THE NATURE, PREVALENCE, CAUSES AND METHODS USED BY TEACHERS TO CORRECT THE READING DIFFICULTIES EXPERIENCED BY MIDDLE BASIC SCHOOL LEARNERS WITH VISUAL IMPAIRMENTS IN ZAMBIA: A CASE OF MAGWERO AND NDOLA LIONS’ SCHOOLS FOR THE BLIND.

BY

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MARCH, 2011.
DECLARATION

I, Thomas Mtonga, hereby declare that the work contained in this dissertation is typically as a result of my own individual efforts and that all the work from other researchers has been acknowledged. I further certify that this dissertation has not been submitted for a degree in any University or similar institution.

Signature: ..................

Date: ................
APPROVAL

The University of Zambia approves this research report of Thomas Mtonga as fulfilling part of the requirements for the award of the Degree of Master of Education in Special Education: (M.Ed Special).

Signed: ……………………………...   date: ………..…

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DEDICATION

I dedicate this work of my hands to my dearest wife Faith Haantete and our three children Thofai, Wodala and Uchizgi. My heart goes out for my family because when you needed me most, I was not available and in moments of deep sorrows and overwhelming work laid upon me, you listened and understood my situation.

I also dedicate this work to my late father Saika Rywel Mtonga and late mum Tiyane Mwale. Though uneducated and lived in a life of bare survival, they labored and insisted that I go to school and live an independent life. My brothers tenten, Grandwel and Mateyo, and sisters: Kate and Susan, in the village, I cherish their love and concern for my welfare. And I appreciate my mother-in-law W.M. Mtonga for her encouragement.

Lastly, I dedicate this work to my dearest Father: the God of the heavens and earth for the special grace He has forever provided to me.
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ABSTRACT

The study investigated the nature, prevalence, causes and methods used by teachers to correct the reading difficulties experienced by middle basic school learners with visual impairments in Zambia. The objectives of the study were to:

identify the nature of reading difficulties among middle basic school learners with visual impairments; determine the prevalence levels and causes as well as to establish the methods used by teachers to correct the identified reading difficulties. The study used the survey design. The target population was one hundred and sixteen middle basic school learners and twenty-six middle basic Special Education teachers in six residential schools for the blind. The sample consisted of forty-five learners and fourteen special education teachers. Random and purposive sampling were used to arrive at the pupil and teacher samples.

In collecting data, questionnaires were administered to learners and teachers. Teachers were also interviewed and learners were engaged in focus group discussions. The study instruments were piloted at Munali Special Unit in Lusaka before they were used in the study. Qualitative and quantitative data analyses were used. The findings of the study revealed that more than half (56.3%) of learners with visual impairments experienced tactile reading difficulties while 43.6% of the respondents experienced phonological and phonemic reading difficulties. 48.8% of all the respondents indicated that the reading difficulties were caused by inadequate reading materials and 44% of them stated that the reading difficulties were caused by challenges in distinguishing letters and dots. Besides these findings, 72% of the respondents also indicated that the identified reading difficulties could be corrected if learners were given adequate special homework and individualized attention.

The study concluded that learners with visual impairments experienced a very high prevalence of reading difficulties contrary to the reading abilities expected at their levels. Major recommendations were made among which were that the Ministry of Education should formulate deliberate policies to enhance the acquisition of reading skills among learners with visual impairments and that the Ministry should purchase adequate reading materials for the learners under review. The Curriculum Development Center and the Examination Council of Zambia should prepare reading materials that are suitable to learners with visual impairments.
# TABLE OF CONTENTS

