

**HOMEWORK POLICY IMPLEMENTATION IN SELECTED PRIMARY  
SCHOOLS OF KALABO DISTRICT IN WESTERN PROVINCE OF ZAMBIA:  
PROSPECTS AND CHALLENGES**

**By**

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requirements for the award of the degree of Master of Education in Sociology of  
Education**

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## DECLARATION

I, **Violet Mwanamwambwa**, do hereby declare that this work is mine and that all work of other persons used in this work has been rightfully acknowledged, and that this work has not been previously presented at the University of Zambia and indeed any other university for this similar purpose.

Signature: ..... Date: .....2021

## APPROVAL

This dissertation by Violet Mwanamwambwa is approved as fulfilling part of the requirements for the award of the Degree of Master of Education in Sociology of Education of the University of Zambia.

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## ABSTRACT

This study explored homework policy implementation in selected primary schools of Kalabo District in Western Province of Zambia with particular focus on prospects and challenges. The study utilised social constructivism theory by Levy Vygotsky 1978. The objectives were; to explore teacher's experiences on the homework policy implementation, to ascertain the perceptions of parents towards homework policy, to assess the prospects of giving homework to pupils and to establish the challenges pupils and parents encountered when given homework. The study used a qualitative approach with the target population that consisted of three government primary schools in Kalabo district. The sample size of this study comprised of three teachers, nine parents/ guardians, and fifteen grade four learners, making a total of 27 participants from the three selected primary schools in Kalabo district. The three schools in the district were selected conveniently while the teachers, parents /guardians and pupils from each school were selected purposively. The research instruments used were semi-structured interview guide and focus group discussion guide. The study findings revealed that teachers' experiences on homework policy implementation involved the following: giving homework at least twice in a week; positive parental response and involvement; negative parental response and involvement; and enhanced academic performance of learners, among other aspects. Parents perceived homework in many ways, for example, some of them perceived homework as school work given to learners in order to keep them busy at home. Prospects of providing homework to learners at selected primary schools were that: homework provided learners with an opportunity to improve the academic performance, it opened up the minds of learners to interact with friends to arouse the interest of learners, and they learnt how to manage their time and kept them in constant touch with school work. This was echoed by subject teachers. On the other hand, teachers reported that parents did not regularly check their children's homework because they were busy with work, farming and doing business which depicted a negative response towards their children's homework. Learners and parents encountered a number of challenges as they worked on homework given by teachers. Some parents did not want to help their children in answering their homework because they believed it was the role of the teachers to do so and not parents. Finally, the study established that despite these challenges learning through homework proved that teachers were engaging parents in the education of their children so that they could help them learn from what they knew in their environment. In view of the above findings, the study recommended that teachers should ensure that they give homework to learners which is manageable so that they finish on time and parents should help their children with homework by creating enough time for them.

**Key words:** *Homework policy, implementation, prospects.*

## **DEDICATION**

I dedicate this work to my dear sisters Veronica, Patricia, Christabel and my darling brother father Victor not forgetting my nephews Thabo and Isaac.

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## TABLE OF CONTENTS

<b>COPYRIGHT .....</b>	<b>i</b>
<b>DECLARATION.....</b>	<b>ii</b>
<b>APPROVAL .....</b>	<b>iii</b>
<b>ABSTRACT.....</b>	<b>iv</b>
<b>DEDICATION.....</b>	<b>v</b>
<b>ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS.....</b>	<b>vi</b>
<b>TABLE OF CONTENTS.....</b>	<b>vii</b>
<b>LIST OF TABLES .....</b>	<b>xii</b>
<b>LIST OF FIGURES .....</b>	<b>xiii</b>
<b>LIST OF APPENDICES .....</b>	<b>xiv</b>
<b>ABBREVIATIONS AND ACRONYMS.....</b>	<b>xv</b>
<b>CHAPTER ONE: INTRODUCTION .....</b>	<b>1</b>
1.1 Overview .....	1
1.2 Background of the study .....	1
1.3 Problem statement .....	4
1.4 Purpose of the study .....	5
1.5 Research objectives.....	5
1.6 Research questions .....	6
1.7 Significance of the study.....	6
1.8 Limitation of the study .....	7
1.9 Theoretical framework .....	7



1.10 Operational definition of terms .....	10
1.11 Organization of the dissertation .....	10
<b>CHAPTER TWO: LITERATURE REVIEW .....</b>	<b>13</b>
2.1 Overview .....	13
2.2 Homework policy guidelines and roles of actors in Zambia.....	13
2.3 Teachers’ experiences on the homework policy implementation .....	14
2.4 Parents’ perceptions towards homework policy .....	26
2.5 Prospects of giving homework to pupils.....	33
2.6 Challenges learners and parents encounter when given homework.....	37
2.7 Summary of the chapter .....	47
<b>CHAPTER THREE: METHODOLOGY.....</b>	<b>48</b>
3.1 Overview .....	48
3.2 Research design.....	48
3.3 Target population .....	49
3.4 Sample size.....	49
3.5 Sampling procedure .....	50
3.6 Research instruments .....	51
3.6.1 Semi-structured interviews .....	51
3.6.2 Focus group discussions .....	52
3.7 Data collection procedure and time line.....	53
3.8 Data analysis .....	53
3.9 Ethical considerations .....	57

3.10 Credibility and trustworthiness of the study .....	58
3.11 Summary of the chapter .....	59
<b>CHAPTER FOUR: PRESENTATION OF FINDINGS .....</b>	<b>60</b>
4.1 Introduction .....	60
4.2 Demographic profile .....	61
4.3 What are the teachers’ experiences on homework policy implementation in selected primary schools of Kalabo district? .....	61
4.3.1 Giving homework at least twice in a week .....	62
4.3.2 Positive parental response and involvement .....	62
4.3.3 Negative parental response and involvement .....	64
4.3.4 Failure to do homework by some learners .....	64
4.3.5 Marking homework and providing feedback to learners .....	66
4.3.6 Improved academic performance of learners.....	66
4.3.7 Complaints on frequency of homework given to learners .....	67
4.4 What are the perceptions of parents towards homework policy in selected primary schools of Kalabo district?.....	68
4.4.1 Homework as school work meant to keep learners busy at home .....	69
4.4.2 Homework as weekly work given to learners.....	70
4.4.3 Homework as good in mathematics.....	71
4.4.4 Homework as a way to find out if teachers are teaching the correct material .....	71
4.5 What are the prospects of giving homework to learners in selected primary schools of Kalabo district?.....	73

4.5.1 Improving academic performance of learners .....	73
4.5.2 Developing interest and enhancing self-learning.....	75
4.5.3 Improving communication and parental involvement in children’s education.....	77
4.6 What challenges do pupils and parents encounter when given homework?.....	79
4.6.1 Challenges learners encounter when given homework.....	79
4.6.1.1 Lack of help from parents.....	79
4.6.1.2 Home chores pressure.....	79
4.6.1.3 Teachers not marking homework.....	80
4.6.1.4 Illeterate levels by parents.....	80
4.6.1.5 Too much homework.....	81
4.6.1.6 Lack of learning materials/ resources.....	82
4.6.1.7 Lack of understanding homework tasks.....	82
4.6.2 Challenges parents encounter with learners’ homework .....	83
4.6.2.1 Inability to help due to incompetency.....	83
4.6.2.2 Fear of being embarrassed.....	84
4.6.2.3 Lack of guidance by teachers.....	84
4.6.2.4 Inability to spare time.....	85
4.6.2.5 Difficulty in buying learning resources/ materials.....	85
4.7 Summary of the chapter .....	86

<b>CHAPTER FIVE: DISCUSSION OF FINDINGS.....</b>	<b>87</b>
5.1 Introduction.....	87
5.2 The teachers’ experiences on homework policy implementation in selected primary schools of Kalabo district.....	87
5.3 Parents’ perceptions towards homework Policy in selected primary schools of Kalabo district.....	94
5.4 Prospects of giving homework to learners in selected primary schools of Kalabo district.....	95
5.5 Challenges pupils and parents encounter with regards to homework in selected primary schools of Kalabo district.....	99
5.6 Summary of the chapter .....	103
 <b>CHAPTER SIX: CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS.....</b>	 <b>105</b>
6.1 Introduction.....	105
6.2 Conclusion .....	105
6.3 Recommendations .....	108
6.4 Areas for further research.....	110
 <b>REFERENCES.....</b>	 <b>111</b>
<b>APPENDICES .....</b>	<b>123</b>

## LIST OF TABLES

<b>Table 1:</b> Category of Respondents from all the Respective Schools .....	61
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## LIST OF FIGURES

<b>Figure 1:</b> Steps in thematic analysis (Source: Adapted from Braun and Clarke, 2006).....	54
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## LIST OF APPENDICES

<b>Appendix 1:</b> Semi-Structured Interview Guide for Teachers. ....	123
<b>Appendix 2:</b> Semi-Structured Interview Guide for Parents. ....	124
<b>Appendix 3:</b> Focus Group Discussion Guide for Pupils.....	125

## **ABBREVIATIONS AND ACRONYMS**

<b>DEBS</b>	District Education Board Secretary
<b>FDGs</b>	Focus Group Discussions
<b>HOD</b>	Head of Department
<b>MOE</b>	Ministry of Education
<b>MOGE</b>	Ministry of General Education
<b>SES</b>	Social Economic Status
<b>TIPS</b>	Teacher involve parents in school work.
<b>ZPD</b>	Zonal of Proximal Development



## **CHAPTER ONE: INTRODUCTION**

### **1.1 Overview**

This chapter serves to introduce the study by presenting the background of the study, the problem statement, purpose of the study, research objectives, research questions, significance of the study, limitations of the study, theoretical framework and the operational definitions of terms. The chapter ends with the organisation of the dissertation.

### **1.2 Background of the study**

Homework is a requirement in all Zambian schools, according to the homework policy of the Ministry of General Education (MOGE). MOGE (2015) outlines the guidance notes on homework policy in the country. Some of these guidance notes are that: homework being tasks or activities assigned to learners to be completed after class hours should be set to help children continue learning after the class; homework is part of the instructional process, as it gives the child more time to learn; homework is part of the formative assessment as it provides the teacher and parents information on the child's progress; and that homework provides an opportunity for the teachers to gauge learners' difficulties and to address them by instruction; learners reinforce recently learnt concepts and skills, and parents are helped to engage in their children's work and monitor their progress through homework. Since the Ministry of General Education's main aim is to provide quality education to all the citizens of Zambia, and homework is one such an essential aspect in the implementation of quality education, the ministry has placed emphasis on the implementation of homework policy in all the schools in the country (MOE, 2015).

Zambian primary schools are not left out, as it is a requirement that teachers assign homework activities to their learners in all the schools, as per homework policy guidelines of the Ministry of General Education. The Ministry of General Education expects every school head teacher to supervise the homework activities that teachers assign to their learners. Teachers are expected to plan for these homework activities and monitor the learners' performance on homework and make sure that there is evidence that parents or guardians are involved in their children's homework assignments (Nyakupanda, 2009). As Madziyire (2010) states, teachers are expected to maintain a record of marks for homework activities in order to trace the performance of their learners. All learners are to be in possession of a set of homework exercise books to use for their homework which are separate from the school exercise books (Mangara, 2011). Class timetables should reflect times when teachers assign homework for all to see (Nyoni, 2012). This information implies that in Zambian primary schools, homework is mandatory in all classrooms and every teacher should assign homework. Heads of schools are also expected to promote the use of homework by all their teachers. It is on account of this information above that this research set out to assess how the primary school teachers in the area studied were implementing the homework policy.

According to Nivo (2008) homework is school work given to learners to do at home during their spare time individually or in groups. Galloway et.al. (2013) asserts that homework is school work that is done by a learner after undergoing explicit instruction on how to carry out the work. Nyoni (2012) argues that homework should be assigned to learners in order to fulfil specific learning objectives rather than for the sake of occupying learners at home. According to Cuban (2009), homework should allow for practice and application

by children and children should not be assigned homework that requires new concepts that have not been introduced and taught by the teacher. Homework should act as a revision of learnt concepts. Kadodo (2013) posits that the objective in giving homework is to develop an independent learner who is able to “learn how to learn” and face problems and solve them without having to wait for the teacher, hence developing in him/her the concept of self-image and confidence as a learner. Redding (2012) postulates that homework can provide other benefits. For example, the child’s ability to bring an assignment home, gather and organize necessary materials to complete the assignment, return the assignment and receive a mark, strengthens his or her sense of responsibility (Redding, 2012).

Eita (2007) mentions that homework can be seen as an everyday part of school life. Most children come home from school with one or more assignments to be completed and returned to school the following day or a within a few days. However, the importance of homework is increasingly becoming recognized. According to Cooper (2007) “homework in the early grades should encourage positive attitudes and character traits and allow for appropriate parental involvement in homework which reinforces skills introduced in class” (p.1). In primary schools homework should work towards improving standardized test scores and grades.

According to Macbeth (2003) “Educators set homework to consolidate and practice work already done in class or in preparation for the next class. Homework can also be given when introducing tasks that extend beyond work already done in class that need to be built upon. Homework can assist slower children to catch up with quicker children. It can also test learners’ understanding of work covered, or their competence in skills. Homework also teaches learners to work independently and to develop self-discipline” (p.4).

Naidu et al. (2011) states that “many parents in African countries are grappling to cope with their role as active stakeholders in education” (p.118). According to Naidu et al. (2011) “parental interest and support is a very important factor for their children’s success in school” (p.130). Epstein (1987) and Van Rooyen (2012) argue that a school community with well implemented practices yields learners with positive results. Lemmer and Van Wyk (1998) reports that “where families learnt together the children’s grades improved and the children enjoyed learning” (p.1). This implies that parental involvement can boost learner homework efforts and effectiveness (Naidu et al., 2011; Pretorius 2014). This view is supported by Hoover-Dempsey and Sandler (1995) and Balli (1998) who agree that when parents help their children with their homework, children believe that their educational pursuits are worthy of their time and effort.

The above statements made the researcher to see the need to explore homework policy implementation at selected primary schools in Kalabo district of Western province, Zambia. This was done in order to appreciate teachers’ experiences on homework policy implementation, parents’ perceptions of homework given to the learners, as well as the prospects and challenges of homework given to the learners.

### **1.3 Problem statement.**

Government through the Ministry of General Education has endeavoured to introduce homework policy as an extension of school work (MOE, 2015). Apart from that, the Ministry of General Education has also encouraged teachers who are the key implementers of homework to work hand in hand with learners in ensuring that this policy becomes a success (MOE, 1996). Due to the congested nature of the primary school timetable, it becomes inevitable that some work may remain unfinished in the classroom and thus some

time has to be found at home to finish the classroom tasks under the guidance of parents, guardians or older siblings. The study therefore set out to assess how the primary school teachers were implementing this homework policy. Since the introduction of this policy by the Ministry of General Education little seems to be known about the prospects and challenges of this policy especially in rural primary schools. It is against this background that this study sought to explore homework policy implementation in selected primary schools of Kalabo district in Western province of Zambia.

#### **1.4 Purpose of the study**

The purpose of the study was to explore homework policy implementation in selected primary schools of Kalabo district in Western province of Zambia with particular focus on prospects and challenges.

#### **1.5 Research objectives**

1. To explore teachers' experiences on the homework policy implementation in selected primary schools of Kalabo district.
2. To ascertain the perceptions of parents towards homework policy in selected primary schools of Kalabo district.
3. To assess the prospects of giving homework to pupils in selected primary schools of Kalabo district.
4. To establish the challenges pupils and parents encounter when given homework.

## **1.6 Research questions**

1. What are the teachers' experiences on homework policy implementation in selected primary schools of Kalabo district?
2. What are the perceptions of parents towards homework policy in selected primary schools of Kalabo district?
3. What are the prospects of giving homework to pupils in selected primary schools of Kalabo district?
4. What challenges do pupils and parents encounter when given homework?

## **1.7 Significance of the study**

It is essential to investigate homework policy implementation in schools and identify challenges and prospects of this innovation to enhance learning. Teachers' experiences on homework policy implementation may highlight challenges which could be corrected in order to improve the practice. Knowing the perceptions of parents towards homework may help in educating some of them who do not know the importance of parental involvement and their roles in children's homework. Moreover, exploring the prospects of giving homework to learners may motivate both the teachers and learners as they could fully understand the importance of the policy, and knowing about the challenges which parents and learners face in homework policy implementation may help devise strategies that can enable effective implementation of the said policy in primary schools. Generally, the study may develop ways of ameliorating the challenges and also come up with strategies to improve on the successes of the policy. The findings of this study might be helpful to educational practitioners and administrators, and may contribute to finding a lasting

solution to the effective implementation of homework in schools. The study may also contribute to the growing body of knowledge on homework in primary schools and in sociology of education at large.

### **1.8 Limitation of the study**

The study was restricted to three selected primary schools of Kalabo district. Other schools in the district did not participate in the study. For this reason, the findings of this study may not be generalised. However, data obtained from these three primary schools was enough to understand teachers' experiences, parents' perceptions, prospects and challenges faced by learners and parents regarding homework policy implementation in primary schools of Kalabo district.

### **1.9 Theoretical framework**

The study was guided by Social Constructivism Theory propounded by Levy Vygotsky in 1978. This theory emphasizes on learners creating knowledge through meaningful interaction. The teacher is seen as a facilitator in teaching and learning processes. The learners learn from each other in the Zone of Proximal Development (ZPD). This theory helps in homework policy regarding homework, along with clear expectations for teachers as to what constitutes good homework. The theory helps to strengthen the benefits of homework for student learning while decreasing potential problems. The policy might define the role of homework in learning at each grade level. For example, the theory helps to understand that homework should help young children develop good study habits, promote positive attitudes towards school, and communicate to learners that learning takes

place outside as well as inside school. Thus, assignments should be brief, involve materials commonly found in the home, and should not be too demanding (Cooper, 1994).

