

**REASONS FOR POOR PERFORMANCE IN COMPOSITION WRITING AMONG
GRADE 9 PUPILS IN SELECTED SECONDARY SCHOOLS OF LUNDAZI
DISTRICT, ZAMBIA**

BY

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**A dissertation submitted to the University of Zambia in partial fulfilment of the
requirement for the award of the Master of Education in Literacy and Learning.**

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DECLARATION

I, **Kondwelani Tembo**, do hereby declare that this piece of work is my own, and that all the work of other persons has been duly acknowledged, and that this work has not been previously presented at this University and indeed at any other University for similar purposes.

Signed:Date:

APPROVAL

This dissertation by Kondwelani Tembo is approved as fulfilling part of the requirements for the award of the degree of Master of Education in Literacy and Learning.

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DEDICATION

This work is dedicated to my beloved wife and Children.

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ABSTRACT

The study investigated reasons for poor composition writing skills amongst grade nine pupils of Lundazi district – Zambia. Grade Nine (9) level of composition writing was purposefully selected to be analyzed because this is the level at which an individual is expected to exhibit acceptable levels of competence as regards composition writing. The target population consisted of all the secondary schools in Lundazi District, all grade nine teachers of English Language, and all grade nine pupils. The sample consisted of three secondary schools; thirty pupils, nine teachers, thirty parents and three head teachers. These were interviewed, observed and engaged in focus group discussions. The research design used was a case study and data collected through semi structured interviews, observation and focus group discussions were grouped into themes according to research questions and analyzed qualitatively. The findings revealed that the pupils do not have the necessary prerequisite language skills and knowledge to write good essays and this is not eased by the fact that they don't get much help from corporate partners such as parents as they, (parents) do not have the necessary skills and knowledge to help their children with homework. Teachers, on their part, test composition instead of teaching it. In the acquisition of the skill of writing, scaffolding is a vital requirement but composition writing has not been given the attention that it deserves by the Curriculum Development Centre, Examinations Council of Zambia, school administrators, teachers, and the pupils themselves. Following these findings, it is recommended that teachers must use appropriate methods and strategies to enhance the teaching of composition. Parents must in any way possible depending on what skills they have or just by way of monitoring and or encouraging and motivating, aid their children in composition writing. Policy makers must put in place policies that promote the teaching and learning of composition.

Key words: writing, skill, collaboration and composition.

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ACRONYMS

CPD:	Continuing Professional Development
ESL:	English as a second language
SBCPD:	School Based Continuing Professional Development
TALULAR:	Teaching and Learning Using Locally Available Resources
ZPD:	Zone of proximal development

CHAPTER ONE: INTRODUCTION

1.1 Overview

This chapter presents the background to the study, statement of the Problem, the purpose of the study, objectives and research questions, significance of the study, conceptual framework as well as operational definitions for Reasons of Poor Performance in Composition Writing at Grade 9 in Lundazi District.

1.2 Background to the Study

Writing is one of the four macro skills in Language learning and it is examinable by the examining body at national level. Writing is to make marks which represent letters, words or numbers on a surface (National Literacy Framework, 2013). According to Rego (2009), an essay is a short passage of prose, light in approach, and graceful in style, on almost any subject under the sun, often containing long digressions but always communicating to the reader about the world to the unique personality of the writer. Good composition writing constitutes: ideas that are interesting and important; organisation that is logical and effective; voice that is individual and appropriate; word choice that is specific and memorable; sentence fluency that is smooth and expressive; and conventions that are correct and communicative (Steven Peh, 2005).

In Zambia, this productive skill has not been given the attention it deserves. It has remained in the shadows of Reading (a receptive skill) which has been given pre-eminence as evidenced by the number of Non- Governmental Organizations that are promoting Reading. Literacy is the ability to read and write. Reading and writing are inseparable components of Literacy Baton: 2007; [http:// www. K12reader. Com](http://www.K12reader.Com). It is because of this that writing must be accorded the attention equal to that of reading.

For anyone to be a competent reader and writer, he or she requires the fundamental literacy skills (Kalima, 2012). Literacy skills are acquired even before pupils begin attending formal school. However, for most Zambian pupils learning to write composition, the more conversant they are with the skills, the better readers and writers they become for reading and writing are interrelated. The aforementioned skills, plus listening and speaking skills are

inextricably interwoven and hence the need for them to be given equal attention and status in the school curriculum.

