete so they could not use them. When teaching their pupils a word on a particular day, they had to write the word on manila and if there was no manila, they wrote on soft paper. In other cases, the teachers wrote words on the board and after the children had read through, they would clean the board for other activities. It was observed that learners had no sentence holders where they could make their own sentences and teachers had no sentence holders where they could make up the sentence for the day. Over the use of Chinyanja story books, teachers said they did not have all of them that are needed for use. When the senior teacher of school one was asked as to why teachers do not have the Chinyanja books, she said:

*The school has a few copies of Chinyanja story books. This is because of the thefts and vandalism experienced by the school. But even if there are few copies the teachers do use them when they need them. But since pupils are many in one class they are not enough*

Only three out of six teachers observed had learner’s assessment sheet and they said they assess their pupils every two weeks.

School 2 teachers made use of the sentence maker. It was displayed in front of the classroom and learners used it to make sentences. The teachers at this school had almost all the materials that are required for use when teaching. At school 2 the teachers used their sentence holders and big word cards to make sentences while the learners used small word cards and sentence holders to make sentences on their own. Unlike the other school, this school had a well organized library corner. The story books are stored in a cupboard to which every group leader has access. It was observed that the pupils’ exercise books were kept at school and they were only taken out of the cupboard when it was time for the activity that required that particular book.

The researcher had a one to one follow up interview with the teachers on the use of the NBTL materials. The following were the responses by each teacher interviewed. Teacher 2 school 1:

*I use the phonic flip chart, which is where I extract syllables and the language activity book at times. I say at times because the school has few copies and when I don’t have access to it then I will not use it and hence children won’t learn. Sometimes when I have*
access to it, I only draw diagrams that are easy for me to draw. I do not draw those which are complicated and the children lose out (T2).

Teacher 4:

I have to prepare word cards in the morning when am about to teach especially if I have no manila at home. I use soft plain paper to prepare word cards so that it can be used to teach learners new words. I normally prepare word cards when am teaching new words. After I have taught new words I start writing on the board until the children master the words.

Other teachers in this school had their own sentiments as well. Teacher 1 said she did not use all the recommended NBTL materials because she had no access to them. She doubted if at all the school had any apart from the teacher’s guide, the phonic flip chart and the observation poster. On the use of story books she said all that were given to their school were either stolen or they got lost. She pointed out that because their pupils did not have access to story books and learners’ activity book; they were not able to develop independent reading skills. The reasons for failure to use recommended NBTL material varied. The main reason given by all teachers of school 1 was that the materials were not available.

In school 2, all the materials that are needed for use in NBTL class were available. The administrators made sure materials that are needed are available as explained by the deputy head teacher:

... as a school we make sure the teachers of grade one have material that is needed for use. You see teaching NBTL takes a heart and I do commend the grade one teachers because they work really hard to see to it that materials are kept under key and lock. Where they lack some material, the school comes in and we support them. You cannot teach NBTL minus the materials that are needed because children have to see what they are being taught.

At school 1, the Administrator claimed the school provided teachers with materials needed for teaching literacy. She said:
I make sure teaching materials are available to the teachers. Even if the school cannot afford to buy the NBTL kit, sometimes we do photocopy some materials that can be photocopied. We cannot photocopy the sentence maker because it is too big and complicated. Most copiers in our locality have no capacity to photocopy such large paper size.

It was observed that some teachers who were assigned to teach grade one took great care of the teaching and learning materials. When the school lacked particular teaching material and they did not have resources, the administration involved the parents who had grade one children to either contribute money or buy. Sometimes the school improvised, especially mats where they did not have a carpet where learners could be taught from. Teacher 5 in school 2 observed:

There was one year when the school didn’t have carpets for the grade one learners to sit on when they were brought in front for classroom instruction. We had to involve the parents and they willingly supported us. They bought carpets for each class and learning by pupils was enhanced.

4.6 WHAT CHALLENGES DO TEACHERS FACE IN TEACHING INITIAL LITERACY USING NBTL METHODS?

The challenges of teaching using NBTL teaching methodologies which emerged out of this study included: inadequate materials, lack of learner support by teachers, time allocation, lack of skills in NBTL methods, class management, absenteeism by both teachers and learners, and over enrolment.

4.6.1 Class size

One of the challenges teachers faced when teaching literacy was the large number of learners in a given classroom. It was observed in this study that due to large class size, teachers tended to ignore some of the methods that learners were supposed to learn.

The teachers of school 1 complained about the big number of learners in class. Instead of having the Ministry standard class size of forty-two learners, one class had between sixty and seventy learners. Teachers said that they could only concentrate on a few learners that showed potential of breaking through to literacy.
Teacher 2 said: *NBTL requires space because you will have to deal with one individual at a time, now without space and a large number in a group, you only work with a few*. It was observed that the learners in all the classrooms of school 1 were not paying much attention when they were in the teaching corner due to overcrowding.