### **Social Constructivism**

The social constructivist theory of learning has emerged as one of the preferred theories used when transforming teaching practices and learner engagement. Expanding on the work of John Dewey (1933), scholars like Piaget (1966), Mezrow (1978), Vygotsky (1978), Glaserfeld (1995), Fosnot (1996), Anderson (1999), and Herr (2005) have provided a strong rationale for teaching from the constructivist perspective. Constructivism represents a shift from teaching which supports teacher dominance and allows other people around the learners to help and provide knowledge to them. According to Vygotsky (1978), constructivism is a learning theory based on the premise that individuals construct their own understanding of the world by reflecting on their own experiences. Social Constructivism was appropriate for this study because it holds that individuals generate their own rules or beliefs about the homework which is given to them and through interaction with the significant others, learning takes place through consultation. This helps learners make sense of their experiences.

Social constructivism is mainly associated with Vygotsky, and hence the reason why it is sometimes referred to as Vygotskian constructivism. Munsaka and Matafwali (2014) notes that Vygotsky believes that culture provides the unique ingredient that determines how children's cognitive development progresses. It is this form of constructivism that emphasizes the role education plays in people's social transformation. Social constructivists believe that an individual's development is influenced by the sociocultural



context within which they live. They see an individual's development as being derived from a group of social interactions in which culturally shared meanings are internalized (Stofflett, 1998).

Vygotsky (1978) posits that the individual's interactions with the environment will help in constructing knowledge that changes not only the individual but also the environment. With this view, children's interaction in a conducive learning environment makes the child to learn through others by sharing ideas, discussing and presenting to the peers. Homework enables the children to be brought together with parents and colleagues and work as a group to solve the homework problems. This collaborative learning is what Vygotsky said to be making the children learn through the Zonal Proximal Development, (ZPD).

Lightfoot et al. (2009) defines ZPD as, "*the gap between what children can accomplish independently and what they can accomplish when they are interacting with others who are more competent*" (p.24). It is from this reasoning that the Vygotskian theory seems appropriate for the teachers' experiences on the implementation of homework policy in the primary schools of Kalabo district. Homework calls for meaningful interaction in a conducive social environment which is created by the parents so that they help the learners in their assignment given by the teachers. Learning has to take place through activities in a social environment, which is the homes.

Homework in this context is based on the constructivism theory of learning which is based on the belief that learning mainly occurs when learners are actively involved in meaning making and the construction of knowledge through meaningful interaction with parents at home (Vygotsky, 1978). It is also argued that learning does not occur in isolation.

Learning occurs when learners interact with new knowledge, the learning environment, as well as with parents or guardians who have the past experiences (Dershem, 1996). These interactions change the pre-existing knowledge of the learners and they adopt new sets of knowledge and behaviour from the parents and guardians. Thus, what is learned is not just based on an individual's past experiences, but instead on the collective experiences of the entire family and community. This implies that learners are actively involved in the learning process. The teacher, as a facilitator, fosters critical thinking and helps create motivated and independent learners who are able to research and consult from the parents and the community as a whole (Kwo, 1994).

### **1.10 Operational definition of terms**

- Challenges:** is an act of rebellion against homework implementation.
- Homework:** in this study is defined as “any kind of task assigned to learners to be carried out after school has ended.”
- Policy:** Set of rules that give guidelines on the direction and influence the behaviour of people in administering homework.
- Perception:** the conscious understanding of homework by the parents in the study.
- Prospects:** in this study, prospects refer to benefits of homework to the learners, teachers and parents / guardians.

### **1.11 Organization of the dissertation**

Chapter 1 introduces the study by giving the background of the study. The motivation of the study being that the researcher wanted to explore how homework policy was being implemented in rural primary schools with the congested nature of primary school time

table. The chapter also outlined some key aspects such as the problem statement, purpose of the study, research objectives, research questions, significance of the study, limitations of the study, theoretical framework and lastly the operational definitions of terms.

Chapter 2 outlines a review of related literature to the problem under exploration. Literature is presented under the following sub-headings: Teachers' experiences on homework policy implementation; Parents' perceptions towards homework policy; Prospects of giving homework to learners; and Challenges learners and parents encounter when given homework. The chapter concludes with a summary.

Chapter 3 provides the methodology which includes, the research design, target population, sample size, sampling procedure, research instruments, data analysis, ethical considerations, and credibility and trustworthiness of the study. Semi-structured interview guides were accompanied by audio recordings. Focus group discussions (FGDs) were used to supplement the semi-structured interviews.

Chapter 4 presents the analysis of qualitative findings. Literature and sociocultural theory of development by Vygotsky (1978) were used for both vertical (within case analysis) and horizontal (across case analysis). However, the document only reflects the horizontal analysis. The chapter ends with a summary of the findings.

Chapter 5 provides the discussion of the findings presented in the preceding chapter (chapter 4) in line with the research objectives. The results are further discussed in view of the literature reviewed and the theoretical foundations that informed the study.

Chapter 6 gives the conclusion and recommendations based on the findings. The conclusion summarises the study while recommendations provide suggestions to inform practice and area of further research in homework policy implementation at primary school level.

## **CHAPTER TWO: LITERATURE REVIEW**

### **2.1 Overview**

This chapter reviews the literature on the studies undertaken on homework policy implementation. The chapter presents literature according to the themes derived from the study objectives. This implies that literature related to homework policy implementation was reviewed. The chapter begins by looking at studies on teachers' experiences on the homework policy implementation, then on parents' perceptions towards homework policy, prospects of giving homework to learners, and challenges learners and parents encounter when assigned homework. Finally, a summary of the chapter is presented. Reviewing literature under the above outlined sub-headings helped the researcher to learn about some of the findings of the previous studies on homework policy implementation elsewhere, and to identify the gaps. This also allowed the researcher to focus the research appropriately.

### **2.2 Homework policy guidelines and roles of actors in Zambia**

The homework policy guidelines in Zambia clearly outline the roles of different actors in developing and using homework (MOGE, 2015). The actors according to the policy document are: the MOGE, the district office, the head teacher, the parents, teachers, and the learners. The roles of MOGE are to develop policy on homework and standardised guidelines for the implementation in all Zambian schools, as well as sensitizing actors at all the district and school levels to the homework policy and guidelines. The district office on the other hand need to sensitise head teachers and class teachers on the importance of homework, monitor homework in schools and ensure that the guidelines for implementing homework are posted. The head teacher with teachers and parents need to develop a

school-based homework policy, monitor the implementation of homework in his or her school, and display the guidelines and school schedule for implementing homework. The head teacher should also ensure that teachers and parents understand the importance of homework and their roles in its use.

On the other hand, homework policy also outlines the roles of a teacher as checking homework as soon as it is brought back, keeping records of homework tasks given every week which can be a reference material for monitoring by head teachers and standard officers, checking parents' signatures in the learners' books, as well as holding regular meetings with parents to discuss learners' work. Parents need to check children's work, sign in homework books, and meet with the teacher about their children's progress. Lastly, learners need to do homework as instructed by their teacher, do peer monitoring where they exchange books and check their work with teacher's guidance. Each child can check or mark their own work with teacher's guidance (MOGE, 2015).

Knowing the homework policy guidelines helped the researcher to understand the roles of each player in its implementation, thereby making it easy to formulate objectives and research instruments of the study. This enabled the researcher to explore homework policy implementation in selected primary schools of Kalabo district and learn the teachers' experiences, parents' perceptions, prospects and challenges parents and learners faced in its implementation.

### **2.3 Teachers' experiences on the homework policy implementation**

Homework is an essential component of teaching and learning in most of the schools if not all. To most teachers, homework has always been and evidently will continue to be

part of their daily routine and practice. Most teachers have assigned homework to reinforce what has been taught in class and to prepare learners for new materials in the next lesson (Fawzy, 2012). Many teachers believe that homework contributes to the enhancement of teaching/learning and academic achievement and to the development of academic skills and responsibility in the learners (Bembenutty et al., 2009).

Cooper et al., (2006) reported in a synthesis of homework research that the relationship between homework and school achievement is stronger in grades seven to twelve (7 – 12) than others. Here the researcher wonders if this is the case in our country, Zambia. Corno et al. (1996); Gill and Scholssman, (2004), maintain that homework is not a panacea to problems in schools, suggesting new approaches to integrating homework in the school curriculum. However, some teachers perceive homework completion and quality by learners as more valid indicators of achievement and success compared to standardized assessment results (Guskey, 2007).

In addition, these teachers believe that learners' homework completion improves their chances of academic success and that it also develops habits and attitudes that work to the learners' advantage far beyond the academic world. The utility value component of the expectancy-value theory supported this by stating that success and achievement will come when learners perceive homework as having a future benefit (Eccles & Wigfield, 2002). Learners' achievements rise significantly when teachers regularly assign homework and learners conscientiously do it and the academic benefit increase as learners' progress to higher grades. Qualities such as self-discipline, responsibility and love of learning benefit learners throughout their lives (Paulu, 1995). It is for this reason that the researcher wanted to establish if Zambian teachers had this positive perception of the benefits of homework

to learners' academic improvements, and also to learn their peculiar experiences regarding homework policy implementation. This was achieved by exploring teachers' experiences on the homework policy implementation at selected primary schools of Kalabo district.

Arguments about homework from teachers, learners and parents seem to be getting louder and louder each new academic or school year. The complaints are that it is either there is too much homework, too little work assigned, or the homework is boring (Strauss, 2006). What is more important is that most teachers be it primary or secondary trained, get little or no training on how to create homework assignments that advance learning (Strauss, 2006). This is probably the reason why Cooper (2006) advises that high school learners studying until dawn probably are wasting their time because there is no academic benefit after two hours a night, for middle scholars, one and a half-hour is enough.

When teachers prepare homework for the learners, their understanding of the learners' homework problems would help them to develop assignments that meet each individual learner's abilities and needs. To design homework more relevant to learners' abilities, teachers need to have an understanding of the homework difficulties that learners are experiencing and the reasons learners do not complete assignments (Eunsook et al, 2011). Homework practices vary widely from one school to another. Some teachers prepare brilliant homework assignments for learners that combine learning with pleasure. Others use homework as a routine to provide learners with additional practice or important activities (Paulu and Perkinson, 1995). Teachers' understanding of the source of decreased interest in completing homework is a critical step towards improving homework performance of the learners. Teachers with a good understanding of learners' homework experience can enhance the quality and relevance of the homework and lessen the



homework problems that learners encounter in every assignment. This research may be used to raise teachers' awareness on the issues surrounding learners' failure to complete homework and to improve their performance in our *Zambian schools*.

Zuzanek (2009) analysed learners' perceptions of time spent on homework and found that the attitudes learners had about homework skewed their reporting of how it negatively affected their ability to participate in other activities. Zuzanek stated that the results showed learners' unstructured time (i.e. television watching, electronic gaming, and socializing) were more affected by homework. However, additional homework correlated to better grades. While learners did not show a high interest in doing homework, they reported being more interested in homework than spending time in class.

Although the study done by Zuzanek (2009) informed the current research that Homework negatively affected learners' ability to participate in other activities i.e. television watching, electronic gaming, and socializing, additional homework correlated to better grades, learners being more interested in homework than spending time in class, the current study went further to explore teachers' experiences on the homework policy implementation at selected primary schools to ascertain the perceptions of parents towards homework policy at selected schools of Kalabo district. Moreover, Zuzanek's (2009) study analysed learners' perceptions of time spent on homework whilst the current research explored homework policy implementation at selected primary schools of Kalabo district in Western province of Zambia with particular focus on prospects and challenges. Also, Zuzanek's (2009) study left a gap to be filled up by this current study because his research was conducted in Michigan whilst this study was conducted in Zambia particularly in Kalabo district. Therefore, the results of the Zuzanek's (2009) study cannot

be generalized to the current study, hence there was need for this study to explore homework policy implementation at selected primary schools of Kalabo district in Western province of Zambia: Prospects and Challenges. These are some of the issues the current study tried to address.

Trautwein et al. (2002) conducted a study in German on homework and established that there was a significant relationship that existed between classes which were assigned more homework and their level of achievement. The study used quantitative approach and it indicated that learners who were assigned homework more frequently scored higher than those with less frequent homework assignments. The study further showed that learners were able to benefit from regular homework owing to the fact that they were able to practice new concepts, previewed concepts they learned, and were able to review the previous concepts (Trautwein et al, 2002). Although the study done by Trautwein et al. (2002) informed the current that there is a significant relationship existing between classes assigned more homework and their level of achievement, the study did not look at teachers' experiences on the homework policy implementation, perceptions of parents towards homework policy, prospects of giving homework to learners and establish the challenges learners and parents encounter when given homework at selected schools of Kalabo district, which the current study looked at.

Moreover, Kunene (2016) conducted a study in Johannesburg in Gauteng province to investigate educators' perceptions of the evidence used to support decisions about homework. In his research, forty educators and two Heads of Department (HoDs) were included for the questionnaires and interviews respectively. The selected educators represented certain types of characteristics and had comparative teaching styles this was

done because some teachers give assignments that combine learning and ecstasy while others give homework that upset the whole process. Therefore, the administration of homework is different. Random sampling was used in selecting the educators and purposive sampling was used only in selecting the HoDs and this was done by selecting participants with specific characteristics to provide the best information to address the purpose of the research. The researcher concluded that most educators claimed they received very little support from the education department in terms of homework issues. The study showed that there was a correlation between homework and achievement. But that it was not adequate to conclude beyond reasonable doubt that it was indeed the case. However, the study showed that, there were some benefits that accrue to learners beyond academic acquisition of knowledge. By contrast, the study also highlighted that homework marginalized economically disadvantaged learners who found it difficult to complete homework tasks due to lack of suitable environment where house chores are more and there is no time for homework, but television and other entertainment. In conclusion; the study suggested that for homework to be effective, homework implementers needed to undertake critical research in order to understand the short comings of homework incompleation.

Although the study done by Kunene (2016) informed the current research that homework marginalized economically disadvantaged learners who found it difficult to complete homework tasks due to environmental issues, the study did not look at teachers' experiences on the homework policy implementation and perceptions of parents towards homework policy. Besides the study done by Kunene (2016) looked at the challenges learners encounter when given homework whilst the current study looked at the challenges

learners and parents encounter when given homework in primary schools. Moreover, the study done by Kunene (2016) was done in Johannesburg whilst the current study was done in Zambia in general, and Kalabo district of Western province in particular. Hence contributing to the knowledge gap.

Matanda (2016) conducted a study on the impact of homework policy on learner performance in Mansa and Milenge district of Luapula province, Zambia. The study indicated that the more the learners understood about the purpose of the homework, the better they performed in the mock and other examinations. It revealed that the majority of the grade seven learners in 2015 performed better in the mock examination. The literature review and empirical investigation showed that homework served its purpose, efficient to improve learner performance; it promoted ownership and interest, learners were competent and homework was appealing to enhance performance.

The findings of Matanda's (2016) study are vital because they informed this study that homework served its purpose, efficient to improve learner performance, it promoted ownership and interest, learners were competent and homework was appealing to enhance performance. This helped to establish the impact of homework policy on learner performance. Moreover, Matanda's (2016) study was centred on impact of homework policy on learner performance in Mansa and Milenge districts of Luapula province, Zambia. This research left a knowledge gap since it bordered on impact of homework policy on learner performance in the named districts of Luapula province, Zambia. There was need for another study to specifically explore homework policy implementation at selected primary schools of Kalabo district in Western province of Zambia with particular focus on prospects and challenges. Also, the study by Matanda (2016) engaged two

districts in Zambia namely Mansa and Milenge of Luapula province unlike the current study which engaged only Kalabo district in Western province, Zambia.

In their study of ninth-grade English learners, Wilson and Rhodes (2010) surveyed learners about their attitude towards homework. High school learners in this study had strong feelings about homework. Whereas 69% of the learners agreed that homework was meaningful, a more significant number (73%) noted that they did not like it. Learners also responded that 86% would be more likely to complete homework if they were allowed to start during class. Only 39% of the responding learners said they frequently completed their homework. The researchers noted that 43% of learners reported that they did not understand their homework.

Wilson and Rhodes (2010) identified a variety of reasons that led to learners not completing homework. Some of the reasons given were that: it was boring, they did not understand the assignment, assignments were not meaningful, and that the teacher did not provide feedback. Learners also listed household chores and extracurricular activities as commitments that left little time and energy for homework. Wilson and Rhodes (2010) suggested strategies that teachers could implement to increase homework completion rates. Similar to Cooper's (1989b) suggestions, they noted that teachers should select specific days to assign subjects to avoid excessive homework. Teachers should be mindful of the time it may take to complete homework assignments, and teachers must ensure that learners understood how to do the work. Timely feedback was also critical to homework success.

In a study designed to analyse the link between homework and its effect on achievement, Trautwein, Schnyder, Niggli, Neumann, and Ludtke (2009) had study participants in Switzerland administered a questionnaire and standardized test to eighth grade learners learning French as a required second language. The questionnaire included items about grades, how often learners were given homework in the subject, how much effort the learners put into their homework, and if the learners had negative emotions about their homework tasks. The first recommendation was that future researchers should carefully consider the many variables included in studying the topic of homework. They found that homework could have a negative, positive, and zero effect. They noted that homework that is more frequent seemed to correlate with higher achievement. However, the classes that received more homework were also upper track-more advanced-so the results were confounded. They also noted that time spent on homework tended to be longer for less proficient learners and often did not correlate with effort. Their final comments stated that the findings were likely not generalizable to younger learners and there would likely be differences when subject matter and culture were considered (Trautwein et al, 2009).

Trautwein, Schnyder, Niggli, Neumann, and Ludtke (2009) study is essential because it informed the current study that homework improves learners' academic achievement. Nevertheless, their study did not look at teachers' experiences on the homework policy implementation, the perceptions of parents towards homework policy, prospects of giving homework to learners, and the challenges learners and parents encounter when given homework at selected primary schools of Kalabo district. This was one of the issues this study tried to provide answers to in order to contribute to the knowledge gap.