Year in year out, there are complaints that the writing skills of candidates who are about to write their second national examinations leave much to be desired. Performance in the junior

Secondary School Leaving Certificate Examinations is so poor that those who drop-out at this stage fail to use their poor skills in the corporate world. American researchers have noted that, students who develop strong writing skills at an early age acquire a valuable tool for learning, communication and self-expression (NCEE, 2012). Most Zambian students continue to show poor writing skills throughout their academic life. The Examinations Council of Zambia (2014), reported that Grade 9 pupils performed poorly in English especially the composition aspect, Manchishi (2015). Despite government's many efforts and interventions in trying to improve the performance of the citizens as regards their writing skills, the candidates have continued to exhibit poor skills in composition writing and other areas of creative writing, including summary. Some of the interventions that government can put in place are: supplying of texts, creation of libraries, training more teachers, up-grading some schools, introducing in-service programmes, motivating teachers and improving teaching approaches by revisiting the curriculum. In the absence of such efforts, poor writing skills will continue plaguing the nation and they manifest themselves in very embarrassing situations sometimes; like one advert in a business community read, "Pure Horny Sold Here" to mean, "Pure honey sold here". One can only imagine how much business this retailer stands to lose because of poor writing skills. For factory or industrial workers, the writing skills as regards communication may be the difference between life and death.

Composition writing is one of the components examined by Examinations Council of Zambia, yet, perennial reports by both the Chief Marker and Chief Examiner point to poor composition writing skills of Grade Nine candidates in Lundazi District. Reasons have not been outlined to explain this poor performance. Thus, the study set out to investigate reasons for poor writing skills in composition writing in selected schools of Lundazi District. This scenario is similar to that of Zimbabwe where most of the pupils at the rural secondary schools go there to prepare for failure after four years, a very painful reality indeed (Luphahla, 2012). Thus, the study set out to investigate reasons for poor performance in composition writing in rural secondary schools of Lundazi District.

1.3 Statement of the problem

Steve Peh (2005), in his article brings out the following as attributes of good writing:

- Ideas that are interesting and important
- Organization that is logical and effective
- Voice that is individual and appropriate
- Word choice that is specific and memorable
- Sentence fluency that is smooth and expressive
- Conventions that are correct and communicative.

He goes on to say, ‘really good writing has all these things in it. By studying the writing of others, you can learn how to get them into your own’. www.ttms.org (2016).

Even though not much research has been carried out on Zambian students’ writing abilities, evidence from teachers, texts/pupils’ books and official reports issued on yearly examination analysis, show a trend of students’ weaknesses in English composition writing. This is especially at the junior secondary school level in secondary schools. Poor composition writing skills are exhibited by Grade 9 pupils who otherwise, should exhibit advanced composition writing skills, having spent nine years practicing this same composition writing. Lundazi schools, especially rural ones have continued to exhibit very poor composition writing skills. What are not known are the reasons for poor composition writing skills and consequently poor results at Grade Nine (9), in Lundazi District. It is only when these reasons are known that one can venture into the noble quest of finding a solution to this perennial problem.

1.4 Purpose of the Study

The purpose of the study was to establish reasons for poor composition writing skills among Grade Nine (9) learners in selected schools of Lundazi District.

1.5 Research Objectives

The main objective of this study was to establish reasons why Grade Nine (9) pupils perform poorly in composition writing at Grade 9 in the rural schools of Lundazi District. This research was guided by the following specific objectives:

1. To establish challenges pupils face in composition writing.
2. To investigate materials teachers use to teach composition.

3. To establish how teachers teach composition.
4. To determine quality of feedback teachers give in marking composition.

1.6 Research Questions

This study investigated the reasons for poor composition writing skills in the rural secondary schools of Lundazi District. In the course of this study, the researcher attempted to find answers to the following questions.

1. What challenges do pupils face in composition writing?
2. What materials are teachers using to teach composition writing?
3. How do teachers teach composition?
4. Are teachers giving quality feedback in composition marking?

1.7 Significance of the Study

The findings of this research may be used by the specialists of English and other examinable Languages at the Examinations council of Zambia and Curriculum Development Centre to put in place strategies that will entail pupils' improvement as regards their performance in composition writing.