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Section</th>
<th>Pages</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Title Page</td>
<td>(i)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Declaration</td>
<td>(ii)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Approval</td>
<td>(iii)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dedication</td>
<td>(iv)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Acknowledgements</td>
<td>(v)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Abstract</td>
<td>(vii)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Table of Contents</td>
<td>(viii)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tables</td>
<td>(xi)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Figures</td>
<td>(xii)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Chapter One: Introduction</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1.1 Background to The Study</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1.2 Statement of the Problem</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1.3 Purpose of the Study</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1.4 Objectives of the Study</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1.5 Research Questions</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1.6 Significance of the Study</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1.7 Limitations of the Study</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1.8 Definition of Key Terms</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Chapter Two: LITERATURE REVIEW</td>
<td>8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2.1 The Nature of Reading Difficulties</td>
<td>8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2.2 The Prevalence of Reading Difficulties</td>
<td>12</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2.3 Causes of Reading Difficulties</td>
<td>17</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2.4 Methods used by Teachers to Correct the Reading Difficulties</td>
<td>21</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2.5 Summary of the Chapter</td>
<td>23</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Chapter Three: METHODOLOGY</td>
<td>25</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3.1 Research Design</td>
<td>25</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3.2 Population of the Study</td>
<td>26</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3.3 Sample Size and Sampling Procedure</td>
<td>26</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3.4 Research Instruments</td>
<td>34</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
3.5 Data Collection Procedure................................................. 35
3.6 Data Analysis................................................................. 37
3.7 Pilot Test........................................................................ 37

CHAPTER FOUR: PRESENTATION OF FINDINGS......................... 39
4.1 Nature of Reading Difficulties............................................ 39
4.2 Prevalence of Reading Difficulties..................................... 46
4.3 Causes of Reading Difficulties.......................................... 57
4.4 Methods used by Teachers to Correct Reading Difficulties.... 76

CHAPTER FIVE: DISCUSSION OF FINDINGS.............................. 80
5.1 The Nature of Reading Difficulties..................................... 80
5.2 Prevalence of Reading Difficulties..................................... 82
5.3 Causes of Reading Difficulties.......................................... 84
5.4 Methods used by Teachers to Correct Reading Difficulties.... 87

CHAPTER SIX: SUMMARY, CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS.... 89
6.1 Summary....................................................................... 89
6.2 Conclusion.................................................................... 90
6.3 Recommendations.......................................................... 90
Future Research................................................................. 92
References........................................................................ 93
Appendices........................................................................ 98
Appendix 1: Questionnaire for Learners with Visual Impairments... 98
Appendix 2: Focus Group Discussion........................................ 107
Appendix 3: Interview Guide for Grades Five, Six and Seven Teachers for Learners With Visual Impairments........................................ 108
Appendix 4: Questionnaire for Grades Five, Six and Seven Teachers for Learners With Visual Impairments........................................ 109
TABLES