Brock et al, (2007) found that teachers primarily assign homework for four reasons: teachers consider that the skill practice is beneficial to learners, parents want it, the district expects it, and homework teaches discipline and responsibility. Teachers in the Brock et al. (2007) elementary school study assigned homework as reading, packets of worksheets, and practice in spelling and math. Some teachers in the study also adapted homework for learners who struggle, however about two-thirds of the teachers gave everyone the same homework, stating grade level standards must be taught and met by all. Teachers indicated that reading at home improves the learners' abilities in reading. They also noted that skill practice as homework enhanced learners' learning. Teachers in the Brock et al. (2007) study designed homework that would not require unique materials to complete. Teachers reported that they put special systems in place for learners who needed assistance in completing homework, such as working with peers over the phone or having teacher assistance by phone available after school; homework was usually not graded, though there were exceptions noted. Homework was a pass or fail category on the grade card (Brock et al., 2007).

Tas et al. (2014) studied the value teachers put on homework. The study linked perceptions of parents and teachers because the researchers looked at how effectively science teachers communicated expectations with parents. Because the teachers stressed that homework was essential to acquisition of subject matter, they communicated with parents and suggested the best strategies for providing help. Tas et al. (2014) found that science teachers in this study assigned more homework in research and problem solving than in memorizing and summarizing. This strategy was adequate so that learners did not conclude that homework is all about one type of learning.

The study by Tas et al. (2014) did not look at teachers' experiences on the homework policy implementation, the perceptions of parents towards homework policy, the prospects of giving homework to learners and the challenges learners and parents encounter when given homework at selected primary schools of Kalabo district. This was among the knowledge gaps this current study sought to offer some contributions to though from the Zambian context. Tas et al. (2014) study and the present study have similarities in some variables like homework as a topic, qualitative in nature. Nevertheless, the current study considers Tas et al. (2014) study to be very vital because as it informed the present study that homework is essential in the acquisition of the subject matter.

A study of tenth-grade learners in China revealed that teacher perceptions of learners' feelings were not always accurate. Hong, Wan, and Peng (2011) found that tenth-grade learners, as self-reported on a questionnaire, were more pessimistic about homework than their teachers knew. In mathematics, learners claimed they did not complete work because the assignments were too complicated. However, they were more critical of themselves than teachers were; researchers noted that there was likely a cultural element to the study. The teachers mainly were accurate in their knowledge of learners' beliefs in homework behaviours, such as competence and performance. In regards to English subject homework specifically, learners usually said they were assigned more homework than what the teachers reported.

However, the study by Hong, Wan, and Peng (2011) provided a great insight to this study. The study provided a background to this study because of slight similarities in terms of the research approach (qualitative research approach). Unlike Hong et al. (2011) study that only focused on the challenges learners encounter when given homework, the current



study was centred on exploring teachers' experiences on the homework policy implementation, the perceptions of parents towards homework policy, the prospects of giving homework to pupils, and the challenges pupils and parents encounter when given homework in selected primary schools of Kalabo district. This was among the gaps which this current study sought to offer some contributions to though from the Zambian context. Also, the present study worked with teachers, pupils, and parents to study, unlike Hong, and his colleagues who involved teachers and learners only.

Peltier (2011) studied the differences in teacher attitudes about homework in Mississippi. The aim of the study was to establish the differences in teacher attitudes about homework. The study employed both quantitative and qualitative approach to collect and analyse the data. Her results identified no significant relationship between teacher attitudes and homework practices at the elementary and high school levels. The middle school level and special education classes in her study did show a significant relationship between teacher attitudes and homework practices. However, in her summary, Peltier stopped short of explaining exactly what the relationship was. She noted that the responding teachers from two schools in the district in her study supported assigning the same homework to all learners regardless of socioeconomic level. Peltier (2011) reported that 47% of teachers gave all learners the same work. This is at odds with the suggestions of Marzano and Pickering (2007) who stated that homework should be differentiated and learners should have a choice of assignments.

Peltier's (2011) study acts as a basis where this study was grounded, as the researcher tried to explore homework policy implementation in selected primary schools of Kalabo district in Western province of Zambia with particular focus on prospects and challenges.

However, unlike the study by Peltier (2011) that employed both quantitative and qualitative approach to collect the data and analyse it, the current study employed qualitative approach to collect the data and analyse it. Hence contributing to the knowledge gap. This study used a different research design from the present study and the two studies differed on the grades they used as participants. Peltier's (2011) engaged teachers as participants a retrospective study design while the current study worked with teachers, learners and parents. Furthermore, the study done by Peltier (2011) did not look at teachers' experiences on the homework policy implementation, perceptions of parents towards homework policy in selected schools, prospects of giving homework to pupils, and the challenges pupils and parents encounter when assigned homework in selected primary schools of Kalabo district which the current study looked at. Hence contributing to the knowledge gap. Having reviewed literature on teachers' experiences on the homework policy implementation, the following section reviews literature on parents' perceptions towards homework policy.

#### **2.4 Parents' perceptions towards homework policy**

Homework is a universal practice and is used in schools and is commonly associated with learners' academic achievement. According to literature, parents take homework involvement positively (Cunha et al., 2015). Results of the study conducted by Harris (2011) show that parents' conception of homework involvement have a positive meaning and focuses primarily on the role played in the promotion of academic learning by fostering their children's autonomy, exerting control over their learning and providing them with emotional encouragement when children struggle with difficulties. This is because homework is one of the most popular and frequent instructional tools used in

home-based involvement, and it is a task in which parents are involved more directly in their children's learning (Wilder, 2014).

Parents have many reasons to perceive homework positively. They appear to involve themselves in their children's homework for three primary reasons: they believe that they should be involved; they think that their involvement will make a positive difference, and they perceive invitation to involvement (Hoover-Dempsey and Sandler, 1997). Several investigators have reported parents' belief that involvement in children's homework and schooling is a normal requirement and responsibility of parenting. Many parents often continue with the involvement in their children's homework despite concerns about their personal limitations, challenges or their children's learning difficulties (Chen and Stevenson, 1989). Their understanding is that involvement is a crucial factor to maintain their children focused on homework, reinforcing the idea that parental involvement prevents children from postponing the homework assignment due to home distractions such as play. Parents' control of children's academic work appears closely related to children's intrinsic motivation for academic achievement (Chen & Stevenson, 1989).

In her study entitled 'Parents perception on the impact of homework on learner's academic performance,' Rosario (2014) revealed that parental involvement in homework was a valuable and effective tool to promote their children's academic success. The study recommended that parents should be available to provide support by facilitating the conditions that make the homework more effective. The study further suggested that parents should also organize the study environment and teaching their children relevant learning strategies to complete their tasks which should include reference books, course books and time to respond to questions. Rosario (2014), study is similar to the current

study in the sense that both studies had interest in establishing parents' attitudes towards homework policy. This, however, entails that Rosario's (2014) study played a significant role to this study. Although Rosario (2014) looked at parents' attitudes towards homework policy, the study did not look at teachers' experiences on the homework policy implementation, prospects of giving homework to the learners and the challenges learners and parents encounter when given homework in selected primary schools of Kalabo district. Hence contributing to the knowledge gap. Moreover, Rosario's (2014) study targeted parents to investigate Parents perception on the impact of homework on learner's academic performance but the current study targeted teachers, primary school learners, and parents only because the situation might be different.

In a study conducted in Finland by Silinskas, Niemi, and Lerkkanen, (2013), researchers wanted to learn what impact parent help had on learners in Grades 1 and 2. Children in Finland begin first-grade at the age of 7 and are not taught reading or math before then. The researchers found that parents tended to help more when learners were struggling. The researchers revealed that struggling learners might have parents who were unskilled with their assistance, poor learners themselves, or less educated. The results showed a negative effect of parental assistance with the child's skill development through homework. Parents who were forceful with their assistance or helped without being asked lowered the children's performance. Silinskas et al. (2013) found that a positive effect of parental assistance with homework was that children were more likely to complete homework and have fewer behaviour issues.

The study by Silinskas et al. (2013), is cardinal to the current study more especially that Silinskas and his colleagues worked with primary school going children which the current

study also targeted as participants. Besides, the study by Silinskas and his colleagues informed the current study about positive effect of parental assistance with homework, that children were more likely to complete homework and have fewer behaviour issues. However, the study done by Silinskas and his colleagues targeted teachers and primary learners while the current study targeted teachers, primary school pupils, and parents in trying to understand homework policy implementation in selected primary schools of Kalabo district in Western province of Zambia with particular focus on prospects and challenges. Moreover, their study did not look at parents' perceptions towards homework policy, the prospects of giving homework to pupils, and challenges pupils and parents encounter when given homework in selected primary schools of Kalabo district. Hence contributing to the knowledge gap. Furthermore, Silinska's and his colleagues employed both quantitative and qualitative approach to collect data whilst the current study was purely qualitative.

In an experimental study of the benefit of parent assistance with homework, Van Voorhis (2011) found that training parents in helping with homework could provide benefit. Van Voorhis undertook a 2-year experimental study in which teachers were trained in homework design and parents were instructed in how to help their learners. Van Voorhis used an interactive system called Teachers Involve Parents in Schoolwork (TIPS). TIPS used high volume communications with parents, work sent home consistently with sufficient time for families to participate, and feedback from parents. Using the TIPS intervention with third- and fourth-grade learners, Van Voorhis (2011) reported that when parents were guided in the correct way to help their learners, family stress levels regarding homework decreased. When homework was explicitly designed to align with curriculum

and state standards, learner standardized test scores showed significant increases. Van Voorhis (2011) noted that homework design must be improved, and teachers needed more professional development time. Kralovec and Buell (2000) discussed TIPS in their book, but had a very negative outlook about the program because it can be expensive and verifiable beneficial results were not always obtained.

Despite Van Voorhis' (2011) study having not looked at parents' perceptions towards homework policy, prospects of giving homework to pupils, and challenges pupils and parents encounter when given homework in selected primary schools of Kalabo district, his study informed the current one that training parents in helping with homework could provide benefits. Also, the knowledge gap in this study is that learners were not asked about the challenges they encountered when given homework which the current study looked at. Therefore, the current study addressed the gap by finding out challenges pupils and parents face when given homework in selected primary schools of Kalabo district. The other knowledge on this study is that data was collected from parents and teachers using questionnaires, but in current study data was collected using Focus Group Discussions with the pupils whilst semi-structured interview schedules were used to collect data from the teachers and parents.

Moroni et al. (2015) studied the parents' attitudes towards homework and the effect that parents help with homework had on sixth-grade learners in Switzerland. Their goal was to determine if there was a difference between the quality and quantity of the parental involvement. The researchers labelled helpful intervention by parents as support and intrusive intervention as interference. They found no significant correlation between support and interference. However, they found that support raised reading achievement

and interference lowered it. When the quantity of homework was analysed, the researchers found that frequent involvement was negatively associated with achievement. They suggest that children likely view greater parental assistance more as interference than as support (Moroni et al., 2015).

Another study that yielded similar negative results of parent involvement was conducted by Núñez et al. (2015). In a study of parent involvement in homework that spanned elementary through high school levels, Núñez et al. (2015) analysed parent involvement in terms of control and support. In the study, control was defined as pressure on learners to complete homework, and support was interpreted as favourable help. Núñez et al. (2015) also looked at parent involvement and its relationship to academic achievement. They found that support had a positive effect on homework completion at all levels, whereas control had a negative impact. At the middle and high school levels, parental support had a positive influence on academic achievement. However, at all levels, parental control had a negative effect on academic achievement (Núñez et al., 2015).

Tam and Chan (2009) conducted research on elementary school learners in Hong Kong. Using a combination of homework diaries and learner and parent questionnaires. The researchers gathered data to determine parent involvement and its relation to academic outcomes. Tam and Chan found that because of Chinese culture, societal expectations, and a high value of education most parents and learners spent a significant amount of time on homework. Parents supervised, provided structure, and assisted with assignments for many children (Tam & Chan, 2009). According to the findings of this study, parents who did not participate at helping their children in tackling the homework tasks often had lower education levels or additional children in the home (Tam & Chan, 2009). For early

elementary learners in this study, parent support trained children to recognize that self-regulated learning would lead to higher academic performance. For older elementary learners, parent support fostered independent learning. The findings indicated that younger children needed parent support, but the support did not need to last into later elementary years to have a positive influence on academic performance (Tam & Chan, 2009).

When Fox (2016) studied homework and families in North Carolina to determine best practice for learners at risk because of socioeconomic status, she found that the six female parents in the study appreciated homework as a communication tool and a way to establish a home routine for their children. The mothers also viewed homework time as quality time for the family and a way to occupy learners at home without using TV or video games. All the children in the family met as a group, receiving help from siblings or other family members. According to Fox's findings, more homework was preferred, as the experiences were very positive for the group that she studied. The participants valued the family time and opportunity for education enhancement (Fox, 2016).

Moroni et al (2015), Núñez et al. (2015), Tam and Chan (2009), and Fox (2016) studies are perfect and fit well in the current study, especially that these studies have informed the current study about parents' attitudes towards homework of which the current study also cantered on parents' perceptions towards homework policy in selected primary schools of Kalabo district. Moroni et al (2015); Núñez et al. (2015); Tam and Chan (2009); and Fox (2016) studies focused on parents' attitudes towards homework, these studies did not look at teachers' perceptions on the homework policy implementation, prospects of giving homework to pupils, and establish the challenges pupils and parents encounter when given



homework in selected primary schools of Kalabo district, hence contributing to this gap. Having reviewed literature on parents' perceptions towards homework policy, the following section reviews literature on prospects of giving homework to pupils.

## **2.5 Prospects of giving homework to pupils**

Prospects of giving homework in this case refers to benefits of homework to the learner, teachers and parents or guardians. To begin with, it is essential to look at similar studies that have been done in this regard.

Costa et al. (2016) investigated the perceptions of teachers and learners of the 4th year of schooling regarding homework and its relationship with the act of studying. A comparative research of a descriptive-correlational nature was undertaken, comprising two questionnaires one to the teachers and another to their learners. The study sampled fourteen primary teachers from all Nelas municipality state schools in Portugal and 128 learners, aged between 9 and 11 years with both sexes (male and female) in identical percentage. Data obtained showed that all teachers asked their learners to do homework, especially in the areas of Portuguese and Mathematics and considered it essential for learning. The learners generally liked to do their homework and considered it essential as well. For the most part, if they could decide, learners would do homework because it helped them to consolidate the content taught. Knowing the teachers and learners' perceptions about the homework is fundamental to developing teaching strategies that contribute to the academic success of all learners.

From the above study, it became necessary for the researcher to explore the prospects of giving homework in selected primary schools in Kalabo district knowing very well that in

Portugal it was established from the views of teachers and learners that homework helped in consolidating the content taught and also in developing teaching strategies that contributed to academic success of all learners. Therefore, the researcher wanted to find out if the story was the same at the selected primary schools in Kalabo district.

Another study by Pfeiffer (2018) investigated the first no-homework policy, which was introduced in one of the primary schools in the Western Cape. This study sought to determine whether a no-homework approach would validate a positive or negative effect on school children and also intended to determine whether a no-homework policy would be beneficial to South African schools. An interpretive approach to a case study was in place, where an interview was conducted with teachers and the head of curriculum. This case study considered replacement exercises executed at the school to compensate for the homework no longer given to the learners. The study found that no-homework left a more positive effect on learners. However, the study argued that no-homework would be a disadvantage in the future. The study proposed that some form of homework ought to be in place in order to help the learner in many aspects of their future life.

This study also helped the researcher to consider determining the prospects of giving homework. It is clear from that study that some homework is essential in helping learners in many aspects of their future life. Hence, the researcher became interested in finding out if some of those aspects could be outlined at some selected primary schools in Kalabo district. The main difference between the two studies is that the current one focused on exploring homework policy implementation in selected primary schools of Kalabo district in Western province of Zambia with particular focus on prospects and challenges while

the other study focused on investigating the first no-homework policy, which was introduced in one of the primary schools in the Western Cape, South Africa.

Moreover, Songsirisak (2019) investigated the impact of homework on students' learning. Participants were 140 undergraduates from a Thai university. A set of questionnaires and focus group interviews were used. Findings revealed that homework benefited and supported students' learning although it had some psychological impact on their learning and affected free time management. It enabled students to acquire knowledge, develop learning skills, and increased academic achievements. Also, it promoted student's collaborative skills and speaking between teachers and students for homework clarification. Findings further indicated that internet was one of the powerful tools for students' learning and homework information. Based on the results, the study suggested strategies and implications for teachers' instructions and effective implementation of homework for students' learning outside class.

This study was insightful to the current study in that diverse prospects of homework such as students acquiring knowledge, collaborative skills and speaking between teachers and students were brought out. Therefore, it became necessary for the researcher to explore if the findings could be similar at selected primary schools in Kalabo district. However, the difference is that this study focused on investigating the impact of homework on students' learning whereas the current study focuses on homework policy implementation with a view to prospects and challenges at selected primary schools in Kalabo district.

According to Milbourne and Haury (1999), Homework is planned to be a positive experience that inspires children to learn. Teachers give homework to help learners

review, apply, and integrate what has been learned in class; to extend learner exploration of topics more thoroughly than class time permits; and to help learners prepare for the next class session. But there's more to learning than simply mastering content. Learning has many aspects and requires many skills that children have to shape. For instance, teachers also assign homework to help children: acquire effective habits of self-discipline and time management; develop initiative and learn to work independently; gain a sense of personal responsibility for learning; develop research skills, such as locating, organizing, and condensing information; learn to use libraries and other reference resources among other aspects. Moreover, homework can also bring parents and teachers closer together. Parents who supervise homework and assist their children with assignments learn more about their children's education and about the school.

The above discussions by Milbourne and Haury (1999) also helped the researcher to consider looking at prospects of homework policy implementation and see if all these prospects outlined in the discussion above were being realised in the selected primary schools of Kalabo district.

Furthermore, Mahmoud (2015) explored the influence of homework assignments on the high basic school learners' achievement in public schools in Nablus directorate from the teachers' perspectives. He also checked the role of the study variables such as gender, qualification and experience in the influence of homework assignments on the high basic school learners' achievement in public schools in Nablus directorate from the teachers' perspectives. The results of the study revealed that the total score for the teachers' evaluation on the relation between homework assignments and learners' achievement was acceptable with a total percent of 61 representing 40%. In light of this finding the

researcher recommended teachers to give regular homework assignments that require high mental skills, that is homework assignments of high quality rather than quantity. Another recommendation was given to the school principals to cooperate with teachers in this regard. One more recommendation was directed to the curriculum centre to include homework assignments of high quality after each unit.