It is also hoped that teachers of Language may use the research findings to introduce effective measures to improve the teaching of composition writing skills. The study may not just be a wakeup call for all stakeholders to take responsibility, but it may also contribute to the literature on teaching composition writing in English and other languages. It may also be a milestone and springboard for further research in this very important Literacy realm as it may provide an insight into challenges being faced by pupils in other provinces as regards composition writing. The findings would also provide additional evidence and material for further research regarding the Reasons for poor composition writing skills of Grade Nine (9) school pupils in secondary schools of Lundazi and other districts of the nation- Zambia

1.8 Limitations

There are several limitations to this study. The primary limitation is generalization of the data. The findings of this study may not be generalized to other populations. The participants in this study were at three secondary schools in Lundazi District. Also, the findings may be different from other schools across the district and across the nation. The data collected in

this research only represents the findings from the three schools at one point in time. This may not be generalised for all provinces in the nation.

1.9 Delimitation

The research was conducted within selected secondary schools of Lundazi District in the Eastern province of Zambia.

1.10 Conceptual Framework

Writing as a skill is something that is owned by an individual for his own benefit and also that of society because an individual will always exist at two levels; first, as society (inter-psychological) and then as an individual (intra psychological) Vygotsky and Luria (1930); Lawrence and Valsiner (1930).

Although knowledge in one sense is personal and individual, the learners construct knowledge through their interaction with the physical world, collaboratively in social settings and in a cultural and linguistic environment Svein (2007). It is with this in mind that individual's composition writing skills, consequently its development or underdevelopment must not be blamed on one aspect but as an aggregate of collaborative societal efforts. The individual, the school, the teacher, and parental aspects must be taken into consideration in the quest of finding a solution to poor composition writing skills at Grade 9 level in secondary schools. Writing must be considered a product of strategically collaborated concerted efforts as illustrated by the diagram below:

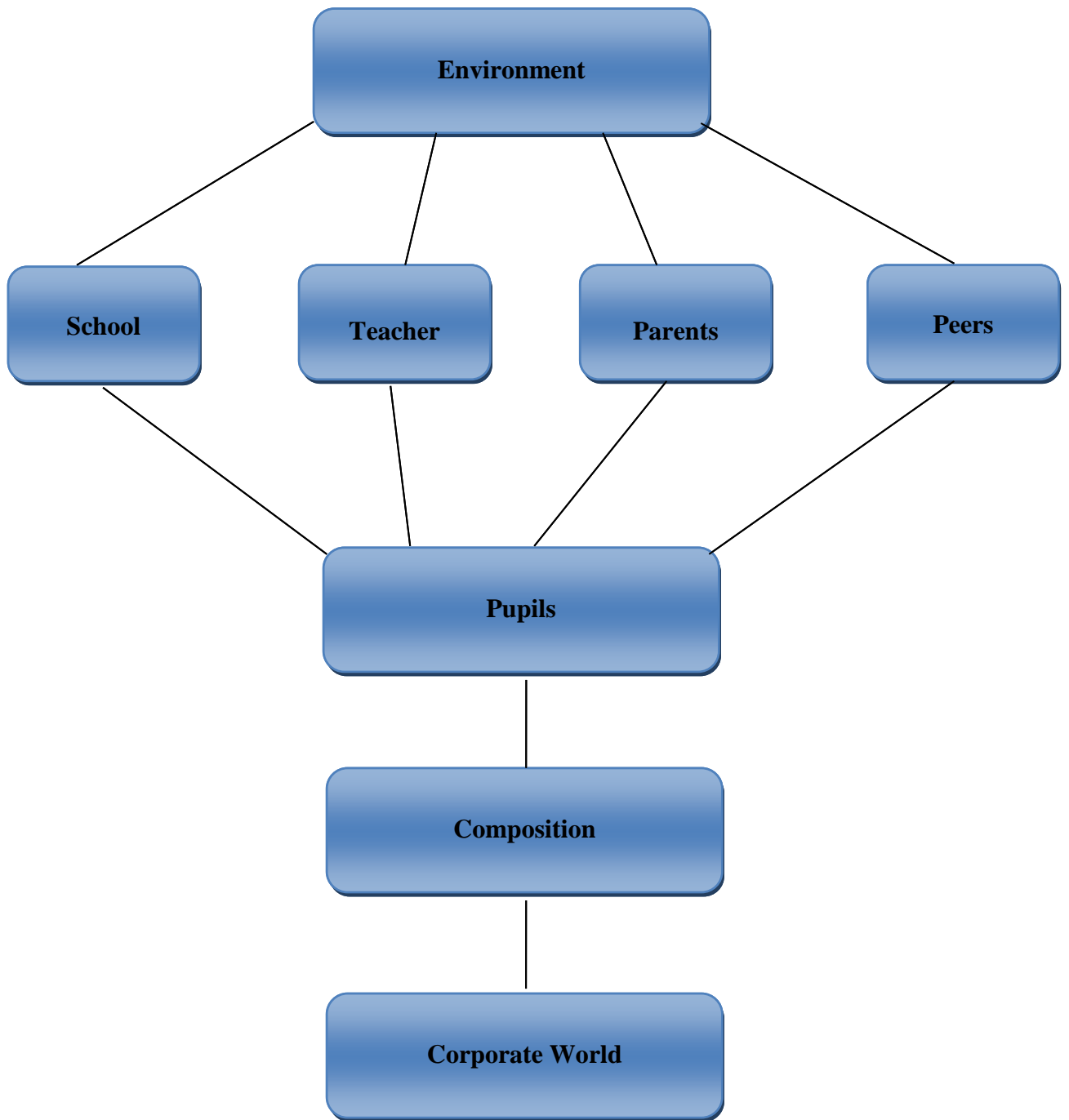


Figure 1: Writing as a Product of Collaborative Concerted Efforts.

1.11 Definition of key Concepts

Some key words are writing, skill, collaboration, composition, and CPD.

Writing: To make letters or numbers on a surface. To encode letters or numbers on a surface that can be decoded

Skill: The ability to do something well.

Collaboration: To work together with somebody in order to achieve something

CPD: Continuing Professional Development

SBCPD: School Based Continuing Professional Development

Scaffolding: Help rendered to a learner until they can perform tasks on their own

ZPD: Zone of proximal development

ESL: English as a second language

TALULAR: Teaching and Learning Using Locally Available Resources

1.12 Conclusion

The chapter has given an introductory overview to the study. It has presented the background to the study, statement of the Problem, the purpose of the study, objectives and research questions, significance of the study, conceptual framework as well as operational definitions for Reasons of Poor Performance in Composition Writing at Grade 9 in Lundazi District.

CHAPTER TWO: LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1 Introduction

In this Chapter, the researcher reviews the existing literature on reasons that may lead to poor performance as regards composition writing skills among Grade Nine (9) learners.

Literature review is according to Kombo and Tromp (2006), the analysis of books or manuscripts.

2.2 Related studies on Composition writing

2.2.1 Definition of Composition writing

Writing a composition according to Project LEAR Net (2017), is a complex activity that includes the mechanics of writing, including handwriting (or keyboarding, using an adaptive device, etc.), spelling, and the basics of language knowledge (i.e., word morphology, syntax, and vocabulary). The article continues to state that composition writing includes the following cognitive, meta-cognitive, self-regulatory, and motivational aspects:

- generating ideas to put into print
- planning what to say and how to say it
- organizing the ideas into a coherent whole
- recognizing the needs of readers and how to meet those needs
- translating these plans into a written text, including a style of writing and word choice appropriate to the writing task and projected readers
- remembering all of the components that need to be included in producing the composition
- self-monitoring the process and reviewing the content, organization, and mechanics and then editing as needed
- possessing the cognitive capacity to deal with all of these aspects of complexity
- possessing the confidence, motivation, and perseverance to engage in the hard work needed to create a well written product

In composition writing the aspect of spelling is very cardinal though the method with which it's taught is dependent on the knowledge and skill of an individual teacher. Ellis Tomlinson (1980) say that, the lack of firm rules makes it difficult to teach spelling. They continued to

say that at secondary school level spelling difficulties are best handled remedially, that is, the teacher keeps a record of common mistakes and teaches the correct spellings of these words only. Their observation indicates that, spelling is not frequently taught and in few cases where it is, correct strategies are not used.

Ellis and Tomlinson (1980:212), provide the recommended structure of a composition lesson plan which is as shown below: -

1. Illustrate and explain a particular teaching point (which will be later practiced in an exercise).
2. Drill the language point(s) connected to the chosen exercise. (Often these will not be completely new items so the purpose of the drilling will be to recall and reinforce correct usage in order to avoid errors which might otherwise occur)
3. Stimulate the pupils' imaginations and thinking.
4. Prepare orally the actual exercise. He should go through part of the exercise (or even the whole of it if the exercise is very difficult) orally before the pupils write.
5. Be prepared to stop the pupils writing if he observes a common error in language or organisation. He should then re-teach the particular point causing difficulty and to guide the pupils into correcting where they have gone wrong. The caveat is that the teacher should not stop the pupils if only one or two of them have strayed as these can be handled individually and remedially. Although the teacher's task is to develop suitable techniques for demonstrating and explaining specific teaching points, literature reviewed reveals a situation which is otherwise. This is exacerbated by what Ellis and Tomlinson (1980) further observe that most text books only provide practice exercises minus the teaching or language points listed below:

1. Organizing a paragraph: logical sequence; chronological sequence; the main point.
2. Order of paragraphs in a composition: when to start a new paragraph.
3. Style: formal and informal writing.
4. Punctuation: full stops and commas; colon and semi-colon; parenthesis (brackets and dashes).