Due to the big class size, most pupils were not paying attention when instructions were given. When the story was being read every learner was quiet and listened attentively but when it was instruction time, learners spent time pushing each other so that they could get the warmth of the carpet. The space was not adequate to accommodate each learner comfortably especially when they were engaged in the whole class instruction and when writing. They did not want to sit on the floor and the carpets were small. The teacher too spent some time controlling those who were disruptive as a result, time was being wasted and little learning took place.

Teacher 3 lamented:

> *I pity these children because they are just too many and the carpet where they are supposed to sit is small. I do not attend to each child individually but just teaches in groups and pairs. I do mind about the learning outcome and my teaching is in a way affected.*

### 4.6.2 Class Management

Class management includes how a teacher administers teaching and learning materials as well as learners. During lesson observations, some teachers demonstrated a good level of managing their classes while some had difficulties due to a large number of learners in their classes.

In school 1, where there was over enrolment in all the classes, it was observed that teachers failed to manage the class. When one group of about seventeen is in the teaching corner with their teacher, the other three groups were given work to do but movements and wandering of learners during this time was observed. Teachers of school 1 confessed that the number of learners was too big for one to manage as noted by Teacher 2:

> *I have a big number of pupils in my class. I sometimes fail to manage discipline especially if all the pupils have reported. These children you see make a lot of noise and I*
end up having a headache. But all the same, I try to make them keep quiet and teaching continues.

They said that if a class had a manageable number of learners, all the obstacles they faced could be overcome. They were going to be inspired to teach and they believed inspiration is more likely to arise when one is not overwhelmed by too large a class. The findings showed that school 1 teachers had difficulties managing the class because of the large number of pupils while school 2 teachers had a recommended number of forty or thirty two learners in class. So classroom management in school 2 was excellent. Teachers monitored learners’ reading, writing and group instruction went on well with less disruption.

4.6.3 Lack of teaching and learning material

Lack of material to use was another challenge that was noted in this study. Teachers were with a view that if the teaching and learning material are re-printed then teaching of literacy using the NBTL methods would work to the expectation of everyone. Teachers in school 1 claimed not to have had material and other resources. They said that lack of teaching and learning material made their teaching difficult. They admitted having not used some recommended methods because these required teaching materials which were not available in school. In school 1, the teachers and administrators claimed that the teaching aids for NBTL were stolen in the many burglaries the school experienced. There were few materials such as word cards left but these were in incomplete sets. Teacher 4 observed:

I do not use all the NBTL methods listed in the guide because I don’t have the materials that are needed. If you talk of Real books method for example, our school doesn’t have story books. Those books were stolen a long time ago. So on that one I can’t tell lies, I don’t use it.

This observation was corroborated by an administrator from the same school.

In this school teachers could not display a library for the learners because they did not have story books for learners to read freely and independently. Even if they had some to display, the size of classrooms could not allow because they were too small to accommodate the over enrolled children.
4.6.4 Organizing groups in a classroom

Organizing groups in a classroom was another challenge which was noted especially in school 1 where there were a large number of learners in a classroom. The teachers were observed stopping whatever they were teaching to just try to correct the learners on where they were supposed to sit.

School 2 teachers had no problems organizing their learners in their different learning abilities and giving different kinds of learning activities was not a problem. In School 1, organizing groups seemed to have been one of the difficult pedagogical tasks for teachers. They did not have material for their classes. Secondly, learners tended to sit in any group especially where there was a desk that accommodated two learners. One learner from the low level reading group usually took a seat where there was space in the high level reading group. Teacher 2 observed:

*I always have a great task to just make sure that these children who are not in the teaching corner are concentrating on their work and not disturbing their friends. As you saw, the children are too many and I will be with them until the end of this year, so the routine of shouting to maintain silence will continue.*

The findings showed that teachers in school 1 were not able to control noise in the groups as they were working with one group. Learners were disrupting each other where they were seated and the noise disturbed those who were in front receiving class instruction. The teacher had a hard task to stop learners from making noise while she gave instructions.

4.6.5 Lack of self confidence by learners

Lack of self confidence was observed as a challenge when teaching initial literacy by teachers. Most of the learners came to school gripped with fear that teachers beat. So when they were at school they tended to shun participating in class activities because they were afraid of being beaten by their teachers for getting the answer wrong. They eventually shunned participating in class and as a result of this they lagged behind in their acquisition of reading and writing skills. Teacher 5 noted:
I have noticed that some children no matter how much you want to engage them in a conversation will be busy playing with their fingers whilst looking down. You would try to point at them when you are teaching so that they participate but when you seem to force them to just say something tears will start rolling down and you will immediately stop and ask other pupils.