The above study also helped the researcher on the focus of the study, especially on the prospects. It was clear from the recommendations that there was need for teachers to give homework assignments that require high mental skills which is a prospect. It was therefore necessary to explore if prospects of homework in selected primary schools in Kalabo were similar to that. The main difference between the two studies is that this study was based on homework and performance and used a quantitative method, while the current study focuses on homework policy implementation, and uses a qualitative methodology. Having discussed the prospects of giving homework to learners, the following section discusses the challenges learners and parents encounter when given homework.

## **2.6 Challenges learners and parents encounter when given homework**

Polloway, Epstein and Foley (1992) estimated more than a million learners or approximately fifty-six percent of learners with difficulties, as well as twenty-eight percent who have not been identified with learning difficulties experience problems completing homework tasks. Learners and parents perceive that they encounter many challenges when given homework. Many causes such as personal deficits and academically related issues have been identified as reasons for the number of this estimated group of students (Soderlund & Bursuck, 1995).

Abrahams (2013) conducted a survey about the challenges to parental involvement in homework assignments of learners in a historically disadvantaged primary school in Cape Town. This study explored challenges to parental involvement in the homework assignments of learners in a traditionally disadvantaged primary school in Cape Town. This exploratory qualitative case study followed an interpretive paradigm. Data was collected via field notes; and semi-structured interviews from individuals and focus groups. Thematic data analysis was used to determine challenges to parental involvement in homework assignments of the primary school learners. This research study was grounded on Epstein's model of overlapping spheres of influence of family, school and community on learners' learning; six typologies of parental involvement; and on Bronfenbrenner's bio-ecological model of human development. The findings highlighted challenges such as poverty, unemployment, inequalities; lack of educational resources; lack of structure in the home; single parenting; school and community factors; and a lack of academic stimulation that negatively affected parental involvement in homework assignments. Results of the study also showed that despite the many challenges that parents experience in helping the learners with homework, the parents still want their children to excel in academic work. Parents in the historically disadvantaged school however seek assistance in how to help the learners with homework assignments.

Despite Abrahams' (2013) study informing the current study about challenges such as poverty, unemployment, inequalities; lack of educational resources; lack of structure in the home; single parenting; school and community factors; and a lack of academic stimulation that negatively affected parental involvement in homework assignments, the participants in Abrahams' (2013) study were parents and teachers only. However, the

current study worked with teachers, learners and parents whose children were in primary schools by seeking to explore homework policy implementation at selected primary schools of Kalabo district in Western province of Zambia with particular focus on prospects and challenges in the Zambian context, hence contributing to this gap. Moreover, the study done by Abrahams (2013) employed both quantitative and qualitative approach of gathering data whilst the current study used qualitative method to collect data from the teachers, parents, and learners through semi-structured interviews and focus group discussions. Besides, the other knowledge gap is that the study done by Abrahams (2013) did not look at perceptions of parents towards homework policy at selected primary schools of Kalabo district. This was also one of the issues this study tried to address. Moreover, the current study also got views from learners pertaining to challenges they encountered towards homework which the study done by Abrahams (2013) did not do. Hence contributing to the knowledge gap. Furthermore, the study done by Abrahams (2013) did not look at teachers' experiences on the homework policy implementation in selected primary schools of Kalabo district. This was one of the issues this study addressed.

Winnar and Kivulu (2009) in their study established that challenges to parental involvement in learners' homework included language, as parents in disadvantaged areas in most cases did not speak the language of learning and teaching, and that affected the communication between parents and children with regards to the instruction about homework assignments. They also established that educator training was also a barrier to parental involvement in learners' homework, in that educators did not receive training on how to engage with parents, and that could have negatively affected the home-school

interaction with regards to how homework assignments should be done. Moreover, the study also found that socio-economic status was also a challenge to parental involvement in learners' homework. The effects of poverty and unemployment were some of the significant challenges which negatively affected homework completion. Parents of low socio-economic status (SES) were found to be less involved in the teaching of new learning skills and cognitive intellectual activities. Parents who are affected by poverty might not regard the education of the learners as a priority as their daily needs will take preference. Working-class parents were seen as lacking the cultural capital to assist their learners with homework. Deficit discourses ascribed to working class parents constructed them as having limited resources to draw on to assist learners at home with homework. Parents who had limited material resources were then also perceived to be lacking mental resources to help their children with homework (Dornbrack, Scheckle & Felix, 2008).

The above study done by Winnaar and Kivulu (2009) brought to light many challenges parents encountered towards homework policy implementation. However, this study left a gap because it did not look at teachers' experiences on the homework policy implementation at selected primary schools of Kalabo district. This was one of the issues this study addressed. Besides, the other knowledge gap is that the study done by Winnaar and Kivulu (2009) did not look perceptions of parents towards homework policy in selected schools of Kalabo district. This was also one of the issues this study tried to address. Moreover, the current study also got learners views pertaining to challenges they encountered towards homework which the study done by Winnaar and wa Kivulu (2009) did not do. Hence contributing to the knowledge gap.



Barher (2017) in his study entitled ‘Homework Problem and What Teachers Can Do about It’, found that challenges to parental involvement in schools and their children’s education were due to negative attitudes and bad feelings of parents. The study further reported that factors such as daily psychosocial stressors; attitudes, and behaviour towards schooling affects parent participation in homework assignments. “Parental involvement in most cases is only seen in terms of attendance at parent teacher meetings, and little attention is paid to the role of parents as active partners with the school in the learner’s homework assignments” (Enoki & Yap, 1995, p.50). Inappropriate attitudes from educators, who undervalue working class parental involvement, might see the parents’ participation as not being beneficial to helping with homework. “Parents’ occupations may limit their availability for involvement activities” (Enoki & Yap, 1995, p.50). The home culture may hold schools in such high regard that it is not considered appropriate for parents to be involved in the learner’s education as the educators are seen as the “experts.”

A study conducted by Tembo (2016) looked at teacher and parental involvement in the management of learner’s academic performance on the Copperbelt. Using a mixed method design on a sample of 105 participants, data was collected using a questionnaire and an interview guide from teachers, parents and grade 12 learners in five secondary schools. The study findings established that teachers gave homework frequently to learners so that the children can consult their parents on some school needs and probably make parents be aware about the lack of teaching and learning materials in school and at home. Through homework, parents were able to provide relevant teaching and learning materials for their children so that children can read and consult the books when the parents were not available. The study concluded that such provisions of materials made parents not to check

the learner's homework regularly and they withdrew their help as books acted as a substitute, yet it was a good way of making children learn to research.

A longitudinal study of more than three thousand primary school learners was implemented to assess the attainment and development of primary school learners (Desforges, 2003). In the longitudinal study the impact of parental involvement in a "home-learning environment" which consisted of reading; visits to the library; identifying sound symbol relationships with 26 single sounds of the English alphabet; playing with numbers and shapes; teaching nursery rhymes, singing, painting and drawing was the main focus (Desforges, 2003). Particularly the impact of parental involvement in interaction with professional provision was of interest. The findings of the longitudinal study were that "higher home learning environment" showed increased levels of cooperation and conformity, peer sociability and confidence, lower antisocial behaviour and higher cognitive development scores. Higher home learning environment had the most potent effect on cognitive development of learners. The study further found that parents in disadvantaged areas in most cases do not speak the language of learning and teaching. This affected the communication between parent and child with regards to the instruction about homework assignments. The above studies done by Desforges (2003) and Barber (2017) are essential to the current study as it brought out challenges that parents encountered when helping their children with homework.

Desforges (2003) and Barber (2017) study left a gap because they did not look at teachers' experiences on the homework policy implementation at selected primary schools of Kalabo district. This was one of the issues this study addressed. Besides the other knowledge gap is that the study done by Desforges (2003) and Barber (2017) did not look

perceptions of parents towards homework policy at selected schools of Kalabo district. This was also one of the issues this study tried to address. Moreover, the current study also got learners' views pertaining to challenges they encountered towards homework which the study done by Desforges (2003) and Barher (2017) did not do. Hence contributing to the knowledge gap.

A qualitative, exploratory study on parental involvement was done by Smidt and Liebenberg, (2003), in an impoverished school in Cape Town. The aim of the study was to understand the dynamics and the reality facing these poverty-stricken parents when attempting to be involved in their children's schooling (Smidt and Liebenberg, 2003). The data obtained from focus group interviews revealed that parents in the community were highly disempowered and felt that they had very little say in the education of their children. Findings revealed that mainstream schools themselves posed barriers for parental involvement in the education of their children. Educators were also found to be out of touch with the realities of sub-economic living conditions (Smidt & Liebenberg, 2003). In addition, the study revealed that parents of low socio-economic status were less involved in helping their children with homework.

Although Smidt and Liebenberg (2003) study informed the current study that that parents of low socio-economic status were less involved in helping their children with homework, the participants in Smidt and Liebenberg (2003) study were pre-service teachers who just recently completed student teaching and parents whose children were in secondary schools. However, this current study worked with in-service teachers, learners and parents whose children were in primary schools by seeking to explore homework policy implementation at selected primary schools of Kalabo district in Western province of

Zambia with particular focus on prospects and challenges in the Zambian context, hence contributing to this gap. Besides, the other knowledge gap is that the study done by Smidt and Liebenberg (2003) did not look perceptions of parents towards homework policy at selected schools of Kalabo district. This was also one of the issues this study tried to address. Moreover, the current study also got learners' views pertaining to challenges they encountered towards homework which the study done by Smidt and Liebenberg (2003) did not do. Hence contributing to the knowledge gap. Furthermore, the study done by Smidt and Liebenberg (2003) did not look at teachers' experiences on the homework policy implementation at selected primary schools of Kalabo district. This was one of the issues this study addressed.

Keskin (2015) conducted a study on evaluating the difficulties faced by primary school learners in doing homework/ research from parents' point of view in Turkey. The aim of the study was to describe challenges faced during the research/homework process by parents who had children in primary schools. The study was led according to the phenomenological method among qualitative research techniques. The study group consisted of 26 parents whose children were in primary school during the 2013-2014 academic year and these parents were selected with the criterion sampling method which is one of those predictive sampling methods. In order to gather information, some interview questionnaire forms were designed and used by the researchers. The study established that parents encountered many economical (e.g. not being able to spare time, providing equipment economically etc.) and spiritual difficulties (e.g. boredom, exhaustion, panic, feeling of self-inadequacy etc.), learners, on the other hand,

encountered some sensory (e.g: boredom, fatigue), cognitive (e.g: not understanding), physical environmental and physic motor difficulties.

Keskin's (2015) study is significant to this study as it informed the current study about the difficulties faced by primary school learners in doing homework/research from parents' point of view. Although Keskin's (2015) study informed the current study on some aspects, he did not look at teachers' experiences on the homework policy implementation at selected primary schools of Kalabo district. This was one of the issues this study addressed. The current study also got views from learners concerning the challenges they encountered towards homework which Keskin's (2015) study did not look at. The current study also aimed at establishing perceptions of parents towards homework policy at selected primary schools of Kalabo district which Keskin's (2015) study did not look at.

The article by Katz, Kaplan, and Gueta, (2010) focused on learners' physiological needs among elementary and secondary school and teacher's role in motivating learners. They found three reasons for not doing homework: (1) Doing homework demands a motivation other than the one used in class activities, (2) Homework tasks compete with life activities in learners' free time, and (3) Homework is done with few clues and supports. In this article, it has been proved that academic performance of learners decline through years. They hypothesized that any changes in psychological support to learners can cause loss of motivation. One of the causes of this decline is related to puberty, but this article relates the problem with teacher's behaviour with learners. The behaviour of teacher changes from elementary to higher levels and learners receive less "autonomy and social support" as the classes get bigger. It indicates that teachers can support learners in three different areas: autonomy, competence and relatedness. A teacher can show understanding of

learners' perspective, provide a relevant rationale for the task, offering choice, and allowing criticism. The article proves that it is the level of perceived environmental support that makes the change in doing homework among elementary to high school level rather than individual differences in level of needs.

Watkins and Stevens (2013) observed a rural high school that conducted a 'No Excuses' homework expectation. After applying this reform three themes emerged: firstly, learners and in some cases, teachers became more accountable. Secondly, the homework quality improved as a result of giving appropriate and honest feedback to learners. And thirdly is a change in teachers' empowerment as the administration could support them with offering change in assignments' standards done outside the class. Meanwhile, learners felt the positive effects of these initiatives on their school work and after graduation. Teachers reported that learners felt more responsible for doing their homework and there was no need for teachers' observation. In this reform all stakeholders, teachers, parents and learners were involved. The results revealed that before this reform, there were more Fs and Ds in score range and most of learners did not turn in their homework or submitted a low-quality work. The reason was supposed to be learners' realization for not being accountable on giving homework. Watkins and Stevens (2013) believed that even with the presence of all or most of the above-mentioned factors and problems, a homework can be enjoyable and educational. One of the factors that can make a big difference is the teachers themselves. A teacher can give flexible homework, vary its nature, amount, and deadline.

## **2.7 Summary of the chapter**

Literature review on the homework policy implementation has indicated that other countries in Africa and those beyond, just like in Zambia, homework is assigned on the assumption that parents or other elderly members have the capacity to assist learners. It is also on the belief that home environment is conducive for learners to do homework. However, Studies from Kenya, South Africa and other countries outside Africa have shown that although parental willingness to be involved in learners' homework is high, this involvement is hampered by many socio-economic factors, including illiteracy and low income. The higher the income and socio-economic status, the more parents are likely to become involved, whereas parents from a more impoverished socio-economic background are less likely to be involved in their children's homework. Hence, on many occasions, homework is not only incomplete, but also not done, and learners are consequently punished for that. This is similar to the Zambian situation. The next chapter discusses the methodology employed in this study.

## **CHAPTER THREE: METHODOLOGY**

### **3.1 Overview**

This chapter presents the research design, target population, sample size, sampling procedure techniques, research instruments, data collection techniques, data analysis, and procedures which were used by the researcher. According to Kazdin (1992), research methodology refers to the principles, procedures, and practices that govern the research.

### **3.2 Research design**

This study adopted an interpretive qualitative paradigm. A phenomenological design was used to find out the feelings, opinions, views perceptions and beliefs of the respondents through focus group discussion (FGDs) and semi-structured interviews. This was so to provide room for triangulation as well as bringing out frequencies that supported the findings from the views and perceptions of the participants. It also helped in the understanding of phenomena in natural rather than experimental setting, giving due emphasis to the meaning, experiences and views of participants (Pope & Mays 1995). Phenomenological design collects information with a rich in-depth, narrative description of sample thereby providing a better understanding of the underlying social realities in the phenomena of interest. The phenomenological design in this case gave teachers, pupils and parents an opportunity to provide in-depth description of their experiences, perceptions, challenges and prospects of homework policy implementation in selected primary schools of Kalabo district. The Interpretive Phenomenological Analysis (IPA) was used to explore in detail how participants made sense of their personal and social world with regards to prospects and challenges in the implementation of homework policy.



### **3.3 Target population**

Kombo and Tromp (2013) have defined population as “a group of individuals, objects or items from which samples are taken for measurement” (p.76). According to Cooper (1998), “The target population includes those individuals or groups that the researcher hopes to represent in the study” (p.40). The target population of this study was all teachers and pupils in primary schools, and parents who had children at those schools in Kalabo district of Western province, Zambia. The choice of these participants was based on the fact that teachers, pupils and parents are critical stakeholders in the implementation of homework policy in schools. These three categories of participants also helped in triangulating data on the implementation of homework policy in selected primary schools. The following section discusses the sample size of the study.

### **3.4 Sample size**

A sample, according to White (2005) is “a group of subjects or situations selected from a large population” (p.252). The sample size of the study comprised a total of twenty-seven (27) participants. Three (3) primary schools in Kalabo district were selected (School A, School B and School C). Three (3) teachers were sampled to participate in the study (1 from school A, 1 from school B and 1 from school C). Fifteen (15) grade four (4) pupils (5 from each of the three schools A, B and C) were sampled, and nine parents (3 from each of the three schools A, B and C) of those pupils were also selected, making a total of twenty-seven (27) participants altogether, as earlier mentioned. This was a reasonable sample size for a qualitative study because it provided data needed to fulfil the requirements for efficacy, representativeness, reliability and flexibility (Merriam, 1998). In the next section, sampling procedure is discussed.

### **3.5 Sampling procedure**

According to Rasch and Schott (2018), “The way of selecting a sample is called sampling procedure” (p.4). In this study, the following technique was applied when selecting respondents. The study used purposive sampling procedures, homogeneous in nature because the researcher was interested in teachers, pupils and parents in primary schools who exhibited similar characteristics. Purposive Sampling technique was used to select parents, pupils and teachers. Purposive sampling seeks those who have in-depth knowledge about an issue being investigated. Patton (1990) states that “purposive sampling aims to reduce suspicion about why certain cases will be selected for a study, but such a sample still does not permit statistical generalization” (p.180). It is essential to understand however that purposive sampling aims at fostering credibility and not representativeness.

The researcher purposively sampled one teacher from each of the three schools selected and the pupils in classes of those teachers became learner participants, where five learners were then purposively sampled to take part in the study. Purposive sampling was suitable for selecting teachers because the researcher was interested in picking the teachers who were teaching grade four pupils at that time, with updated homework records, as they could provide the needed information. From the five learners selected, the parents of three of them were also purposively sampled to take part in the study. The five learners from each school were sampled based on their performance in homework (2 high performers, 2 middle performers and 1 low performer) with the help of their teachers. The inclusion of these categories of learners was necessary so that the researcher could establish the understanding of homework policy implementation from the point of view of these

idiosyncratic groups of learners. Having outlined the sampling procedure, the following section discusses research instruments used in the study.

### **3.6 Research instruments**

The study utilized focus group discussion guides and semi structured interviews guides. The focus group discussion was used to collect data from pupils in the three selected primary schools. Semi-structured interviews were used to collect data from teachers and parents. This is because of their flexibility to probe and paraphrase further. The following sub-sections (3.6.1 and 3.6.2) provide details about the two research instruments used.