5. Using a variety of sentence structures.
6. Connecting ideas together.
7. Writing plainly (i.e. being concise).
8. Writing in an interesting manner: using ‘pictorial’ words (e.g. adjectives); using detail for particular effects; using humour.
9. Suiting the language to the type of writing.
10. Registers.
11. Point of view: objective and biased writing.
12. Relevance.
13. Making a plan: paragraph outline; composing notes.

2.2.2 Teaching Strategies for Composition

Studies have shown that students utilising productive skills, namely writing and speaking, are found to experience a considerable amount of anxiety in the process of learning (Hilleson, 1996), Zhang (2001).

While it is believed that students experience a considerable amount of anxiety in the process of learning, it is not clear as to how the environment in which the rural child is learning can be exploited to reduce these anxieties. It is in a bid to uncover the extent to which these anxieties will affect the learner that the research was conducted so that when the reasons are known each sector can play their part to try and improve the writing skills of the pupils. To be taken into consideration in this aspect is the principle of collaboration, which stresses mutuality among responsible individuals rather than mere labour-sharing (Roschelles and Teasley, 1995). It is this same collaboration in the realm of composition writing that is to be exploited fully as an integral part of this research.

Adelabu (1998), reported three reasons that explain the negative attitude to the learning of a foreign language by secondary school students. Firstly, the poor results recorded yearly. Secondly, Lack of positive attitude engendered by teachers through bad methods of teaching and lastly lack of a thorough grasp of instructional content and procedure by teachers. The

account above gives an elaborate illustration of the influence of culture on a student's attitude towards learning a foreign language but it fails to properly account for the blame which other stakeholders such as parents should shoulder. It is therefore this knowledge gap that this particular research endeavoured to explore. This is so because culture is a way of life of a particular people. If composition writing was perceived by society as a way and source of livelihood, then it would come as naturally and enjoyably as cattle keeping is to pastoral communities.

According to [https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Reading_\(process\)](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Reading_(process)), Reading is a complex "cognitive process" of decoding symbols in order to construct or derive mean. Reading is a means of language acquisition, communication, and of sharing information and ideas. Like all languages, it is a complex interaction between the text and the reader which is shaped by the reader's prior knowledge, experiences, attitude, and language community which is culturally and socially situated. The reading process requires continuous practice, development, and refinement. In addition, reading requires creativity and critical analysis. Consumers of literature make ventures with each piece, innately deviating from literal words to create images that make sense to them in the unfamiliar places the texts describe. Because reading is such a complex process, it cannot be controlled or restricted to one or two interpretations. There are no concrete laws in reading, but rather allows readers an escape to produce their own products introspectively. This promotes deep exploration of texts during interpretation. Readers use a variety of reading strategies to assist with decoding and comprehension. Readers may use context clues to identify the meaning of unknown words. Readers integrate the words they have read into their existing framework of knowledge or schema.

Reading is an important component of language learning and it contributes tremendously to composition writing. According to Rayner et al (2005), reading is significant in general ways that touch everyone because the ability to read and write is an essential ingredient of success in most societies where so much information is transmitted in written form. Kalima (2012), in her research conducted on poor performance in composition writing in Zambian schools, says, reading affects writing and writing affects reading. She goes on to say that this assertion is in agreement with what (Clay, 1991) asserts that, when children read extensively, they become better writers.

What is not known is the reading culture and ability of Grade Nine pupils in Lundazi.

2.2.3 Marking of Composition

A crucial aspect in composition writing is marking. This does not only provide feedback but it also leads to remedial work which according to Ellis and Tomlinson (1980) is very vital. Wiseman (1949), writing on the marking of composition in Grammar School selection says, investigation into the problem of marking essays seem to show indisputably that the marks of even experienced examiners are extremely unreliable. He goes on to say that as a result of this, education officers of local education authorities are extremely reluctant to include 'composition' among the examination papers used for grammar school selection at eleven plus. At Grade Nine Compositions are marked out of forty marks and both the teachers and the pupils need to be aware of aspects that are scrutinised when marking. According to [Whhttps://hubpages.com/literature/What-Examiners-Look-For-When-Marking-Your-English-Composition](https://hubpages.com/literature/What-Examiners-Look-For-When-Marking-Your-English-Composition), when one writes an essay or composition in English language examination, there are four things that examiners look at when marking. These are:

- Content
- Organisation
- Expression and
- Mechanical accuracy

What is not known was whether both teachers and pupils of Lundazi schools are aware of these requirements.