4.6.6 Language Problem

For pupils to learn initial literacy better, they must be given an opportunity to learn initial basic skills of reading and writing in their local language. But in this study language was identified as one of the hindrances to teaching of literacy to the learners. The language barrier between the teachers to learners or learners to teachers was noted.

It was observed that pupils and some teachers had a huddle with language. In all the classes that were observed, there were some learners who were not conversant with Chinyanja. Some of them came from pre-schools where they were introduced to English first. Such pupils had problems switching to Chinyanja; the language used for initial literacy in Grade one in Lusaka.

T 4 confessed:

I have a big problem with Chinyanja. It is the first time I am teaching the grade ones and I find difficulties speaking Chinyanja, worse reading it. I think you saw how I taught, am not impressed at all. If only they allowed us to use our languages but again these children would not understand. Anyway, I am learning and I can bet, before they go to Grade 2, I will know how to read these books fluently and with ease.

Teachers who had problems with language struggled to pronounce some words. They were not fluent when reading the story books and had no time simplifying some words that seemed difficult for the learners because they did not know them. One word that was a problem for the learners was “kucapa” (Washing) which the learners know as “Kuwasha”. Some learners were coming across that word for the first time so it needed to be simplified to their level.

An administrator at school 1 also confirmed having a challenge with some words that are used because she got confused when she was monitoring teachers’ teaching. She said she was not a
chinyanja speaker but she found out that the words she knows were twisted to something else. She lamented that the Chinyanja used in teaching literacy was deep than the Chinyanja, the language of play of children. In class the children were learning Chichewa and when they played in the play ground they used chinyanja. This finding challenges the common held view that NBTL encourages the use of familiar language in the initial literacy as Chichewa was a complex language.

4.6.6 Monitoring progress of learners

Out of six teachers only three had assessment sheets, meaning that three teachers had assessed their learners’ performance and recorded the words pupils could read. Teacher 2 explained:

*Assessing these children becomes difficult because they are just too many. When you start with one pace group it takes about three to four days for you to finish. Sometimes it depends on how many words you are dealing with. And when some children are absent in that pace group you keep going backwards instead of starting with another pace group. The process then becomes slow but I have to do it, you know.*

Teachers had a routine to monitor what the learners had written but giving them homework by taking words they had difficulties with in class to go and read at home was not part of their repertoire of skills. Some teachers did not keep a record of words learners had difficulties with. The teachers had few techniques on how they could help those learners who could not read the core vocabulary words it was observed.

Another observation was that parents and guardians of pupils did not show support to their children\wards. NBTL course entails that pupils’ families have to give support or rather corroborate with teachers so that their children could make progress in learning literacy skills and thus breakthrough to literacy through the methods used by teachers in class. This posed a challenge.

4.6.7 Lack of Learner support by teachers

In school 2 where there were library corners in the classrooms, teachers made sure their learners were reading the right books that were displayed and they provided assistance where learners needed them to. In school 1 pupil were given work on the board mostly as they do not have story
books to give to their pupils. Support for the learners was a problem because of large classes. Teachers could not go round assisting every learner but learners were encouraged to walk to the teachers’ table. It was observed that those learners who had interest are the ones who were going to ask but those who were shy or scared of losing a space where to sit did not go to ask the teacher. They did not mind what they wrote or did. Some teachers neglected checking whether the pupils were using the right exercise book because they did not go round to check.

4.6.8 Lack of feedback on pupils’ work

It was observed that pupils’ work was not displayed on the walls in both schools. What teachers did was to collect about four books from the pupils with good handwriting, good pictures drawn and someone who did not follow instruction. The teachers would ask if at all there was a mistake in the way all the books displayed looked and the pupils would point to a book that was well written or drawn. The worst book would be pointed out by their teacher. Then the teacher would encourage the pupils to work hard and write like the one whose book was well written.

Teachers of both schools complained that they could not display wall charts or pupil’s work because the older pupils from other classes remove them by tearing them to pieces. But even if there were complaints of older pupils tearing wall charts, Teachers in school 2 had some learning aids such as syllable chart, color chart and the alphabet displayed on the wall. At school 1 only few charts or none were seen in some classrooms. Mostly it was the core vocabulary words that were permanently stuck to the wall and the alphabet.

4.6.9 Allocation of time

Time efficient transitions contribute to creating opportunities to learn but with NBTL, teachers of school 1 complained that time allocated to teaching literacy was not enough. It was observed that teachers spent more time on one activity especially when it was time for group reading. For every pupil to participate it took a long time to finish with one group. A teacher observed:

*NBTL is a good course for the pupils but time allocated is not enough. You tend to run out of time when you are teaching. You see there are some words that are difficult to be grasped by children and you really have to spend time with them until you see signs that they have known it. Another thing is that some methods demand that you spend time on*
them, for example, the syllabic method need you to spend a bit of some time for children to learn the syllables and make words. The use of real books also requires you to spend some time so that every child has a feel of the story books. The children are learning to write and when they are given an exercise on writing they take long. The fact that you have to go round checking, you are forced to spend some time on one pupil at a time to make sure that they are writing properly.