#### **3.6.1 Semi-structured interviews**

Semi-structured interviews were chosen as an appropriate technique for this study on the premise that, in depth information is gathered due to the open-ended structure of the questions (Kombo et al., 2006). Kyale and Brickman (2009), equally highlight the importance of the interviews because of its tendency to move away from seeing human subjects as being who can be manipulated and data as being external to individuals. These semi-structured interviews helped the researcher to arrive at the desired knowledge about the teacher and parents' experiences in learner's homework. Semi-structured interview guides were used to solicit detailed information from the teachers and parents on the implementation of homework policy in selected primary schools in Kalabo district of Western province, Zambia (see Appendix 1 and 2 for details). Semi- structured interviews were used in order to collect data that would address the objectives of the study. The flexibility of nature of the semi-structured interview guides allowed for probing of information and seeking for clarification when need arose. However, the main weakness

which is associated with this data collection technique is language barrier. The researcher faced some challenges in this regard, especially when collecting data from some parents who did not understand the language of instruction. Therefore, the researcher simplified the language when collecting data from such parents so that they could easily and freely participate in the study. The following sub-section discusses FGDs.

### **3.6.2 Focus group discussions**

“Focus group discussions are used to obtain a better understanding of a problem or an assessment of a problem” (McMillian & Schumacher, 2010, p.163). According to De Vos et al. (2005) there are many advantages to a focus group interview. It is less time consuming than conducting numerous individual interviews. The group dynamic is a synergistic factor in bringing out information. Participants may express their honest views feelings more confidentially within a support group of peers than during individual interviews. Purposive sampling was used to select learners because it seeks to obtain insights into a particular practice that exist within a specific location, context and time. All the participants (pupils) met in the class room for the focus group discussions. This setting was ideal since group members were stimulated by one another’s perceptions and ideas. The researcher used focus group discussions guide to collect data from learners (a group of 5 learners from each of the three schools A, B and C) (see Appendix 3 for details). All the questions were posed to the group and order in answering questions was observed. All the answers given by learners were recorded using a tape recorder and this helped the researcher to capture data in totality. The main weakness of FGDs is that some participants cannot voice out their opinions freely in a group. It is also difficult to control a group. However, before FGDs were done with pupils, the researcher explained to them the

purpose of the study and encouraged them to voice out their opinions freely. In the next section, data collection procedure and time line are discussed.

### **3.7 Data collection procedure and time line**

Data was collected by administering semi-structured interviews to parents and teachers, while focus group discussions were administered to pupils. Semi-structured Interview guides were employed on teachers and parents. Pupils were given FGDs guides to answer the research questions, because of the nature of the topic which demanded their freedom of expression.

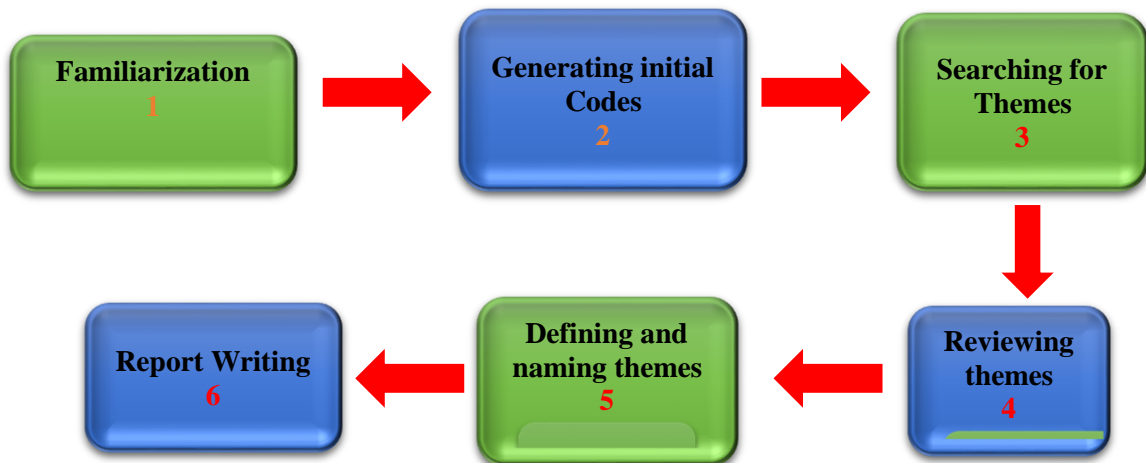
The actual qualitative data was collected in the second term of the school calendar for 2020. For school A data was collected between June 15<sup>th</sup> and June 19<sup>th</sup> 2020, for school B between June 22<sup>nd</sup> and June 26<sup>th</sup> 2020, and for school C between June 29<sup>th</sup> and July 3<sup>rd</sup> 2020.

Qualitative data was first collected through semi-structured interviews with teachers and parents, and then FGDs with learners according to the periods indicated above for each school. The researcher conducted four (4) semi-structured interviews at each school (1 for the teacher and 3 for the parents) making a total of twelve (12) semi-structured interviews for the three schools sampled, and a total of three (3) FGDs (1 FGD for each of the three schools A, B and C with 5 pupils sampled). The following section explains data analysis.

### **3.8 Data analysis**

Qualitative data was analysed through coding and categorization of themes that emerged from the data. Data collected through semi-structured interviews and FGDs were analysed

vertically according to each instrument and horizontal across both research instruments in line with the research questions. Themes were generated considering horizontal analysis (Creswell, 2014). During thematic analysis, data recorded from semi-structured interviews and FGDs was transcribed, edited, coded, categorised and tabulated according to the research questions (Kothari & Garg, 2014). Figure 1 shows the steps taken by the researcher during thematic analysis of data on homework policy implementation in selected primary schools of Kalabo district. The Interpretive Phenomenological Analysis (IPA) was used as a method for representing participants experiences by getting an insider's view of the participants' views and feeling.



**Figure 1:** Steps in thematic analysis (Source: Adapted from Braun and Clarke, 2006).

The six steps shown in Figure 1 were applied in the study by the researcher as follows:

### **1. Familiarization**

The researcher was fully engrossed and actively involved in the data by firstly transcribing the interactions and then reading (and re-reading) the transcripts and listening to the recordings of semi-structured interviews with teachers and parents, as well as that from FGDs with pupils. Initial ideas of the participants' responses were also noted down. The researcher had to gain a comprehensive understanding of the responses of the semi-

structured interviews with teachers and parents, and FGDs of pupils on homework policy implementation in the selected primary schools of Kalabo district. This step provided the foundation for the subsequent analysis of data in the study. The next step (step 2) discusses how the researcher generated the initial codes.

## **2. Generating initial codes**

After being familiar with data, the researcher then identified preliminary codes, which were the features of the data that appeared exciting and meaningful. In this case the researcher manually, coded data which was answering research question one on teachers' experiences on homework policy implementation with a numerical value of 1. Likewise, data answering research questions two, three and four were manually coded with numerical values of 2, 3 and 4 respectively. These codes were more numerous and specific than themes, but provided an indication of the context of the conversation. Step 3 addresses searching for themes.

## **3. Searching for themes**

The third step in the process is the start of the interpretive analysis of the collated codes. In this regard, after coding data with numerical values according to the research questions, the researcher then categorized it according to similar ideas patterning to each research question. For example, data on research question two on the perceptions of parents towards homework was sorted out to come up with similar ideas before coming up with themes such as 'homework as school work given to learners to keep them busy at home'. Grouping data in this way under each research question helped the researcher to come up with themes. In the next step (step 4) reviewing themes is discussed.

#### **4. Reviewing themes**

After grouping data according to similar ideas for each of the four research questions, the researcher then made a deeper view of identifying themes. This was done by either combining, refining, separating or discarding initial themes that emerged when categorizing data into similar ideas under each research question. The researcher at this stage also ensured that data within themes was coherent and meaningful, and that the themes generated were clear with identifiable distinctions between them. In order to do this, the researcher checked and ensured that the themes developed were in relation with the coded extracts and also in connection with the overall data set. It was during this step that the thematic ‘map’ was generated by the researcher. Step 5 discusses defining and naming themes by the researcher.

#### **5. Defining and naming themes**

The researcher under this step refined and defined the themes and their sub-themes within the data. After doing that, the researcher then named the themes depending on the common ideas under each category of similar coded data. It was at this point that the unified story of data on homework policy implementation in selected primary schools of Kalabo district emerged from the themes. For example, some themes for research question one on teachers’ experiences on homework policy implementation were named as follows: giving homework at least twice in a week; positive parental response and involvement; and improved academic performance of pupils among other themes. In step 6 report writing is discussed.



## **6. Report Writing**

Finally, the researcher transformed her analysis into an interpretable piece of writing by using vivid and compelling extract examples that related to the themes generated, research questions, and literature. The findings were reported according to the four research questions on teachers' experiences on homework policy implementation; parents' perception of homework; prospects of giving homework to pupils; and challenges of homework presented to pupils, with their respective emerging themes and sub-themes. These findings were then discussed and supported by literature and the theory used. Empirical evidence was also given in the analysis in terms of verbatim and excerpts. The following section addresses ethical consideration.

### **3.9 Ethical considerations**

The researcher conducted interviews and focus group discussion which required adherence to the research ethical guidelines where measures were put in place to protect the participants (McMillan & Schumacher, 2010). The researcher kept all parts of the interviews and all materials confidential and inaccessible to unauthorized individuals. The researcher obtained clearance from the ethics committee and got permission from the University of Zambia to access information from the participants in selected schools of Kalabo district where the research was conducted. Additionally, the researcher also obtained permission of entry into the schools from the District Education Board Secretary (DEBS) and of access to the teachers and learners from the head teachers. The respondents were given assurance of confidentiality and anonymity and that code names were used in place of the respondents' real names or school. In this regard, the three schools sampled were coded as School A, school B and school C. Teachers were coded as Teacher A (from

school A), Teacher B (from school B) and Teacher C (from school C). Learners were coded as pupil A<sub>1</sub>, pupil A<sub>2</sub>, pupil A<sub>3</sub>, pupil A<sub>4</sub> and learner A<sub>5</sub> (from school A), pupil B<sub>1</sub>, pupil B<sub>2</sub>, pupil, pupil B<sub>4</sub> and pupil B<sub>5</sub> (from school B), and pupil C<sub>1</sub>, pupil C<sub>2</sub>, pupil C<sub>3</sub>, pupil C<sub>4</sub> and pupil C<sub>5</sub> (from school C). Parents were coded as Parent 1, Parent 2, Parent 3 (from school A); Parent 4, Parent 5 and Parent 6 (from school B); and Parent 7, Parent 8 and Parent 9 (from school C). Moreover, the participants were made aware of the nature and purpose of the study, as well as the benefits of participating in the study, such as being aware of the existence and importance of homework policy in schools. Data sets were not shared with any individual or organization that were not involved in this research or for other intended purpose rather than for the purpose of this study. In the next section, credibility and trustworthiness is discussed.

### **3.10 Credibility and trustworthiness of the study**

In order to ensure credibility and trustworthiness, participants' own words were used in the presentation of findings (Shenton, 2004). Moreover, the themes that emerged after data analysis were subjected to expert view to see whether they were in line with recordings, and recognisable (Adler, 1996; Merriam, 1998). Thus, the researcher's supervisor and colleagues cross examined them to ensure that they aligned with the study, and if they did not make sense alternative themes were suggested. According to Shenton (2004) credibility and trustworthiness can be attained by adopting research methods which are well established in qualitative approach such as observation, focus groups and individual interviews. In this regard, the researcher used these methods in data collection. Moreover, the use of semi-structured interviews with teachers and parents, and FGDs with learners helped the researcher to triangulate data thereby reducing the effect of

investigator bias (Maxwell, 1992; Shenton, 2004). The researcher also gave participants a free will to refuse or accept to participate in the study so as to ensure that data collection sessions involved only those who were genuinely willing to take part and prepared to offer data freely (Shenton, 2004). The following section addresses a summary of the chapter.

### **3.11 Summary of the chapter**

This chapter on methodology brought out proper procedures that the researcher carried out when conducting a research. The chapter discussed the research design, target population, sample size, sampling procedure, research instruments used, data collection procedure and time line, data analysis, ethical considerations, and credibility and trustworthiness of the study. The next chapter presents the findings of the study.

## **CHAPTER FOUR: PRESENTATION OF FINDINGS**

### **4.1 Introduction**

The previous chapter discussed the methodology which was adopted for this study. This chapter presents the findings of the study that were obtained through semi-structured interviews and Focus Group Discussions. The semi-structured interviews were administered to teachers and parents whilst Focus Group Discussions were administered to the learners.

The three schools sampled were coded as school A, school B and school C. The following codes have been used for identification of the participants; Teacher A as teacher at school A, Teacher B as teacher at school B, and Teacher C as teacher at school C; learners (A<sub>1</sub>, A<sub>2</sub>, A<sub>3</sub>, A<sub>4</sub>, and A<sub>5</sub> at school A), learners (B<sub>1</sub>, B<sub>2</sub>, B<sub>3</sub>, B<sub>4</sub>, and B<sub>5</sub>, at school B), and learners (C<sub>1</sub>, C<sub>2</sub>, C<sub>3</sub>, C<sub>4</sub>, and C<sub>5</sub>, at school C); Parent 1, Parent 2, Parent 3, Parent 4, Parent 5, Parent 6, Parent 7, Parent 8, and Parent 9. Parents 1, 2 and 3 from school A, parents 4, 5 and 6 from school B, and parents 7, 8 and 9 from school C. However, the data analysis procedure in this study was guided explicitly by the following research questions:

1. What are the teacher's experiences on homework policy implementation in selected primary schools of Kalabo district?
2. What are the perceptions of parents towards homework in selected primary schools of Kalabo district?
3. What are the prospects of giving homework to pupils in selected primary schools of Kalabo district?
4. What challenges do pupils and parents encounter when given homework?

## 4.2 Demographic profile

**Table 1:** *Category of participants from all the Respective Schools*

Participants	No. of participants	Male	Female
Pupils	15	5	10
Teachers	3	2	1
Parents	9	5	4
<b>Total</b>	<b>27</b>	<b>12</b>	<b>15</b>

Table 1 above shows the category of participants who took part in the study from the three selected primary schools of Kalabo district, Western province. Five (5) pupil participants were males and ten (10) were females. Of the three (3) teachers, two (2) were males and one (1) was female. Among the parents, five (5) were males and four (4) were females, making a total of twenty-seven (27) participants altogether.

## 4.3 What are the teachers' experiences on homework policy implementation in selected primary schools of Kalabo district?

This section presents teachers' experiences on homework policy implementation in selected primary schools of Kalabo district. Research question one was answered by teachers through semi-structured interviews. However, triangulation of data was also achieved by comparing what the parents said through semi-structured interviews and what the learners said through Focus Group Discussions. The following were the experiences of teachers on homework policy implementation in the primary schools sampled:

#### **4.3.1 Giving homework at least twice in a week**

Results from interviews showed that 17 out of 21 participants said homework was given at least twice in a week as evidenced by the following verbatim quotes for **Teacher A**, **Teacher B** and **Learner C<sub>3</sub>**:

*“We give homework twice in the week” (Teacher A, 2020).*

Similarly, **Teacher B** said:

*“I give homework two to three times in a week” (Teacher B, 2020).*

Additionally, **Learner C<sub>3</sub>** during FGDs also narrated that:

*“We are given homework two to three times in a week” (Learner C<sub>3</sub>, 2020).*

#### **4.3.2 Positive parental response and involvement**

In terms of the ways in which parents helped their children with homework, all the teachers during interviews stated that they experienced a positive parental response and involvement with some parents. According to them some parents were involved by asking their children questions, sitting together with them, giving them answers, and signing at the back of the book as per homework guidelines. This finding is supported by the following verbatim for **Teacher A** and **Teacher B**:

*“...by asking them questions and giving them answers on the work given to them they show proof that they do help their children by signing*

*at the back of the book... some parents respond positively and willingly in helping their children” (Teacher A, 2020).*

*“Some parents respond positively and willingly to help their children with homework” (Teacher B, 2020).*

Supporting the notion expressed by **Teacher A** and **Teacher B** above, **Teacher C** also narrated that:

*“When doing homework, some parents sit together with pupils at home and they show them how to go about the work given. Parents show examples and ask questions as well, making sure that children have understood well. After doing the work together, parents sign at the end, in the book.” (Teacher C, 2020).*

The above assertions by the three teachers were supported by the learners during Focus Group Discussions who said that their parents assisted them with homework. Some learners said that they appreciated the roles their parents played in their homework in Mathematics and other subjects. For instance, some of them stated that, their parents provided them with guidance on how to find solutions to some mathematical problems, bought exercise books, textbooks and other reference materials for them. When asked about the benefits of homework to their children, majority of parents mentioned that they appreciated homework because it helped their children by keeping them busy from playing too much, kept their children away from trouble and made them go back home in time.

### **4.3.3 Negative parental response and involvement**

Findings also revealed that 15 out of 21 participants (3 teachers and 12 learners) indicated that some parents did not help in the implementation of homework policy as they showed negative response and were mostly not involved in their children's homework. Some parents did it deliberately as they thought educating a child was entirely the responsibility of teachers, while others were simply illiterate and as a result could not help their children in doing homework. To explicate this point, **Teacher C** narrated that some parents responded to homework of their children negatively because they said that they cannot do the work for teachers who get paid for it. This is evidenced by the following passage acting as a typical example:

*“Some parents respond negatively, they usually say that they cannot do work for teachers who are paid for it” (Teacher C, 2020).*

Moreover, some learners indicated that they did not appreciate their parents' involvement in their homework. For example, some of them complained that, their parents were illiterates and could not help with homework in Mathematics and Literacy.