2.2.4 General Performance in Composition

Writing on poor writing skills, Gibbs (1963), says that, one of the major deficiencies noted in these reports is the general inability of graduates to use effective written English. In essence, these reports charge that the schools are not effectively teaching writing skills. If, on the other hand, they want to ameliorate the conditions that exist, they can do more than give lip service. They can recognize and stress the paramount importance of composition not only because it underpins all fields of study, but also because it is a skill without which the student and the graduate is seriously handicapped. He clearly connects poor performance as regards composition writing to the status accorded to composition instructors. The situation in this

nation may yield different results where there may be few or no trained teachers to specifically teach composition.

Hillocks (1986), in his research on written composition, points out that studies in the first major division were concerned with various aspects of the composing process. Many of these studies dealt with what might be called the "production process," the observable behaviour of writers as they compose. One subcategory of studies examined the revisions made by writers working under various conditions. A second subcategory included studies of writing apprehension, and so forth.

A second major division of studies was concerned with the writer's repertoire. Many of these studies investigated syntactic patterns present in the writing of various groups. Some were concerned with modes of discourse or more precisely defined forms.

A third major division consisted of studies of particular pedagogical approaches. This division included a large number of studies which, as it turned out, required many, many hours to classify and analyse. In retrospect, those frustratingly endless hours seem worth the expenditure of time and effort.

Other divisions in the initial outline included teacher preparation and attitudes, writing in schools and in the outside world, methods of assessment, and the development of writing abilities. Studies in the last category were integrated with those in the repertoire or process categories. A decision was made to ignore teacher preparation studies and to deal with studies of school programs tangentially as it seemed appropriate. Very few studies dealt with writing outside school in business, for recreation, and so forth.

From most of the studies done, it seems clear that not much has been done to show how all aspects and participants work together to either enhance one's composition writing skills or altogether impede good composition writing skills. What has not been considered is the seriousness of the matter by all stakeholders and hence all sit on the fence as the pupil grapples with the problem of poor composition writing skills.

In the realm of writing, one cannot afford to overlook the role played by culture. This is because culture is both a process and product of writing. Hughes, Kroehler and Vander Zanden (1999), define culture as 'the social heritage of people; those learned patterns of thinking, acting and feeling transmitted from one generation to the next, including the

embodiment of these patterns in material terms'. Tylor in Belington, Strawbridge, Greenside and Fitzsimons (1991), argues that 'culture is that complex whole which includes knowledge, beliefs, art, morals, law, custom and any other capabilities and habits acquired by man as a member of society'.

These definitions underlie the view that culture is a way of life of a people. In this context it (culture) encompasses a number of issues such as behaviour, lifestyles, customs, habits and knowledge forms of the people concerned. Culture should then be seen as a way of living of a particular people. It comes to represent innovations made by people in order to adapt to their environments. It includes a body of knowledge that people utilize to solve recurring problems on a day to day basis. It is important to bear in mind that culture influences the way people interpret social reality and people from different cultures do not interpret Social reality in exactly the same way.

Culture plays an important function in any society since the culture to which one belongs becomes the root of the individual's identity, because culture gives us a sense of power and confidence by giving us the basis of achieving our goals, determining what is desirable and undesirable and developing the purpose of our life (Pai 72 and Adler, 1997). Therefore, culture provides the blueprint that determines the way an individual thinks, feels and behaves in society (Gollnick and Chinn, 1994). It therefore follows that the way an individual behaves, is to a large extent, influenced by his/her cultural upbringing. There are two concepts that are related to culture that need to be elaborated. Culture is also made up of norms and values. If writing can be part of a culture of the people then composition writing would enjoy a considerable amount of success on the part of the pupils. What was not known is whether the Grade Nine pupils of Lundazi district took composition writing as a culture.

2.2.5 Reasons for Poor Performance.

2.2.5.1 Europe and America

In America, a survey was carried out to find out composition writing skills of incarcerated males in a state prison. Shippen et al, (2010) in a study examining the written expression skills of incarcerated males in America, noted that highly significant differences were noted based on race; with European American males scoring higher than African American males specifically in writing composition and capitalization skills. Implications of findings related to the continued need for literacy instruction of incarcerated individuals were also discussed.