4.6.10 Lack of skills in NBTL methods

Lack of NBTL methods was another challenge that was observed. When teaching Grade ones, teachers assigned to teach this grade need to be equipped with the required methodologies and knowledge.

Use of NBTL methods posed a challenge in that most teachers did not learn how these methods are used in class when teaching while in college and could not efficiently use them in initial literacy. They did not master any basic reading skill. It was observed that one or two methods were used not because pupils understood but because the teacher was comfortable with it as confessed by Teacher 3: ‘… I use the methods that are easy for me, for example I like using the phonic and look and say methods.’

This was corroborated by one of the administrators who said:

The challenge we face as administrators on the use of NBTL is that a few teachers from each school were trained to teach NBTL when it just started and those teachers that are coming from colleges shun teaching grade one. They give different reasons but one common reason is that it is involving and they are not conversant. Mostly the teachers that have been teaching grade one are those who did not even graduate recently, all they do is read what they are supposed to do and sometimes when there are workshops we send them there.

From the observation, it was noted that all the teachers at school 1 mostly used the look and say or the phonic method. It seems these are the methods they taught each other when they had GRACE meetings and the fact that most of them were teaching grade one for the first time, they followed what the one who had been teaching grade one for four years was using.
4.7 SUMMARY
The findings in this chapter demonstrate that there are variations in the teaching of literacy by means of NBTL. These variations depend on many factors such as skills, materials, policies and class sizes. Teachers with skills in NBTL taught well and enjoyed teaching grade ones. Their counterparts who have had no initial training in NBTL both in college and during school based CPD faced a lot of challenges and most of them did not like teaching literacy. The same can be said about indigenous and non-indigenous chinyanja speakers. Although this study was not aimed to compare the two schools and their respective teachers, it is clear that the two school handled NBTL classes differently. The challenges were similar in both schools but the responses were different. Further, both invested into the teaching of literacy at different levels. In both cases the definition of the language of instruction had an effect on the outcome of the teaching and learning. The next chapter discusses the findings presented in this chapter.
CHAPTER FIVE
DISCUSSION OF FINDINGS

5.0 OVERVIEW
This chapter discusses the findings based on the objectives of the study. The key findings discussed in this chapter include: the characteristics of teachers; general teaching methods employed by teachers; recommended NBTL methods used by teachers, NBTL teaching aids used by teachers in literacy classes at Grade one and the challenges teachers faced when teaching literacy using NBTL methods.

5.1 PRESENTATION OF DISCUSSIONS
The discussions are presented under sub-headings derived from objectives of the research. These are:

- characteristics of the teachers in the study
- explore the general teaching methods employed by teachers in literacy classes;
- identify the recommended NBTL methods employed by teachers in NBTL classes;
- establish the teaching aids used to support NBTL teaching methods; and identify challenges faced by teachers in teaching reading using NBTL methods.

5.1.1 Characteristics of teachers
All the teachers who were observed and interviewed were trained in primary teaching methods. Out of the six teachers, only was trained at a private teaching college, and out of those who went to government colleges only three were taught NBTL methods at their respective colleges. Some of the teachers in the study were teaching grade one for the first time and had negative comments towards NBTL methods. Teachers who had been teaching literacy in grade one using NBTL commented positively about the methods. Teachers had their own challenges of language and this study revealed that although these teachers received training in the teaching methodologies, they were not equipped with necessary knowledge and skills in teaching of literacy. Therefore, teachers need to have skill and knowledge of the language when they are teaching literacy (Chihana, 2012). From the findings teachers who had received training in NBTL had fewer
difficulties in teaching literacy. Training in NBTL was received through colleges of education or through continuing professional development workshops under the School Programme for In-Service for the Term (SPRINT).

5.1.2 To identify the general teaching methods employed by teachers
The first objective was to identify the general teaching methods employed by teachers when teaching NBTL to grade ones. The findings show that in both schools where this study took place, teachers varied the way in which they enhanced their teaching of literacy through NBTL. Teachers used both non NBTL and NBTL methods in the teaching of literacy. The non NBTL methods included; whole word method as taught in Zambia Primary Course (ZPC) and use of alphabet. ZPC and Zambia Basic Education Course (ZBEC) trained teachers argued that if the whole word method worked during their time, it was important for teaching literacy even nowadays. This argument is supported by scholars such as Irwin (1967), Goodman (1965) and Doman (1989). ZPC and ZBEC trained teachers showed a lot of confidence when using this method. Some teachers argued that the whole word method was the best method for teaching literacy because that was how children learned - attacking the whole word and not in smaller units. For example, one teacher argued that children are able to read wholes of words because initially they start with writing their names in wholes. She further argued that children become familiar with words before they even start learning the core vocabulary words. It was however, clear that not all the pupils were comfortable with the whole word method and teachers had to switch to other methods to cater for such learners.