### **4.3.4 Failure to do homework by some learners**

Results of the study indicate that all the three teachers that were interviewed dealt with a good number of learners who did not do homework tasks for various reasons. Teachers said that when learners failed to do the homework, they were asked to give reasons why they did not do it. Teachers usually asked learners who did their homework to educate their counterparts who did not do it, on the importance of doing homework. Sometimes



teachers asked learners who perpetually did not do their homework to come with their parents to school. This was supported by the following verbatim by **Teacher A**:

*“As a teacher it’s important to ask the learner as to why he/ she hasn’t done the homework before sending them back home and bring the parents” (Teacher A, 2020).*

Supporting the notion expressed by **Teacher A**, **Teacher C** also explained that:

*“Firstly, teacher finds out why homework is not done and summons the person who must have helped the learners, to discuss the importance of homework to the learners” (Teacher C, 2020).*

During semi- structured interviews, the researcher further asked the respondents on what they thought made some learners not to do their homework. Some teachers said that learners lacked seriousness on their part.

For instance, **Teacher A** complained as evidenced in the excerpts below:

*“Some of these pupils are never serious with school, at home they spend most of their free time watching television, chatting on Facebook and WhatsApp. Sometimes it is because of house chores and having illiterate parents who do not appreciate education that they fail to complete homework” (Teacher A, 2020).*

#### 4.3.5 Marking homework and providing feedback to learners

Two of the three teachers who participated in the study said they checked and marked homework tasks consistently in order to identify learners' weaknesses. For instance, the following excerpts by **Teacher A** and **Teacher C** act as typical examples:

*“Yes, so that feedback is given on time to know learners' improvement and progress... checking and making the homework tasks consistently also helps us teachers to know how to help the weaker individuals in their areas of challenge” (Teacher A, 2020).*

*“Once the learners hand in the homework, feedback is given on time in order to know if the learners have challenges pertaining to the work they were given” (Teacher C, 2020).*

However, **Teacher B** explained that homework tasks were not checked and marked on time because he was teaching many classes and that some classes had many learners making it difficult to check and mark homework tasks on time. The following excerpts provide evidence of what he said:

*“...homework is not consistently checked and marked learners in some classes are just too many therefore marking and checking of the learners books becomes a challenge for me” (Teacher B, 2020).*

#### 4.3.6 Improved academic performance of learners

Results from interviews with teachers showed that all the three of them experienced improved academic performance in learners who consistently answered homework tasks,

especially in subjects like Mathematics, English and others. This came out when the researcher asked them on the positive aspects they experienced by giving homework to learners. This is evidenced by the following verbatim:

*“Homework has greatly improved the academic performance of learners more especially in mathematics, being a practical subject”*  
**(Teacher B, 2020).**

*“Homework opens up the minds of learners because playing time at home is minimized as compared to school work time. More practice makes perfect...hence good results in tests”* **(Teacher A, 2020).**

Correspondingly, **Teacher C** had this to say:

*“Yes, especially in reading and writing, literacy skills... Pupils with reading challenges have greatly improved and progressed because most reading of syllables, words, sentences, paragraphs and texts all with the helper at home”* **(Teacher C, 2020).**

Similarly, in the FGDs most of the learners pointed out that the homework policy was effective for various reasons. Some learners expressed that homework enabled teachers to know what they understood concerning the assignments they gave them, and homework made them study in advance.

#### **4.3.7 Complaints on frequency of homework given to learners**

Teachers (2 out of 3) indicated that there were some complaints by parents and learners that too much homework assigned disturbed their free time and that it made it difficult for

them to attend some programs such as church programs and doing some house chores.

The following verbatim by **Teacher B** are a typical example:

*“We experience complaints from some parents that we are giving too much homework to the learners....and that leads to them failing to do house chores or attend to various programs such as church meetings when they are at home” (Teacher B, 2020).*

Moreover, parents also said in as much as homework is essential, there was need to come up with the maximum number of homework per week for each subject which is manageable, because their children went home with more homework tasks from various subjects. This made it difficult for them to attend to other issues and also jeopardised their free time.

Furthermore, the researcher also wanted to know the learners’ views on this aspect. They said being too busy with homework sometimes prevented them from attending to some church programs, and also from spending time freely with their families.

#### **4.4 What are the perceptions of parents towards homework policy in selected primary schools of Kalabo district?**

The previous section provided findings on teachers’ experiences on homework policy implementation in selected primary schools of Kalabo district. The second research question sought to ascertain parents’ perceptions towards homework policy in selected primary schools of Kalabo district. This question was answered by parents/guardians through interviews. However, validity of data was also achieved by comparing what the parents said through semi-structured interviews with what the learners said through Focus

Group Discussions. The following were the perceptions of parents on homework policy in selected primary schools of Kalabo district:

#### **4.4.1 Homework as school work meant to keep learners busy at home**

When asked about how they viewed homework during in-depth interviews, some parents (7 out of 9) mentioned that they knew what homework was. They described it as work given to learners to be done at home, so that they are kept busy with school work all the time. This finding is evidenced by following verbatim for **parents 7, 3, 5 and 8** who said the following:

*“Homework to me is work which is given to pupils to be done at home to keep them busy and away from causing troubles” (Parent 7, 2020).*

*“Schools should be giving more homework for our children so that they are kept busy when they are at home” (Parent 3, 2020).*

*“I appreciate homework because it keeps my son busy at home. He does not go out with bad friends to drink beer and smoke when he has been assigned homework” (Parent 5, 2020).*

*“Our children when they are not given homework play a lot. So my appeal to teachers is to be giving our children more homework” (Parent 8, 2020).*

During FGDs, learners complimented what the parents said during semi-structured interviews. Some learners said homework was meant to keep them busy at home and to make them study.

#### 4.4.2 Homework as weekly work given to learners

Findings also revealed that parents (5 out of 9) perceived homework as weekly school work given to the learners. Some parents said homework administration was done weekly and therefore, it could be referred to as weekly work given to learners. Some parents even cited that, homework was given to their children twice in a week. This is evidenced by the following verbatim quotes for **Parent 2**, **Parent 3**, and **Parent 5** respectively, as typical examples:

*“...homework is weekly work given to our children and usually twice in a week” (Parent 2, 2020).*

*“Homework is school work which is given to pupils two times in a week normally” (Parent 3, 2020).*

*“....it is given two times in a week...” (Parent 5, 2020).*

On the other hand, some parents said that homework was school work given to their children three times in a week. The following verbatim by **Parent 1** and **Parent 9** provide evidence to this effect:

*“....it is given to children three times in a week as I have seen with my children” (Parent 1, 2020).*

*“It is given per week.... meaning it is the weekly work based on what teachers teach or intends to teach in a week...and I have seen that it is given at least three times in a week” (Parent 9, 2020).*

#### **4.4.3 Homework as good in mathematics**

Findings revealed that all the parents perceived homework as being good in mathematics where learners are required to learn the concepts through more practice. All the parents during semi-structured interviews explained that homework was necessary in mathematics as the subject requires daily practice. The findings are supported by the following excerpts by **Parent 3**, **Parent 6** and **Parent 7** respectively:

*“Homework is good and needed in mathematics as it requires daily practice” (Parent 3, 2020). “Mathematics as it requires daily practice...that is where homework is required and it helps” (Parent 6, 2020). “Most of the homework’s I have assisted my child are in Mathematics” (Parent 7, 2020).*

In addition, during FDGs complimented the parents’ perception of homework being good in mathematics, though they added English to it. They said homework mainly was given in Mathematics and English.

#### **4.4.4 Homework as a way to find out if teachers are teaching the correct material**

Findings also showed that parents (4 out of 9) perceived homework as a way of finding out if teachers were teaching the correct material to learners. Some parents said that they checked and asked their children about homework in order to see if teachers were teaching the correct material among other reasons. This finding is evidenced by the following verbatim for **Parent 4** and **Parent 6** respectively:

*“...every time when they come back from school, I always check their books if teachers have given them homework. This is also a way to find out if teachers are doing the correct thing” (Parent 4, 2020).*

*“Every time when children are back from school, concerned parents or guardians must ask about homework. This is to know how children are faring and what teachers are teaching... and knowing how to assist them” (Parent 6, 2020).*

On the contrary, teachers explained that most of the parents did not regularly check and ask their children about homework even though they claimed to do so as a way of finding out if teachers were teaching the correct material. They added that most of the parents were ever busy with work, farming, and doing businesses. The following excerpts by **Parent 8** and **Parent 9** are typical examples of what the parents said which supported the teachers’ statement above:

*“I have no time to help my child because am always busy with work” (Parent 8, 2020).*

*“I don’t have enough time to help my child with school work because of work. I believe that homework is for the pupil and not for the parents” (Parent 9, 2020).*

Similarly, results from FGDs showed that parents did not check and assist their children in doing homework. Some learners explained that their parents did not help them with homework because they were busy with other works. They also said that some parents checked and assisted them with homework, but not regularly.



#### **4.5 What are the prospects of giving homework to learners in selected primary schools of Kalabo district?**

The previous section presented findings on perceptions of parents towards homework policy in selected primary schools of Kalabo district. Research question three focused on determining the prospects of giving homework at selected primary schools of Kalabo district. Here the researcher needed to find out from the participants the notable prospects of providing homework to the learners. To do this, semi-structured interviews were conducted with sampled teachers, and parents. Lastly, FGDs were done with sampled learners at all the three selected schools. The following were the prospects of giving homework to the learners, from the viewpoint of the participants:

##### **4.5.1 Improving academic performance of learners**

Findings from semi-structured interviews with three teachers revealed that homework helps in improving learners' academic performance leading to learners performing well in assessments at school level and in national examinations. The following excerpts are examples of what teachers' responses were when the researcher asked them on the prospects of homework given to the learners:

*“Homework improves academic performance of learners especially in reading and writing (literacy skills) .... I have seen pupils with reading challenges improving through the constant use of homework because most reading of syllables, words, sentences, paragraphs and texts is done also at home with the help of parents” (Teacher A, 2020).*

*“Homework in literacy has helped to improve learners’ performance even in other subjects because learners practice reading and writing both at school and at home...we all know that reading enhances performance even in other subjects because learners can read and understand, which in turn helps them to pass in various assessments and national examinations at grade 7...homework plays a big role in improving the academic performance levels from below, minimum to outstanding” (Teacher B, 2020).*

*“One of the rationales I assign homework to learners with reading difficulties is to improve their performance because they will be assisted by parents at home. Some of these children understand their parents better and their parents understand them better as well...hence, it has greatly improved the academic performance of learners, especially in mathematics and literacy. Mathematics being a practical subject, it helps...” (Teacher C, 2020).*

During semi-structured interviews with parents, they echoed the exact words when they were asked about the importance of homework for their children. The following excerpts are a typical example of what they said:

*“Yes, homework is important because the performance of the children go high” (Parent 1, 2020).*

*“One of the importance of homework is that it helps to uplift literacy levels” (Parent 2, 2020).*

*“.... apart from that, homework improves the performance of our children in academic subjects, and so it should be given regularly”*  
*(Parent 4, 2020).*

Moreover, learners in FGDs also acknowledged the fact that homework was vital as it helped in improving their performance. Learners were aware of their problems in learning and hence appreciated the idea of homework in order to address the challenges they were facing in their own learning. For example, the following verbatim is an example of what learners said in FGDs when the researcher asked them why homework was usually given in literacy:

*“They give us homework in literacy because some of us don’t know how to read and write well” (Learner A<sub>1</sub>, 2020).*

When the researcher asked them on the importance of them being given homework, they acknowledged that it improves their performance. The following verbatim serves as an example of what the learners said:

*“Homework is important because it keeps us busy even at home and it improves our results in tests” (Learner A<sub>3</sub>, 2020).*

*“We like homework because by reading at home also we don’t play too much and this makes us to pass our tests well” (Learner C<sub>2</sub>, 2020).*

#### **4.5.2 Developing interest and enhancing self-learning**

Findings from semi-structured interviews and FGDs also revealed that homework helped in developing interest in some subjects by learners and also enhanced self-learning in

them. For example, the following excerpts are typical examples of what teachers said when they were asked on the prospects of the homework given to the learners:

*“Homework arouses the interest of pupils to learn more leading to self-directed learning” (Teacher C, 2020).*

*“When it is done consistently, homework raises the interest of learners in the subjects since they spend more time at home answering the activities” (Teacher A, 2020).*

*“Homework arouses the interest of pupils to learn more and helps learners to interact with each other” (Teacher B, 2020).*

Semi-structured interviews with parents also revealed similar results, when the researcher asked them on the importance of teachers giving homework to their children. The following excerpts are examples of what they said:

*“It is important for teachers to give homework regularly because our children are too playful, hence they need to be kept busy so that they can develop interest in the subject and also learn to search for information on their own” (Parent 3, 2020).*

*“Homework is good because it also encourages learners to work on their own” (Parent 5, 2020).*

Learners in FGDs also said that their interest in various subjects is enhanced when they are given homework regularly. The following are the notable excerpts of what they said when they were asked about the advantages of being given homework:

*“Homework encourages us to learn more on our own and then we become interested in the subjects where it is given” (Learner C<sub>4</sub>, 2020).*

*“.... homework is good because it makes us practice more in the subject and we come to like the subjects which we didn’t like because it forces us to study and ask our parents, brothers and sisters” (Learner B<sub>2</sub>, 2020).*

#### **4.5.3 Improving communication and parental involvement in children’s education**

Findings also revealed that other prospects included improving communication between learners and parents, learners and teachers and between teachers and parents through giving of homework. When asked on the prospects of homework, some teachers eluded to the fact that it improved communication between teachers and learners, and also between teachers and parents, as well as enabling parents to be involved in the education of their children. The following are notable excerpts of what teachers said:

*“Parents are made to sign for their children in the homework book each time it is given. This is good because there is an improved communication between us and parents and between learners and parents....in the end parents also participate in the education of their children” (Teacher B, 2020).*

*“Homework bridges the gap between parents and us teachers and a learner is at the centre of it all.... Therefore, parents also participate in the learning of their child” (Teacher C, 2020).*

Interviews with parents also indicated similar results. The following excerpts are typical examples of what parents said when they were asked on the advantages of homework.

*“Sometimes us parents we come to learn about the school performance of our children through homework, though sometimes it is too much, but it is good” (Parent 4, 2020).*

*“We are able to participate in our children’s learning through helping in doing homework” (Parent 1, 2020).*

Learners in FGDs also indicated that communication was enhanced through homework, and that parents and siblings helped in their learning. The following excerpts are examples of what they said in FGDs when the researcher asked them on how they did their homework, as a follow up question:

*“We enjoy doing homework. Some of us our parents help us because they understand the importance of school” (Learner B<sub>3</sub>, 2020).*

*“In class you may not understand the Mathematics concepts, English concepts but homework gives us an opportunity to consult our parents and they explain well so that we understand” (Learner B<sub>5</sub>, 2020).*

*“Because of homework our teachers give us in different subjects, it has encouraged our parents to buy study materials for us” (Learner A<sub>5</sub>, 2020).*

## **4.6 What challenges do pupils and parents encounter when given homework?**

The previous section provided findings on the perceptions of parents towards homework policy in selected primary schools of Kalabo district. Research question four sought to establish the challenges learners and parents encountered when given homework. This question was answered by parents/guardians through interviews and learners through focus group discussions. However, triangulation of data was also achieved by comparing what the teachers said through semi-structured interviews. The following are the challenges which learners and parents encountered:

### **4.6.1 Challenges learners encounter when given homework**

#### **4.6.1.1 Lack of help from parents**

When asked about the challenges, learners encountered when doing homework, they stated that their parents did not help them with homework as supported by the following verbatim for **Learner A<sub>3</sub>** who complained that:

*“I do homework at school because at home I am alone; I have no one to explain to me” (Learner A<sub>3</sub>, 2020).*

Similarly, **Learner B<sub>4</sub>** explained that:

*“I do most my homework assignments alone because I do not receive any help from my parents” (Learner B<sub>4</sub>, 2020).*

#### **4.6.1.2 Home chores pressure**

Results from FGDs showed that, learners failed to do homework due to home chores pressure as evidenced by the following verbatim for **Learner B<sub>5</sub>** who narrated that:

*“Sometimes we have pressure at home, especially us girls after school we have to walk home fast to do some house works and we get tired at night and fail to do our homework” (Learner B<sub>5</sub>, 2020).*

Correspondingly, **Learner C<sub>3</sub>** had this to say:

*“The challenge I face with homework is that I fail to work on the questions on time because of too many house work at home” (Learner, C<sub>3</sub>, 2020).*

#### **4.6.1.3 Teachers not marking homework**

Five (5) out of fifteen (15) learners stated that some teachers were not consistent in marking of homework. During focus group discussions, learners cited lack of consistence in marking homework as discouraging and demotivating for them. For instance, the following excerpts by learners (**A<sub>3</sub>** and **B<sub>4</sub>**) act as typical examples:

*“Our teachers take long to mark us the homework. This makes us not to put in our effort with homework” (Learner A<sub>3</sub>, 2020).*

*“The homework’s that our teachers give us are not effective because they take too long to mark us” (Learner B<sub>4</sub>, 2020).*

#### **4.6.1.4 Illiterate levels by parents**

Responses from the learners during focus group discussions revealed that some of them failed to complete their homework because their parents were illiterates. Some learners further explained that, their parents were illiterate and could not help them to find the



solutions and each time they got stuck, they became frustrated in the course of doing homework as evidenced by the following verbatim:

*My parent says “I have never been to school before and I cannot help you)” (Learner C5, 2020).*

Correspondingly, **Parent 9** reported that:

*“I have never been to school before. So most of the time my child brings homework to me, I always fail to help him. Though at times when I try to help him, I get stuck because I have never been to school” (Parent 9, 2020).*

#### **4.6.1.5 Too much homework**

Results showed that, too much homework overburdened and affected them to hand in and complete the tasks on time as evidenced by the following passages for **learners A5** and **C4** as typical examples:

*“Homework is an important part of my learning process, but there is sometimes no balance and then there are periods when no homework is given and others in which we are given a lot of homework” (Learner A5, 2020).*

*“We are always given homework” (Learner C4, 2020).*

Similarly, **Parent 7** reported that:

*“Sometimes the children are congested with homework in so many subjects like Mathematics, Geography, English and sciences, and they get very busy and tired” (Parent 7, 2020).*