The answer to the research carried out in American state prisons may not necessarily be racial but other factors such as scaffolding that could be at play. If race was anything to go by in determining one's writing abilities, then Richard Wright, Ralph Waldo Emerson and Maya Angelou (all great American writers) would not have become the renowned and celebrated writers that this world has come to know.

Graves (1983) in a study conducted in America discusses the writing process around stages he calls choice, rehearsal, and composing. Glatthorn (1982), speaks of exploring, planning, drafting, and revising. Kirby & Liner (1981), talk about the writing process in terms of Getting It Started, Getting It Down, Checking It Out, and Getting It Right. The implication is that the writing process can be separated into stages, and teachers need to be aware of these stages so that they can provide ample time for students to work through the process. Another characteristic of the writing process is that the stages are recursive rather than linear, and sometimes they overlap.

Graves (1983), argued that during composing, the writer may feel that there is not enough information and begins to rehearse by talking about other ideas or asking questions of others. The process is one of getting ideas down on paper, checking them out with someone else and rewriting so that the message is clear and coherent to the intended reader. The process here is well outlined; it however leaves out the roles played by other stakeholders in moulding this writer who is an apprentice to the teacher, peers, parents and the environment.

Other writers have argued as to who should teach writing as Jurkowitz (2015) refutes claims made by Wiener (1978), that parents should teach writing if teachers cannot, suggesting there must be a balance between teachers' and parents' input in guiding the learner in this endeavour. This is very true and obviously a call for concerted efforts in a manner of scaffolding but it fails to account for illiterate parents who also need literacy help so that they can help their children. 'Two blind people cannot lead each other,' so the wise say. What is cardinal is to investigate the level of competence of the parents and the extent to which they can go in helping their children as regards the acquisition of composition writing skills.

Adelabu (1998), reported that three reasons explain the negative attitude to the learning of a foreign language by secondary school students. Firstly, the poor results recorded yearly. Secondly, lack of positive attitude engendered by teachers through bad methods of teaching and lastly, lack of a thorough grasp of instructional content and procedure by teachers.

The above conclusions, however, fail to account for the roles played by the pupil herself/himself, the parent and the environment. These aspects not accounted for are the ones that this research took into consideration. A lack of positive attitude by teachers alone and the bad methods they (teachers) use to teach composition cannot be the only aspects responsible for pupils' poor performance in composition writing. It is important too, to take into account the roles played by the pupil herself/himself, the parents and the environment at large in imparting into a learner composition writing skills. It is an aggregate of all the aforementioned aspects that this particular research took into consideration.

2.2.5.2 Poor Composition Writing Skills in Africa

In their study which investigated the causes of poor performance in English language among secondary school students in Dutse Metropolis of Jigawa State-Nigeria Sa'ad T U and Usman R (2014) bring out the following factors which are related to this study.

There are many causes of poor performance in English language among senior secondary school students. These include the following:-

The dominance of mother tongue is regarded as one of the causes of poor performance in English language. Usman (2012) was of the view that Nigerian students are surrounded by a complex linguistic situation that forces them to learn first their indigenous language and they are required to have a good command of English language. He goes on to say that the Nigerian policy on education stressed the use of the immediate language of the community in instruction at the lower level of primary education and a combination of English and language of the immediate community at the upper part of primary education. In other words, the policy recommended the use of mother tongue in teaching at primary level. He goes on to say that the situation contributes immensely in poor learning of English language right from primary school and it extends to secondary school. Fema (2003) was of the view that the major cause of the errors in English used by Nigerians can be attributed to the interference of mother tongue with the English language. He added that students often use their native language or mother tongue in all their interactions and English is only used within the four walls of the classrooms and ends there.

The above situation clearly shows that dominance of mother tongue in Azare metropolis contributed immensely in poor performance in English language. What is not known is whether this situation which is similar to the Zambian situation since the 2013 National

Literacy Policy would have the same effects on pupils' composition writing skills amongst the pupils of Lundazi.

Inadequate qualified English language teachers also cause poor performance in English language in our secondary schools. Due to the above mentioned cause, in some schools other subject teachers are forced to teach English language and some who even read it exhibit poor abilities in oral and written expression of it. Therefore, with this kind of situation these teachers can never teach effectively and hence poor performance from their products. Adedokun (2011) was of the view that poorly trained and untrained teachers of English were employed to teach and prepare secondary school students for the school certificate examinations in English language. This situation contributed immensely in poor performance in English language among secondary school students in some Nigerian schools.