The whole language method was the most liked and effective methods that teachers used to teach literacy. Pupils also seemed to have liked the method as they participated fully in the learning process. Through this method children imitated how their teachers wrote. Teachers also encouraged good writing by asking the class to compare books of pupils who wrote well and those who did not. The excitement and enthusiasm of both the learners and teachers who used this method demonstrated the fact that the method worked well for them.

Pupils who were taught using the alphabet and discussion seemed to have been mastering the words faster. This observation corroborated earlier findings by Ehri (1998) who suggested that
when learners appreciate the alphabet and the way it was designed, phonemic awareness
development occurs.

The teacher who used the *discussion* method said she used it all the time because her learners
became active when they were involved in a discussion. According to her observation even the
pupils who do not normally participate in other subjects and topics do participate when they are
discussing a story. This observation is supported by Morrow’s (2005) argument that learners
learn new materials when it is repeated and practiced.

### 5.1.3 To identify the recommended NBTL methods employed by teachers

The second objective was to identify whether the teachers used the recommended methods in the
teaching of initial literacy. The findings show that there was a clear balancing of methods in
class where the teacher could use all the NBTL methods.

Teachers used most of the NBTL methods but some argued that not everything in NBTL worked
for their classes and so they opted to use methods which were not recommended in NBTL such
as use of the alphabet. Irwin (1967), Goodman (1965) and Doman (1989) advocate for use of
various methods believed to be the best methods for teaching children to learn to read in the past.
The language experience method was used by all the teachers in both schools everyday for
approximately twenty minutes. This consistent uses of the methods made some pupils learn to
read and write.

This study shows that most teachers did not understand the principles underlying NBTL methods
but they however used some methods such as phonemic awareness. Where the learner could not
read the words taught, a teacher (in different instances) was observed using the look and say,
phonic, syllabic and real books. Much explicit teaching occurred: pupils were taught word
recognition skills, self reading, comprehension tactics and writing strategies. This explicit
teaching occurred through teacher modeling, but more importantly revising occurred in relation
to learner’s needs.

The revision basically occurred and emphasis was put on weaker learners with the teacher
consistently monitoring learners as they read. Group lessons were offered and reinforcement
where need arose was applied. Wharton-McDonald *et.al* (1998) observed salient monitoring and
re-teaching on an individual learner. This was observed by the researcher in all the classes. In classes where NBTL methods were applied, teachers used the phonic flip chart for sounds, learners were taught to attend to letter and word level cues.

It was observed that learners did not have access to story books and there was no independent reading in school one. The implication arising from this inability is that learners are deprived of an opportunity to choose a story book freely and read it to develop the skill in fluency and comprehension. This resonates with Brophy (2004) who states that teachers need to be intentional in helping learners recognize and appreciate the value of reading.

The books that were read during the guided reading session in class were re-read by learners twice or at least for two days when it was time for independent reading especially in school two. From the findings the exposure of books to learners over and over again helped the learners to develop comprehension and build fluency. This was seen in school two where learners had a variety of books to be read to. The findings seem to support earlier findings that effective primary level literacy instructions involve literate classroom practices.

This study also established that learners in all the classes were provided opportunities for authentic reading. Guided oral reading was the major component of daily instant. Writing was another important factor in literacy acquisition in all the classrooms. All teachers used writing as a way of reinforcing the conventions of print but little was done by teachers especially from school one to assist the learners develop appropriate writing skills. The implication from this finding is that learners were provided with little guidance in the way they wrote and this could go on to the second grade where learners would fail to use necessary skills that were supposed to be learnt in Grade one and absence of literacy practices will not spearhead literacy development.

The other finding from this study was that teachers in both schools used the phonic method in their teaching of literacy. This seemed to have been the common method that was used by all teachers. However teachers were not able to use Chichewa appropriately as the language of play was chinyanja. This implies that if all teachers used the language of play more frequently, learners would breakthrough in big numbers.
In classes where few NBTL methods were used, learners parroted to some words and sentences and they tended to be noisy such that when they were told to read a word they failed to read but could read a word as a sentence, for example at school one, the child was asked to read the word \acapa\ and he read, amai acapa zobvala (mother is washing clothes). This shows that the teachers did not explain properly how the word is read. The finding confirm to earlier findings (Omujuwa, 2005) suggesting that learners when not helped to master the reading skills will memorize some words with no clue to how words are formed.