#### **4.6.1.6 Lack of learning materials/resources**

When asked about the challenges learners encountered when doing homework, majority of learners mentioned that lack of learning materials such as text books, and mathematical sets, affected them doing homework tasks. For instance, the following verbatim for **Learner A<sub>3</sub>** and **Learner B<sub>2</sub>** act as typical examples:

*“We fail to do homework tasks on time due to lack of learning materials such as textbooks for reference. This is one of the biggest challenge us pupils we face” (Learner A<sub>3</sub>, 2020).*

*“After our teachers have given us homework, we always research for notes so that we understand the questions but the challenge we face is lack of textbooks to refer to and answer the questions. Lack of text books has contributed to not handing in homework sometimes” (Learner B<sub>2</sub>, 2020).*

#### **4.6.1.7 Lack of understanding homework tasks**

Results from focus group discussions showed that, learners experienced difficulties in doing homework due to lack of understanding homework tasks. For example, **Learner A<sub>3</sub>** expressed the following:

*“I sometimes do not understand how to do my homework because I do not know how to go about the task” (Learner A<sub>3</sub>, 2020).*

Correspondingly, **Parent 1** had this to say:

*“They sometimes do not understand how to do their homework. I sometimes look at her tests and see that she takes a wild guess and marks the options. She sometimes makes up the words that she doesn’t know” (Parent 1, 2020).*

#### **4.6.2 Challenges parents encounter with learners’ homework**

##### **4.6.2.1 Inability to help due to incompetency**

The majority of parents (6 out of 9) stated that they did not help their children with homework because of being illiterate or having forgotten their school work as supported by the following passages for **Parent 6** and **Parent 5**:

*“.... No, I do not help him, I am not educated; I had no luck of being taken to school because my parents divorced when I was too young and I am also divorced and I can’t manage to do everything for the children alone” (Parent 6, 2020).*

*“The teachers give such homework to help our children not knowing that we have no knowledge about these assignments because some of us have never been to school before” (Parent 5, 2020).*

#### **4.6.2.2. Fear of being embarrassed**

The results showed that some parents failed to help their children with homework because of fear of embarrassment if the child got it wrong as evidenced by the following passage:

*“I am always sceptical about helping my child with homework cause of fear of being embarrassed when she gets the answers wrong” (Parent 4, 2020).*

Similarly, **Parent 6** narrated that:

*“I have stopped helping my child with homework because last time when I helped him, he got all the answers wrong”. I felt embarrassed and I promised myself not to be helping with homework. The challenge is that it’s been a very long time since I did school work and that’s why my child gets wrong answers each time I help him” (Parent 6, 2020).*

#### **4.6.2.3 Lack of guidance by teachers**

With regard to lack of guidance by the teachers, some parents explained that most teachers did not guide them how they should help their children with homework as evidenced by the following sentiments for **Parents 7** and **8**:

*“It is only that I have been a teacher before and I know what to do when it comes to helping my child with homework. I am not supposed to give answers but guide and monitor. Otherwise teachers do not give us guidance” (Parent 7, 2020).*

*“They just tell my children to tell me to help them with homework without really telling me how I should help” (Parent 8, 2020).*

#### **4.6.2.4 Inability to spare time**

Results showed that some parents had difficulties in helping their children with homework due to lack of spare time as evidenced by the following remark from **Parent 7**:

*“I have difficulty in sparing time as I have a little baby. Some days I have to come home late. At such times we have difficulty. We want her to do it with the nanny at home, but we come home to see that they haven’t. We’ve had such kind of difficulties” (Parent 7, 2020).*

#### **4.6.2.5 Difficulty in buying learning resources/ materials**

Results from interviews showed that some parents (5 out of 9) experienced difficulties in helping their children with homework due to lack of learning materials. For instance, the following passages by **Parent 1** and **Parent 3** are examples:

*“Certain things are hard to buy. When a performance task is given, it burdens a great deal of cost depending on to the state on that day. That happened a few times before; there are times when she forgets homework due to another one. When she learns that there is homework for the other day, we panic. Then, she naturally gets upset. And we try to complete the homework even at night. We help her as much as we can, but there are times when we don’t have money and we suffer from material difficulties” (Parent 1, 2020).*

*“I have three students and I face many material difficulties. We have a single income and may not be able to buy everything they want all the time. I’ve seen many times that they said, “Mum, I don’t have a cardboard, I don’t have lined paper” on the last day of the homework. Then I get angry with them and ask them why they don’t tell us what they need on time so that we could buy it. When necessary, we buy it by cutting it from our bread and butter” (Parent 3, 2020).*

#### **4.7 Summary of the chapter**

This chapter has presented the findings from different participants of the study. The results have been presented in accordance with the four objectives. The findings on the homework policy implementation showed that teachers’ experiences on homework implementation were that: they assigned homework to learners at least twice in a week; they experienced both positive and negative parental response and involvement, among other experiences. Parents perceived homework given to learners in many ways including that homework was weekly work given to learners; homework as being good in mathematics among other issues. On the prospects of giving homework to learners in selected primary schools in Kalabo district, it was established that homework improved the academic performance of learners especially in subjects like mathematics, among other reasons. On the challenges learners encountered when given homework, it was observed that some learners failed to do their homework due to home chores pressure; lack of learning materials; and that some parents did not provide the needed support and assistance to their children. The findings were clear that homework policy improved the academic performance of learners. The next chapter discusses these findings.

## **CHAPTER FIVE: DISCUSSION OF FINDINGS**

### **5.1 Introduction**

This chapter presents a discussion of findings of the study on homework policy implementation in selected primary schools of Kalabo district in Western province of Zambia. The discussion has used the literature reviewed in chapter two and synchronised with the theory guiding the study. Themes from the objectives have been used to present a discussion of the findings. The discussions of the themes are done in sections. Section 5.2 discusses teachers' experiences on homework policy implementation in selected primary schools of Kalabo district. Section 5.3 discusses parents' perceptions towards homework policy in selected primary schools of Kalabo district. Section 5.4 discusses the prospects of giving homework to learners in selected primary schools of Kalabo district. Section 5.5 discusses challenges learners and parents encountered when given homework. Finally, section 5.6 summarises the chapter.

### **5.2 The teachers' experiences on homework policy implementation in selected primary schools of Kalabo district.**

The study established that teachers' experiences regarding homework policy implementation at the schools sampled were as follows: they were giving homework at least twice in a week; teachers experienced both positive and negative parental response and involvement; failure to do homework by some learners; marking homework and providing feedback on time; improved academic performance of learners; and complaints on frequency of homework given to learners.

Homework was given twice in a week to learners in different subjects, and this was in line with home policy of the schools in the district. It is essential to give more homework to the learners as it is a way of doing revision and making learners do more practice at home. This finding resonates with Trautwein (2002) who observed that there was a significant relationship that existed between classes which were assigned more homework and their level of achievement. Learners who were assigned homework more frequently scored higher than those with less frequent homework assignments. Moreover, Eccles and Wigfield (2002) noted that learners' achievements rose significantly when teachers regularly assigned homework and learners conscientiously did it, and that the academic benefit increased as learners progressed to higher grades. They perceived homework to be a beneficial component of the teaching and learning process. Therefore, the importance of homework in children's learning cannot be overemphasised as it is crucial that they also learn from their parents at home who are also significant others as stated by sociocultural theory of development (Vygotsky, 1978). When homework is regularly given to learners, they sharpen their skills and acquire knowledge in academic subjects even at home, as they also learn from their parents and other people around them.

From the findings, it was also established that teachers experienced both positive and negative parental response and involvement in the education of their children. Through homework, some parents cooperated by helping their children and signing at the end of each homework assignment given to learners, while others did not cooperate. Some parents were involved in the education of their children through homework, by asking their children questions, sitting together with them, giving them clues to the answers, and signing at the back of the book as mentioned earlier. The findings are in line with Rosario



(2014) who revealed that parental involvement in homework was a valuable and effective tool to promote their children's academic success. Moreover, homework policy guidelines in Zambia clearly states that the roles of parents in homework involves checking children's work and signing in their homework books (MOGE, 2015). Advice was given that parents should organize the study environment and teach their children relevant learning strategies to complete their tasks which should include reference books, course books and time to respond to questions. The findings are also supported by Hoover-Dempsey and Sandler (1997) who established that parents appear to involve themselves in their children's homework for three primary reasons: they believe that they should be involved; they think that their involvement will make a positive difference, and they perceive invitation to involvement. Moreover, Chen and Stevenson (1989) added that parents believe that involvement in children's homework and schooling is a standard requirement and a responsibility of parenting. Many parents often continue with the involvement in their children's homework despite concerns about their personal limitations, challenges or their children's learning difficulties.

From the above, it is necessary to recommend that parents should be available to provide support by facilitating the conditions that make homework be more effective for their children. Moreover, these parents who helped their children in homework also provided materials such as textbooks and other reference materials to ease the answering of the tasks. Parents are significant stakeholders in the learning of their children and therefore providing support like this is what constructivists refer to as scaffolding. This support is necessary if learners are to learn effectively (Vygotsky, 1978). It was also established that teachers always encouraged parents to participate in the homework of their children and

help them in finding answers to some given school work whilst at home as per homework policy guidelines. These findings agree with Van Voorhis (2011) who reported that when parents were guided in the correct way to help their children, family stress levels regarding homework decreased.

On the contrary, the study revealed that some parents did not help their children in answering their homework because they believed it was the role of the teachers to do so and not parents. Perhaps it was because some learners complained that their parents were illiterates and could not help with homework in Mathematics and Literacy. These parents showed negative parental response and involvement in their children's education, contrary to Chen and Stevenson (1989) who indicated that parental involvement was a key factor to maintain their children focus on homework, reinforcing the idea that parent involvement prevents children from postponing the homework assignment due to home distractions such as play. Parents need to realise the fact that when homework is done by the learners and presented to the teachers, it provides motivation for the teachers and learners as both achieve something at the end of it. This becomes a fertile ground for teaching and learning for both parties involved. Hence, it is imperative for parents to take keen interest in the education of their children through helping them with homework among other aspects, especially at primary school level where learners need more support from the significant others and more capable peers (Vygotsky, 1978).

Teachers also came across a number of learners who did not do homework assigned to them for various reasons. When learners failed to do their homework, they were asked why they did not do it. Learners who fail to do homework tasks for any reasons are not likely to succeed in their school. This is so because homework helps in consolidating what

is taught by teachers. Homework policy in Zambia requires learners to do homework tasks according to the teacher's instructions without fail (MOGE, 2015). Learners who fail to do homework tasks given to them should be made to account for that. This is because by completing homework tasks assigned to them, learners improve their academic performance. This is also in line with Eccles and Wigfield (2002) who said that teachers believe that learners' homework completion improves their chances of academic success. Kunene (2016) established that there was correlation between homework and academic achievement. Hence, the need for learners to do every homework assigned to them. This encourages learners to do every homework assigned to them promptly if they are to succeed in their school work. Teachers and parents need to explain clearly the importance of homework to the learners. For those who managed to do it, the teachers found out who did their homework, explained to them the importance of homework and at times children were asked to bring their parents for failure of doing the homework.

On marking and providing feedback, two teachers were able to get responses from learners, mark them and provide feedback on time, which showed that homework was well implemented in their classes. However, it was established that one teacher did not manage to mark homework tasks for learners and providing feedback on time due to having overcrowded classes. This jeopardised the effectiveness of the teacher in giving feedback to the learners promptly. These findings are supported by Banda (2017) whose findings indicated that teachers were underperforming because they handled huge classes which were over enrolled, underperforming learners and their writing skills were lacking. She added that it was difficult for teachers to mark homework, exercises and tests on time in all the subjects for all the classes and this made the teachers fail to monitor progress of

learners properly. Because of such lacunas, it was not easy to shoulder the blame on teacher for not marking the homework promptly. However, even with too much work to do, teachers should always endeavour to check homework as soon as it is brought back, as it is one of their roles in homework implementation as per homework policy guidelines in Zambia (MOGE, 2015).

Furthermore, the teachers also stated that they experienced improved academic performance of learners through homework policy implementation, especially in subjects like Mathematics, English and many others. The findings were in line with Matanda (2016) who also noted that homework was appearing to improve learner performance. Van Voorlis (2011) also added that when homework was explicitly designed to align with curriculum and state standards, learners' standardized test scores showed significant increases. Teachers, therefore, perceived homework as a means to improving learner performance in school. Further, Matanda (2016) indicated that the more the students understood about the purpose of the homework, the better they performed in the mock and other examinations. He added that the majority of the grade seven learners in 2015 performed better in the mock examination and they made it to the next grade in the following year. In view of this, it showed that homework served its purpose, efficient to improve learner performance. Moreover, Trautwein et al. (2002) added that learners were able to benefit from regular homework owing to the fact that they were able to practice new concepts, previewed concepts they learned, and were able to review the previous concepts through the use of the parents and the materials they provided at home. This created a positive teacher perception on how they made homework work to their advantage. Trautwein et al. (2009) found that homework which was more frequent seemed

to correlate with higher learner achievement. Brock et al. (2007) showed that some teachers in their study also adapted homework for learners who struggled in certain subjects, at times teachers gave everyone the same homework and stating grade level standards must be taught and met by all. It was also noted that learners who practiced reading at home improved their abilities in reading. Therefore, homework was seen to be a relevant practice tool the teachers to help learners improve their competencies in schools and subjects in class.

The study also established that homework made some parents to become aware of the educational materials the learners lacked in their school. These findings are supported by Tembo (2016) who established that teachers gave homework frequently to learners so that the children could consult their parents on some school needs and probably made parents aware about the lack of teaching and learning materials in school and at home. Through homework, parents were able to provide relevant teaching and learning materials for their children so that children could read and consult the books when the parents were not available. Therefore, teachers perceived homework as an indirect lobby for the needed teaching and learning materials for learners to use at home for their academic improvement. Teachers and parents need constant communication regarding homework so that learners can be assisted. Parents need to meet with the teacher about their children's progress (MOGE, 2015).

Findings also revealed that teachers experienced complaints on the frequency of homework given to the learners in all the subjects. Parents stated that most of the time learners were given too much homework such that it affected their free time management. Learners echoed the same statement too. This finding resonates with Strauss (2006) who

established in his study that the complaints were that it was either there was too much homework, too little work assigned, or that the homework was boring. On a similar issue, Wilson and Rhodes (2010) suggested that teachers should select specific days to assign subjects to avoid excessive homework. This suggestion is significant because learners in schools learn more subjects and if homework is given in all subjects at once, they are overwhelmed with work. Moreover, when learners have too much work at once, the quality of answering those assignments is compromised. Learning occurs when learners interact with new knowledge, the learning environment, as well as with parents or guardians who have the past experiences (Dershem, 1996). Therefore, homework is necessary for learners as they also need to learn from their experienced parents. What is required is to see to it that learners are given enough homework and not too much at a time.

### **5.3 Parents' perceptions towards homework Policy in selected primary schools of Kalabo district.**

The study findings indicated that parents perceived homework as school work meant to keep learners busy at home. They also perceived it as weekly school work given to learners, homework was also seen by parents as good in mathematics because of the practical nature of the subject, and that homework was a way of finding out if teachers are teaching the correct material.

These findings are supported by Fox (2016) whose study revealed that mothers also viewed homework time as quality time for the family and a way to occupy learners at home without using TV or video games. All the children in the family met as a group, receiving help from siblings or other family members. He added that more homework was

preferred, as the experiences were very positive for the group that she studied. Homework provided value for family time and opportunity for education enhancement in school. Moreover, Harris (2011) established that parents' conception of homework involvement having a positive meaning and focusing primarily on the role played in the promotion of academic learning by fostering their children's autonomy, exerting control over their learning and providing them with emotional encouragement when children struggled with difficulties. This is a more reason why parents' perceived homework as being good in mathematics as the subject demands that learners learn by practising.

What was great about the parents' perceptions towards homework was that they knew its importance in the education life of their children. The fact that they also perceived homework as a way to find out if teachers were teaching the correct material could be true. Homework could provide accountability of the time teachers and learners spend at school. It can surely give a clue on how the objectives of the education system are being realised and whether the learners are learning the intended curriculum as they should or not. Therefore, it is vital for parents to take part in the education of their children through homework among other aspects. To support these findings, Wilder (2014) also indicated that since homework is one of the most popular and frequent instructional tools used in home-based involvement, it is a task in which parents are involved more directly in their children's learning.

#### **5.4 Prospects of giving homework to learners in selected primary schools of Kalabo district.**

The findings from semi-structured interviews with teachers and parents, and FGDs with learners showed a number of prospects of homework in selected schools in the district.

Some of the notable prospects were: improving academic performance of learners; developing interest and enhancing self-learning in learners; and enhancing communication and parental involvement in children's education.

The findings revealed that one of the prospects of giving homework to pupils was that it improved learners' performance in literacy and many other subjects. Teachers observed that learners who were constantly given homework improved in academic performance. This finding resonates with the findings of Songsirisak (2019) who established that homework enabled learners to acquire knowledge, develop learning skills, and increase learner academic achievement. Costa et al. (2016) also observed that all the teachers in their study asked learners to do homework, especially in the areas of Portuguese and mathematics because they considered it essential for learning. This shows that indeed the importance of homework in improving the academic performance of learners cannot be overemphasised. Pfeiffer (2018) proposed that some form of homework ought to be given to the learners in order to help them in many aspects of their future life. To amplify this, it is important to note that when learners' academic performance is improved at primary school level through the use of homework and other means, these learners are more likely to excel in their secondary and tertiary education later in their academic journey.

Moreover, Milbourne and Haury (1999) stated that homework is planned to be a positive experience that inspires children to learn by helping them to review, apply, and integrate what has been learned in class, develop research skills such as locating, organising and condensing information. All these outlined skills once they develop in learners, they lead to improved academic performance and achievement. Moreover, Matanda (2016)



observed that homework promoted ownership and interest, learners were competent, and homework was appealing to improve performance.