Table-1: Pupil Respondents by School and Sex………………………………………………….. 28
Table-2: Age and Sex of Pupil Respondents……………………………………………………… 28
Table-3: Age When Pupil Became Visually Impaired………………………………………… 29
Table-4: Respondents by Grade and Sex………………………………………………………… 31
Table-5: Pupils’ Responses On The Types Of Braille That Learners Liked Reading……… 39
Table-6: Pupils’ Responses on the Reasons for Liking the Type of Braille………………….. 40
Table-7: Pupils’ Responses On The Nature Of Reading Difficulties Faced Which They Faced…………………………………………………………………………………………….. 41
Table-8: The Nature of Reading Difficulties Faced By Pupils…………………………………… 43
Table-9: The Teacher Responses from Questionnaires on the Nature of Reading Difficulties As Experienced By Their Learners……………………………………………………… 44
Table-10: How Often Pupils Experience Difficulties in Detecting Letters and Words In a Sentence…………………………………………………………………………………………….. 46
Table-11: Frequency Of Experiencing Reading Difficulties……………………………………… 56
Table-12: Summary Of The Frequencies Of Learners Experiencing Reading Difficulties……………………………………………………………………………………………. 57
Table-13: Pupils’ Responses on Possible Causes for Finding Difficulties in Detecting Letters And Words in A Sentence……………………………………………………………………….. 58
Table-14: Pupils’ Responses on Possible Causes for Confusing Letters When Reading………………………………………………………………………………………………………………….. 58
Table-15: Pupils’ Responses on Possible Causes for Skipping Lines When Reading………………………………………………………………………………………………………………….. 59
Table-16: Pupils’ Responses on the Possible Causes for Skipping Words When Reading………………………………………………………………………………………………………………….. 60
Table-17: Pupils’ Responses on the Possible Causes for Having Problems with Pronunciation Of Certain Words…………………………………………………………………………………………….. 60
Table-18: Pupils’ Responses on the Possible Causes for Confusing the Spellings of Certain Words When Reading…………………………………………………………………………………………….. 61
Table-19: Pupils’ Responses On the Possible Causes for Failing to Recall Certain Letters and Words When Reading…………………………………………………………………………………………….. 62
Table-20: Pupils’ Responses on the Possible Causes for Easy Distraction in Attention When Reading…………………………………………………………………………………………….. 62
Table-21: Pupils’ Responses On The Possible Causes For Failing To Understand What they
Table-22: Pupils’ Responses on the Possible Causes for Feeling the Braille Very Faint……………………………………………………………………………… 63
Table-23: Pupils’ Responses on the Possible Causes for Difficulties in Distinguishing Contracted And Uncontracted Braille……………………………………………………………………………… 64
Table-24: Summary of the Suggested Possible Causes for the Tactile Reading Difficulties……………………………………………………………………………………………………………………… 66
Table-25: Teachers’ Views on the Possible Causes for Learners’ Difficulties in Detecting Letters And Words in A Sentence among Learners with Visual Impairments………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………….. 67
Table-26: Teachers’ Views on the Possible Causes for Learners Confusing Certain Letters……………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………….. 68
Table-27: Teachers’ Views on the Possible Causes for Learners Skipping Lines……………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………….. 69
Table-28: Teachers’ Views on the Possible Causes for Learners Skipping Some Words…………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………. 70
Table-29: Teachers’ Views On The Possible Causes For Learners’ Difficulties With The Pronunciation of Certain Words……………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………… 70
Table-30: Teachers’ Views on the Possible Causes for Learners Confusing the Spellings Of Certain Words………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………… 71
Table-31: Teachers’ Views on the Possible Causes for Learners Having Difficulties in Recalling Certain Letters and Words………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………… 72
Table-32: Teachers’ Views on the Possible Causes for Learners’ Failure to Understand What They Read………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………… 72
Table-33: Teachers’ Views on the Possible Causes for Learners Feeling Braille as Being Faint………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………… 73
Table-34: Teachers’ Views on the Possible Causes for Learners Finding Difficulties In Distinguishing Between One Contracted Braille Symbol and Another…………… 74
Table-35: Pupil Suggestions on the Methods Used To Correct Reading Difficulties Among Learners………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………… 77
Table-36: Teachers’ Views Teaching Methods Used By Teachers to Correct Braille Reading Difficulties………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………… 78
FIGURES.

Figure-1: Whether the Learner Was Totally Blind or Not…………………………………. 30
Figure-2: Whether the Teacher Was Trained or Not……………………………………… 32
Figure-3: Whether the Teacher Was Sighted or Not……………………………………… 33
Figure-4: Summary of the Pupil and Teacher Responses from Both Questionnaires And
Focus Group Discussion on the Nature of Reading Difficulties as Experienced By Learners……………………………………… 45
Figure-5: Frequency at Which Pupils Confused Letters When Reading……………… 47
Figure-6: Frequency at Which Pupil Skipped Lines When Reading…………………… 48
Figure-7: Frequency At Which Pupils Skipped Words When Reading………………… 48
Figure-8: Frequency at Which Pupils Had Difficulties in Pronouncing Certain Words… 49
Figure-9: Frequency At Which Pupil’s Confused Spellings of Certain Words………….. 50
Figure-10: Frequency at Which Pupils Had Difficulties in Recalling Letters and Words……………………………………………………………………… 51
Figure-11: Frequency at Which Pupils Had Difficulties with Attention………………….. 52
Figure-12: Frequency at Which Learners Had Difficulties with Understanding What They
Read……………………………………………………………………………… 52
Figure-13: Frequency at Which Pupils Felt Braille to Be Faint………………………… 53
Figure-14: Frequency at Which Pupils Had Difficulties in Distinguishing Contracted And
Uncontracted Braille……………………………………………………………… 54
Figure-15: Summary of both Teacher and Learners Responses on the Teaching Methods
Used by teachers To Correct Reading Difficulties………………………………… 79