Based on the findings, it is clear that teachers in the study did not apply the recommended NBTL methods when teaching literacy to the grade ones. This put the learners at substantial risk of not developing literacy skills. Hence, this hinders some learners not to breakthrough to literacy because they are not taught how to read.

5.1.4 To establish the teaching material used to support NBTL teaching methods
For objective number 3, the finding was that only a few teaching materials where used to support NBTL teaching methods. The data showed that NBTL has its own materials that a teacher has to use to teach literacy. From the observations all the teachers used the teachers guide to extract methodologies for specific lessons and for guidance on how they would teach each lesson in the teaching corner but in one school other materials that the learners are supposed to use were not available. This could result in learners not developing literacy skills as expected.

The study also established that some teachers had a relaxed method to making or improvising teaching materials. At one of the two schools, the teachers of school one made word cards using soft paper as teaching aids instead of manila. The cards made were not durable and they got torn easily. Perhaps they were made to demonstrate to this researcher that they could also improvise teaching aids. It appeared like teachers kept making them when they felt like and when they did not feel like making the word cards they just wrote the words on the board for learners to read and later erase them off when writing other activities for the learners. There was no system in place for making teaching materials. The effect of not using word cards is that children may not interact and freely use the cards that are durable and as a result personal growth and responsibility to practice reading words will be restricted. Learners will only have access to
reading previous work done only if the teacher feels like writing them on the board for them to read.

This study also established that the conversation poster was used by all the teachers to elicit sentences that were to be taught. Learners were asked what they saw in the picture and they gave answers until they came to the one they were to learn that day. When the study was going on, the teachers were teaching about the home and pupils could tell what each image in the picture was talking about. Learners were seen giving constructive answers prior to what they were to learn that day. This shows how important this teaching material is to the teaching of literacy. This is consistent with studies (NRP, 2000; Morrow, 2005) that have revealed a relationship of using specific methods and use of teaching and learning aids. Findings in these studies show that children should incorporate seeing, hearing, smelling and touching when learning.

At one of the two schools only the teachers had the learner’s activity book (LAB) while at the other school these books were in abundance. The learners were given an activity book each when it was time to use these books unlike at the other school where only the teacher had access to one or two copies. The learners at school two used these books and they could draw the pictures from the book into their exercise books with ease. The learners in school one had to draw what their teacher drew on the book. It was observed that not all the relevant diagrams were drawn on the board by the teacher because some diagrams were difficult to draw and it was going to be time consuming drawing one picture on the board for learners to copy.

This clearly shows that some topics that require diagrams were not taught for challenge of drawing by the teacher in the case of school one. Thus learners do not learn all the NBTL skills in full as the teachers skip some important things that they are supposed to in the initial stage of schooling. This means that literacy acquisition on the part of the learner is negatively impacted because of the lack of teaching aids and inability by the teachers to improvise.

The other implication, as supported by the Ministry of Education (1992) policy document is that learners cannot attain relatively satisfactory levels of learning and achievement in the absence of appropriate learning materials. Learning and teaching aids enhances learners’ cognitive achievement if provided by the teacher. This is in line with Allington & McGill-Franzen (1993);
Gambrell, (1993); Neuman & Celiano, (2001) and Morrow (1992) idea that classrooms that provide an abundance and variety of reading materials for children, support engagement with reading and the classroom that is rich with reading material such as story books is a motivation to learners and learning is high.

5.1.5 To identify challenges faced by teachers in teaching reading using the NBTL

The fourth objective was to identify the challenges teachers face in teaching NBTL to grade one learner. The data showed that teachers faced a lot of challenges in the bid to impart literacy skills in the learners. Even if teachers employed all the methods and techniques as per NBTL demands, there are still other challenges which may affect the effective delivery of the NBTL course and these are:

Class size – teachers were unable to effectively apply NBTL methods due to the number of learners present. NBTL is heavily dependent on teaching and learning support materials. This implies that when the class is big, the limited materials available in the two schools could not be used effectively. Further huge classes posed a challenge to manage and organize group work and participatory learning activities.

Absenteism – learners who are often absent from class are likely not to breakthrough as they tend to miss a lot of skills in literacy. These skills are presented as building blocks i.e. they are like staircases one case leads to the other. Missing any one case along the way means one cannot reach the end. According to one teacher, these are the children who do not breakthrough because they are ever absent. This study has confirmed Luangala’s (2011) finding that missing class by children make them not read. He further observed some children are not consistent in attending class.

Language Problem - In chapter four the presentations of findings show that there were instances where teachers used English instead of Chinyanja. Three of the teachers were observed expressing themselves in English more fluently than Chinyanja. At school one, one teacher started her lessons by reading a story book entitled “Ana akhanda awiri” with words mispronounced, for instance instead of reading the word “akhanda” she read it as “akanda”. The \h\ was dropped in pronunciation, “awiri” was pronounced as “awili” the \r\ was dropped. The
mispununciation of these words was due to mother tongue interference. The implication is that when a teacher misleads the learners in the way words are supposed to be pronounced, the learners would eventually get confused as to what could be the right spelling and pronunciation of the word. If learners are to breakthrough they are supposed to pronounce and spell the words correctly as per *phonics method*. This means that grade one teachers need to be competent with the pronunciations of words in the teaching of literacy.