Furthermore, sociocultural theory of development states that learners learn by being supported by either more capable peers or more significant others (Vygotsky, 1978). In this case learners' knowledge is enriched by consulting parents when homework is given, hence, their actual developmental level is pushed to potential developmental level in the ZPD through parental support (Vygotsky, 1978). It is therefore, clear that where learners are supported by being provided constantly with homework, their engagement in school work is extended and their academic performance improves. This is one of the prospects of giving homework to the learners.

Another notable prospect that came out of the interviews with teachers and parents as well as FGDs with learners is that through homework, learners developed interest in the subjects where homework was constantly given, and that it enhanced self-learning in them. This finding is in line with Milbourne and Haury (1999) who observed that homework enables learners to acquire effective habits of self-discipline and time management, hence they develop initiative and learn to work independently. Mahmoud (2015) advised teachers to give regular homework assignments that require high mental skills; that is homework assignments of high quality rather than quantity. This is important since homework needs to develop interest in learners once they do it. It should also help them to enhance self-learning alongside other prospects. It is most likely that when homework gives an opportunity for learners to engage in high mental thinking they are likely to develop interest in the subject if they manage to solve the problems assigned to them. That also leads to self-directed learning.

Teachers and parents in the study stated that some learners developed interest in some subjects as they continuously worked with homework assigned to them. For example, one parent indicated that children needed to be given homework regularly because some of them are playful at home, and that they need to develop interest as a result. This implied that homework helps in developing the interest of learners in the subjects and that it helps learners to engage in school work most of the time. This finding also resonates with sociocultural theory in the sense that it views knowledge as first occurring on the social plane and then transferred to psychological plane. In this case the teacher gives homework in the social set up and then parents and the learners discuss it, and in the end the learner internalises it so that it becomes part of his/her psychological plane (Vygotsky, 1978).

The findings also showed that improving communication between teachers and learners, learners and parents, and teachers and parents, as well as parental involvement in children's education was yet another prospect of homework outlined. This finding is in agreement with Milbourne and Haury (1999) who indicated that homework can also bring parents and teachers closer together, and added that parents who supervise homework and assist their children with assignments learn more about their children's education and about the school. Songsirisak (2019) added that homework also promoted students' collaborative skills in speaking between teachers and students for clarification. Moreover, sociocultural theory encourages people to communicate effectively since it believes that knowledge comes as a result of social interactions and relations. Therefore, teachers and parents need to constantly communicate in order to ensure that learners can learn effectively (Vygotsky, 1978). Tas et al. (2014) also indicated that because the teachers stressed that homework was influential in the acquisition of subject matter, they

communicated with parents and suggested the best strategies for providing help. This kind of communication between teachers and parents is vital in the education of the child.

Therefore, it is worth noting that the above discussions show that there are a number of prospects of assigning homework to the learners at any level and in any subject. Generally, homework is aimed at enhancing learners' performance through engaging them to do school work even when they are at home. However, by doing that it was observed from the study that it also helped in developing interest and enhancing self-learning in learners, as well as improving communication and parental involvement in children's education. When these prospects are realised, they benefit all the three parts involved, that is teachers, learners and parents. However, homework should be given with caution and it should not be too much so as to compromise the ability of learners to have free time. Songsirisak (2019) noted that homework benefited and supported students' learning although it had some psychological impact on their learning and affected free time management.

### **5.5 Challenges pupils and parents encounter with regards to homework in selected primary schools of Kalabo district.**

The study established a number of challenges which parents and learners encountered as they worked on homework given by the teachers. The study revealed that some parents were not helping their children with their homework tasks for various reasons. These findings are supported by Silinskas, Niemi, Lerkkanen, and Nurmi (2013) who found that parents tended to help more when learners were struggling. They added that struggling learners might have parents who were unskilled with their assistance, poor learners themselves, or less educated and this lead to a negative effect of parental assistance with the child's skill development through homework. The results were that parents who were

not forceful with their assistance or helped without being asked lowered the children's performance. The findings are further supported by Desforges (2003) who indicated that a better home learning environment had the most substantial effect on cognitive development of learners. They argued that parents in disadvantaged areas in most cases did not speak the language of learning and teaching and this affected the communication between parents and child with regards to the instruction about homework assignments. Parents have to initiate the helping strategies of learners with their homework.

Further findings established that learners failed to successfully do homework due to home chores pressure which the parents delegated to them. These findings are in agreement with Kunene (2016) who noted that homework marginalized economically disadvantaged learners who found it difficult to complete homework tasks due to lack of suitable environment where house chores were more and there was little time for homework. Further, the findings agree with Núñez et al. (2015) who found that support had a positive effect on homework completion at all levels, whereas control had a negative impact. At the middle and high school levels, parental support had a positive influence on academic achievement. However, at all levels, parental control had a negative effect on academic achievement. It was the role of the parents to create a conducive environment to enable these challenges be worked on.

The other challenge established by the study was the lack of consistence to mark homework by teachers which discouraged and demotivated some learners to accomplish the homework tasks given to them in time. These findings are supported by Wilson and Rhodes (2010) who identified a variety of reasons which made learners not to complete homework and these reasons include the following: that it was boring; they did not

understand the assignment; assignments were not meaningful; and the teacher did not give feedback for the previous homework they wrote. Indeed, learners were demotivated to accomplish future tasks if the teachers were not providing feeding on the current ones. Marking enabled learners and parents to be informed on the learner's progress.

The other challenge established in the study was that teachers gave learners too much homework which overburdened and affected them to hand in and complete the tasks on time as Hong, Wan, and Peng (2011) support these findings when they found that tenth-grade learners were more pessimistic about homework than their teachers knew. In mathematics, learners claimed they did not complete work because the assignments were too complicated. However, the learners were more critical of themselves than teachers were as a result of a cultural element to the study. The teachers were primarily accurate in their knowledge of learners' beliefs in homework behaviours, such as competence and performance. With such challenges, it was not easy to make homework possible in the primary schools. The other challenge the study established is the lack of learning materials such as textbooks for reference resulted into the parents failing to help their children and the children failing to read alone and find solutions to the questions. The findings agree with Abrahams (2013) whose findings highlighted challenges such as poverty, unemployment, inequalities; lack of educational resources; lack of structure in the home; single parenting, school and community factors, and a lack of academic stimulation that negatively affected parental involvement in homework assignments. The findings are also supported by Dornbrack, Scheckle and Felix, (2008) who noted that deficit discourses ascribed to working class parents constructed them as having limited resources to draw on to assist learners at home with homework. Parents who had limited material resources

were then also perceived to be lacking mental resources to help their children with homework which was not the reason.

The study established that the other challenge was that parents did not help their children with homework because of being illiterate and others for having forgotten their school work. Tam and Chan (2009) dispute these findings by stating that parents supervised, provided structure, and assisted with assignments for many children. They later accept that parents who did not participate at helping their children in tackling the homework tasks often had lower education levels or additional children in the home (Tam & Chan, 2009). In addition, Tembo (2016) concluded that the provisions of materials made parents not to check the learner's homework regularly and they withdrew their help as books acted as a substitute, yet it was a good way of making children learn to study. Parents being closer to the children was a remedy to ensuring that learners were helped with their homework.

The challenges identified in the foregoing discussion are against the principles of the social constructivism theory of learning. The lack of materials for learners to use at home, overburden of house chores and parent's illiteracy were the factors which made homework ineffective because there was less social interaction between the parents and their children. Munsaka and Matafwali (2014) notes that Vygotsky believed that culture provides the unique ingredient that determines how children's cognitive development progresses. It is this form of constructivism that emphasizes the role education plays in people's social transformation. Cognitive development of the children should be facilitated by both parents and teachers through the use of the suitable materials at home and in schools. The absence of these materials made the learner's interaction with the family become limited

and failed to develop their own problem-solving skills as intended by the teacher through homework.

## **5.6 Summary of the chapter**

The discussion of findings concentrated on the teachers' experiences in homework policy implementation at selected primary schools of Kalabo district, the parents' perception towards homework given to learners at the schools selected, the prospects of providing homework to learners at those schools, and the challenges learners and parents encountered when given homework. From the discussion of the study findings, it was noted that learners faced many challenges in terms of homework. The study established that teachers gave learners too much homework which overburdened and affected them to hand in and complete the tasks on time. The other challenge the study established was that parents did not help their children with homework because of being illiterate and some learners forgot their school work whenever they reached home. The findings also reviewed that some learners failed to successfully do homework due to home chores pressure which the parents delegated to them.

Furthermore, the study discovered that lack of consistence to mark homework by teacher's discouraged and demotivated learners to accomplish the homework tasks within the given time. Levy Vygotsky's constructivism theory formed the theoretical framework of this study. Vygotsky believed that culture provides the unique ingredient that determines how children's cognitive development progresses. It is this form of constructivism that emphasizes the role education plays in people's social transformation. Cognitive development of the children should be facilitated by both parents and teachers through the

use of the suitable materials at home and in schools. The absence of these materials made the learners' interaction with the family become limited and failed to develop their own problem-solving skills as intended by teachers through homework. This study was supported by social constructivism theory because this theory encourages parents to interact with their children and to help them accomplish tasks of homework. In view of this theory, homework was a form of this collaborative learning which Vygotsky said to be making the children learn through the Zonal Proximal Development, (ZPD). ZPD is the gap between what children can accomplish independently and what they can accomplish when they are interacting with others who are more competent. Finally, homework was sent to parents and the two worked together to accomplish the exercise and signature was a sign of collaborative work. The next chapter concludes the study and also outlines some recommendations.



## **CHAPTER SIX: CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS**

### **6.1 Introduction**

The previous chapter presented the discussion of the study on the implementation of homework policy at selected primary schools of Kalabo district of Western province, Zambia. This chapter presents the conclusions and recommendations of the study.

### **6.2 Conclusion**

The study findings and discussion have demonstrated that the set objectives of the study have been met and the research questions have been answered successfully. In view of this, the following conclusions can be made:

Generally, the study established that homework policy is considered in many African countries and those outside Africa. In all these countries like in Zambia, homework is assigned on the assumption that parents or other elderly members have the capacity to assist learners and that home environment is conducive for the learners to do homework. However, it has been noted that even though there is a high parental willingness to be involved in learners' homework, this involvement is hampered by many socio-economic factors, including illiteracy and low income. The higher the income and socio-economic status, the more parents are likely to become involved whereas parents from a poorer socio-economic background are less likely to be involved in their children's homework.

This study also found that teachers' experiences in homework policy implementation in selected primary schools of Kalabo district were as follows: they administered homework at least twice in a week; they faced both positive and negative parental response and

involvement; they came across learners who could not do the homework; they marked homework and provided feedback to the learners, though at times they were overwhelmed with work due to significant numbers of learners; they witnessed improved academic performance of learners; and they also received complaints that too much homework was being given to learners. Parents perceived homework given to their children in many ways, including that it was a way of finding out if teachers were teaching the correct material. Some prospects of giving homework to the learners at selected primary schools have also been discussed. Further, challenges learners and parents faced have been discussed too.

Teachers considered homework as a tool to enable learners and parents interact and share the school experiences through parents helping their children and children learning from parents in a home environment. Therefore, homework was vital in improving learner's academic achievement as it facilitated self and home revision of the learnt materials. Teachers gave work to make parents realise the need for them to provide reference books and other materials for the learners to use while at home. Homes with poor conditions were not supportive to the learner's homework while well to do homes provided the needed help for the learner's homework to be well written.

Parents had a positive attitude towards learner's homework. They ensured that, learners were assisted and they guided them to make the homework well answered. On the other hand, some parents were not literate enough to fully help their children with the given homework. Therefore, children coming from such homes where parents are illiterate, did not find support from their parents and this really affected their performance.

The challenges learners faced included being given too much homework which overburdened and affected them to complete their tasks on time. Lack of learning

materials such as textbooks for reference resulted parents failing to help their children and the children failing to read alone and find solutions to the questions. Such resulted into making learners fail to accomplish the homework tasks given by the teachers in schools. The learners failed to successfully complete their homework tasks due to the burdening home chores assigned to them. The lack of consistence in marking homework tasks by teachers also discouraged and demotivated learners to accomplish the homework tasks within the given time.

The study noted that the weaknesses of the current homework policy in Zambian schools are that; the policy does not provide a platform for equal opportunities to learners from both the economically advantaged and the economically disadvantaged homes; the policy does not provide a platform at school level where learners from underprivileged homes in terms of homework are assisted in answering the tasks which are problematic to them. There is need for the homework policy to include ways in which learners from homes where they are not assisted in homework to be helped consistently at school other than just teachers checking their homework books. Under the current homework policy, it is difficult for teachers to meet parents and discuss learners' progress, as the policy does not outline the program or a time table when the two parties can meet in a term or in a year.

The homework policy which can integrate the above ideas would be an ideal one, especially for learners from the homes where parental involvement in their homework is low or completely missing due to many socio-economic reasons. In that way, homework can be a valuable tool to enhance learners' performance regardless of their socio-economic status. The current policy with the mentioned lapses benefit learners from high socio-

economic status more than their counterparts from low socio-economic status, hence the need to find a way to strike the balance so that all the learners can benefit from homework.

### **6.3 Recommendations**

Arising from the conclusions presented in the foregoing presentation above, the study made the following recommendations to the various stakeholders:

- i. Teachers should ensure that they give homework to learners which is manageable so that they could finish on time whilst at home. This would encourage learners to complete the work whilst at home. However, it has been noted that pupils fail to finish their homework due to economic status of the family. Learners have to give a helping hand to breadwinners in order to boost their family 's economic status. Therefore, they have little time for homework.
- ii. Teachers should ensure that they mark the homework on time so that learners are motivated to continue writing and handing in for marking. This would help to check on the learner's progress. Teachers have a duty and task to give prompt feedback to learners. However, the current situation does not allow them to do so due to the ratio between teachers and pupils. Teachers find it difficult to provide credible feedback. The pupil-teacher ratio has been found to be a credible indicator of pupil success. Therefore, the fewer pupils each teacher has, the more closely they can engage pupils to their specific learning styles.
- iii. Parents should help the learners with the various grade references and textbooks for reading whilst at home and attend to the given homework. This

would make learners study on their own rather than depending on the teachers and parents for answers and knowledge. In as much as we recommend this, there are economic challenges that parents are facing such as lack of textbooks. It is not easy to buy textbooks for they are expensive in rural areas and parents can't afford to buy these learning materials.

- iv. Parents should create time for their children to accomplish homework whenever they are given by not overloading them with house chores. This would make learners understand that even their parents are supportive of them finishing their school work. Even if this has been recommended there is a complaint from parents that, their children go home with more tasks from various subjects and this has made it difficult for them to attend to other home duties.
- v. The school management should ensure that they monitor the teaching methodologies and learning styles closely to ensure that all assigned homework is attended to by responsible teachers. This would help the teachers and learners to take the homework policy implementation seriously. However, the head- teachers explained that there was no consistence in monitoring teachers' homework given to leaners. Due to big numbers of teachers, head teachers were, in most instances, unable to monitor and evaluate the implementation of the homework policy.
- vi. Government and stakeholders in education should ensure that they provide sufficient teachers to primary schools to reduce the teaching load of the current staffing. This would enable teachers to be effective in their work.

#### **6.4 Areas for further research**

Arising from the research findings of this study. The following proposed areas of study would push the frontiers of knowledge on this subject.

- a) Comparative analysis of homework policy implementation between urban and rural schools in Zambia.
- b) Voices of Education Standards Officers on the implementation of homework policy in selected districts of Zambia.
- c) Solutions to challenges in homework policy implementation in Zambian primary schools.

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## APPENDICES

### **Appendix 1: Semi-Structured Interview Guide for Teachers.**

Dear Respondents,

I am a university of Zambia student pursuing a Master of Education Degree programme in sociology of education.

**The information sought through this interview guide will be used to explore homework Policy Implementation in selected Primary Schools of Kalabo District in Western Province of Zambia: Prospects and Challenges.**

You are kindly requested to participate in this study by responding to the interview questions below. This study is purely for academic purposes and not meant to cause you any mental or physical harm. I therefore, encourage you to participate freely.

1. How often do you give home work to your pupils?
2. In what ways do parents help their children with homework?
3. How do parents respond to homework given to their children?
4. How do you respond to learners who do not do their homework?
5. How has homework improved the academic performance of your pupils?
6. How often do you check and mark the homework tasks?
7. What challenges have you encountered in the implementation of the homework policy?
8. What are the advantages of the homework policy/any disadvantages

## **Appendix 2: Semi-Structured Interview Guide for Parents.**

Dear respondents,

I am a university of Zambia student pursuing a Master of Education Degree Programme in Sociology of Education. The information sought through this interview guide will be used to **explore *the homework Policy Implementation in selected Primary Schools of kalabo District in Western Province of Zambia: Prospects and Challenges***. Feel free to participate in this interview. You are assured that the study is purely academic and information provided will be for this purpose and treated as confidential as possible. Your cooperation will be highly appreciated.

1. How often does your child come with homework?
2. In which subject is homework usually given?
3. How often do you check/ask your child about their school homework?
4. How important is it to give homework to learners?
5. What are the advantages of homework to learners? Any disadvantage?
6. What challenges do you face in assisting your child to do homework task?
7. How can teachers be assisted in the implementation of homework policy in schools?
8. How do you assist your child with homework tasks?
9. How does homework impact your child's relationship with you?

### **Appendix 3: Focus Group Discussion Guide for Pupils**

Dear respondent,

I am a university student pursuing Master of Education Degree programme in Sociology of Education. The information sought through this focus group discussion guide will be used to explore the Homework Policy Implementation in selected Primary Schools of Kalabo District in Western Province of Zambia: Prospects and Challenges. Feel free to participate in this discussion .You are assured that the research is purely academic and information provided will be for this purpose and treated as confidential as possible. Your cooperation will be highly appreciated.

1. How often does your teacher give you homework?
2. In what subject is homework usually given?
3. How often do your parents/guardian ask you about your school work?
4. What are the advantages of homework to learners? Any disadvantage?
5. How do your parents or guardians assist you in your homework tasks or activities?
6. What challenges do you face in attending to homework activities?
7. How enjoyable do you find doing homework at home?
8. How often do your teachers check and mark your homework exercises?
9. How does your teacher respond to those that do not write homework?