**Lack of materials** – Teachers had inadequate NBTL materials for teaching literacy. School one experienced a lot of burglaries during holidays. As a result of this more and more material got lost. In view of the scarcity of material to support the teaching of literacy, there is less support to learners’ learning as they do not have sufficient materials to use. To this effect it can be concluded that some children fail to breakthrough easily because there are no learning materials for them.

**Lack of parental support** - The study established that lack of parental support posed a challenge to literacy teaching. All teachers believed that for literacy to be impacted in the children that are taught, parents or guardians are to be supportive. They play a vital role in developing literacy. From the data in chapter four, it was found that all the teachers tried to involve the parents and guardians by informing them about their child/ward’s performance, their weaknesses and needs, but the parents seemingly did not show interest according to the teachers’ observations. However, this could not be entirely true as some parents and guardians could be illiterate and to blame them for being unwilling to support their children’s learning will be unfair. Most pupils came from homes with social and emotional challenges that could not easily support schooling.

**5.2 SUMMARY**

Through the researcher’s observations and interviews, it became evident that teachers do not use all the NBTL methods recommended in the teaching of literacy. Most teachers taught literacy in the way they were taught when they were pupils. The study showed clear lack of understanding of NBTL methods on the part of some of the teachers in the study. Most of the teaching was purely guess work or was vaguely applied. Even where there were attempts to teach literacy using NBTL methods, lack of teaching resources hampered the process. There was a dire need for materials for use in the literacy classes. NBTL is a high resource demand method to teaching
literacy. However, some teachers made a great effort to improvise teaching aids. Although the class size was also another challenge, teachers made use of their own knowledge and skills to address large number of learners. The next chapter presents a summary, conclusion and recommendations proposed by the study.
CHAPTER SIX
CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

6.0 OVERVIEW
This chapter presents the summary, the conclusion and recommendations drawn from this study for possible development and further research.

6.1 SUMMARY
The study was undertaken with the purpose of establishing whether or not grade one teachers were applying the appropriate NBTL teaching methods correctly in the teaching of literacy. This research generated information on what methods teachers should apply when teaching literacy to the Grade one learners. The study has also suggested the methods that could be helpful to the teachers as they teach literacy. Besides, this study has shown the need for the teachers to improvise durable teaching aids and the challenges that are faced by teachers as they are teaching literacy.

The study has also revealed that the teachers of Grade one do not apply all the methods recommended by the Ministry of Education. It has also shown why teachers should work with the methods recommended because learners have different learning ability and when all the methods are used learners will be able to grasp literacy skills easily. In addition, the study established that teachers lacked the literacy knowledge on how the NBTL methods should be applied. Another revelation is that lack of knowledge by teachers on use of the NBTL methods renders learners not breakthrough.

In the main, the study was responding to the growing interest among Zambian citizens and academicians on the failing standards of reading skills in schools. While a lot of research has been done on NBTL, the focus has been on the learner’s ability to read and write. Most of the research findings tend to blame the poor reading skills on the pupils or lack of teaching materials. This was mainly done through observing teachers teach and then interview them after teaching. The study focused on the competencies of teachers to teach literacy using NBTL methodologies.
6.2 CONCLUSION

The study concludes that NBTL methods when fully applied to teach literacy is an effective methodology, but needs skills and investment. In this study, not all the six teachers applied all the NBTL methods as outlined in the programme. The study has established that the teaching methods recommended in the NBTL teachers’ guide are not used by all the teachers. The study has shown that few teachers in the sample could teach using all the methods. Teachers favored one method over another and came up with their own that had been effective to them over the years.

Based on the results of this study, one can conclude that not much investment in NBTL materials and in-service training has been done by the MOE in a long time. Further, time allocated to the teaching of literacy through NBTL was not enough. It was observed that all teachers taught for more than one hour and yet literacy is supposed to be taught in one hour. Another observation was that teachers lost time as they tried to make teaching aids at the time they were supposed to start teaching. Absenteeism by both learners and teachers also contributed to time lost in a term, year that affected literacy skills acquisition.

The study has also shown that teachers face numerous challenges when teaching NBTL to the young ones. These include, among others, Class size, lack of material to use, language problem and absenteeism by learners.

It was established that because of the large class size, teachers failed to manage their classes and teaching of literacy became difficult as they could not pay extra attention to those learners that were failing to read. It was also observed that teachers had no access to learners’ guardians or parents. Therefore, they could not work collaboratively with them and this tended to be of less help to learners.

The overall conclusion is that teachers did not use all the NBTL teaching methods as recommended by MOE. It was observed that some teachers lacked knowledge of these methods and how to apply them when teaching the Grade one learners.
6.3 RECOMMENDATIONS

Following the completion of the study, the researcher made recommendations at two levels. These are recommendations at policy level and for further research.

6.3.1 Recommendations for Policy Development

The Ministry of Education and Curriculum Centre should undertake the task of supplying NBTL materials to all schools in Zambia to enhance teaching with less difficult. This may help teachers teach the literacy lessons to Grade one successfully.

All teachers teaching grade ones should be trained in NBTL in college or through school /zonal based continuous professional development in order to effectively teach literacy at this grade level. Some teachers in the study clearly lacked the skills to teach literacy through NBTL. The grade one teachers should be re-trained in the methods that they are supposed to use when teaching literacy. Re-training should be followed up by regular monitoring of the teaching and learning by the school administrators.

Schools should invest in the production of NBTL teaching materials using school grants for purchase of books. Schools can also improvise some teaching materials which should be well stored and of quality to enable use over a long period of time. Teachers should have core vocabulary words stuck on the class notice board or on the wall (talking walls) for children to read all the time. If this practice is encouraged, children will in a way ask their friends for assistance when they have chance to read some core vocabulary words than wait for their teacher to write the words on the board and later erase them.

Greater emphasis should be given to the development of teachers’ communication skills in the initial language and the pedagogies for children’s literacy competencies. If this is done, it would have the impact on teachers improving practice and a good way of language instruction ability.

There must be a deliberate homework policy which should be shared by parents who are able to read and write. This must clearly spell out the roles and responsibilities of parents\ guardians in supporting pupils read and write.
6.3.2 Recommendations for further research

This study is not exhaustive but has opened up other areas where further research may be necessary. Below are some of the areas that could need further research:

- To study the effect of school based continuing professional development (CPD) in improving the teaching of literacy.

- A study on how to improve scaffolding in NBTL literacy in big class size.

- A comparative study between methods recommended in the NBTL teachers’ guide and the Learner Support Program handbook by Room to Read.

- A study on how national literacy policies are interpreted by teachers in classrooms through teaching.
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Appendix 1: Interview Schedule for Grade 1 teachers

Name of Teacher: 

School:

1. What is your experience of teaching reading to Grade 1s?

2. What teaching methods do you use in the teaching of initial literacy?

3. Have you worked with NBTL methods to teaching initial literacy, how?

4. What challenges/problems do you face in teaching reading using the NBTL methods?

5. Which of the NBTL methods are effective in your teaching?

6. What teaching aids do you use to support NBTL teaching methods?

7. Suggest any other method(s) of teaching initial literacy that you have found effective.
Appendix 2: Interview Schedule for head teachers

1. What methods do your teachers use to teach literacy skills?

2. How familiar are you with the NBTL methods of teaching initial literacy?

3. How do you ensure your teachers are teaching initial literacy using the recommended language?

4. What challenges do you encounter in the bid to provide instructional leadership (supervision) to Grade 1 teachers in the teaching of initial literacy?

5. In a situation where there is lack of teaching resources and financial support, how do you ensure that literacy is effectively taught in your school?

6. Suggest ways which can improve the teaching of initial literacy in your school.
**Appendix 3: Lesson Observation Schedule**

**Declaimer:** This lesson observation is for academic purposes only and it is not meant to evaluate a good or a bad teacher. The results of this observation will be kept in confidence and names of participants will not be revealed to education authorities. The results are meant to contribute to a Master’s degree study on the teaching of literacy, at the University of Zambia.

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Appendix 4: Research Consent Form

The University of Zambia

School of Education

Department of Languages and Social Sciences Education

Research Consent Form

Researcher: Edrivione M. B. Lupele

Introduction

I am Edrivione M.B. Lupele, a registered student at the University of Zambia. I am undertaking a Master’s Degree in Literacy and Learning. I am currently carrying out field work and I invite you and your School to participate in this study. As I work in your school I wish to observe teachers teach reading to Grade ones. I may also interview teachers on the success and challenges of using New Breakthrough (NBTL) teaching methods.

Duration

To gain in depth insights in the teaching of literacy through NBTL I may observe a Grade one teacher at least three to four times.

Confidentiality
The information gathered through this study is for academic purpose and will not be revealed to anyone including education authorities. Any information about you will be coded to a number which will be assigned to you, instead of your name. It will not be shared with or given to anyone.

**Consent (to be completed by the participant)**

I have read the foregoing information. I have had the opportunity to ask questions about it and any questions I have asked have been answered to my satisfaction. I consent voluntarily to be a participant in this study.

Print Name

Signature of participant

School

Date