Roger (1981) was of the view that instructional materials and facilities are an important part of the process of learning as they provide practice and feedback in the learning track. The author not restricting these materials and facilities to just books goes on to elaborate how facilities like the language laboratory and its absence will affect pupils performance in English.

Sa'ad (2007), was of the view that teaching and learning take place effectively when classes allow for proper teaching and learning. Cotton, in <http://www.hawaii.edu/mauienglish/depart>. In her research on effective practices of teaching composition she says, unfortunately, writing is an area characterized by considerable divergence between research and practice. Smith (1982), notes that "much is known about which practices in teaching the writing process are effective, but several of these findings are in conflict with widespread practices in the schools" (:3). For example, he continues to say that, staff of the ERIC Clearinghouse on Reading and Communication Skills reported in 1984 that "while most authorities of writing agree that children learn to write by writing, there is a distressing lack of classroom time devoted to extended periods of writing" (:1). The research set up on a path to find out if this scenario was pertaining in Lundazi district schools.

On the other hand, in the area of instructional resources or media, there is dominance of textbooks, dictionaries, workbooks and posters in the teaching of English language in secondary schools in Nigeria. Modern media such as audio, video tapes, language laboratories, programmed texts, flash cards; computers, magazines and newspapers are rarely

used. Mohammed (1998) observed that the teaching of English language is bedevilled with many problems such as inadequate period of teaching, method of teaching and lack of adequate and useful resources.

Therefore, it is clear to us that inadequate infrastructural facilities leading to large class sizes and inadequate as well as obsolete teaching resources or media lead to poor performance in English language in our secondary schools.

Another important cause of poor performance of English language in Nigerian secondary schools is the teachers' attitude toward innovation and use of instructional media. Most Nigerian secondary school English language teachers fail to take into account the dynamic nature of English curriculum but they continued to bore students with definitions and drills in grammar, vocabulary and speech work. The traditional content/knowledge oriented teaching is still very much practiced by them. Abdullahi (2003) was of the view that teachers mostly prefer to use traditional ways of teaching which they have been familiar with or as they were taught, which do not necessarily aid proper learning. Ya'u (1993) categorically said that successful achievement of stated objectives in teaching and learning is always associated with using the right technique.

Therefore, it is clear to according to Ya'u (1993) that poor attitude of teachers toward innovation and use of instructional media or materials in teaching English language leads to poor performance among secondary schools in Azareg metropolis.

Another important cause of poor performance in English language is the negative attitude of students toward the learning of English language. Students, particularly in secondary and primary schools mostly show negative attitude toward learning of English language because they consider it foreign or not theirs. Mohammed (2002) was of the view that most students put a kind of negative attitude in learning and use of English language as well as making teachers' task a difficult one indeed. It is obvious that for any student to be proficient in English language, mastering of skills of listening, speaking, reading and writing is necessary, and it requires hardworking and dedication from the pupils.

Therefore, it is clear that the negative attitude of students towards learning of English language is one of the causes of poor performance in the subject.

Improper use of method of teaching also causes poor performance in English language among secondary school students. It is obvious that successful teaching and learning take place when right teaching methods are used by teachers. Ya'u (1993) in Sa'ad, (2007) was of the view that successful achievement of stated objectives in teaching and learning takes place when right teaching methods are used by the teachers. Ya'u (1993) in Sa'ad (2007) was of the view that successful achievement of stated objectives in teaching and learning is always associated with using the right methods by the teachers. Sometimes teachers of English language do not consider the learners' age, the topic, the time and background of the learners in choosing the method to be used in teaching and this affects the level of learning of learners.

Abdullahi (2003), Sa'ad (2007), Abdulganiyu (2010) and Usman (2012) were of the view that provision of enough instructional media/materials, qualified teachers as well as conducive classrooms will assist a lot in improving the performance of secondary school students in English language.

Udumah (1987) was of the view that teachers should devise ways through which they can help the students to improve their learning, speech and their listening skills. He categorically stated that:

- Students should be taught correct pronunciation in English language in order to minimize the effect of the first language on the second (English language).
- Instructional materials and facilities should be provided for effective teaching and learning of English language.
- More qualified teachers of English language should be provided and they should be encouraged to undergo professional teaching courses, workshops and seminars to update them.
- Students should be encouraged to communicate in English language in and outside the classroom.
- Facilities like language laboratory should be provided to assist in proper teaching and learning of English language.

Their study led to the conclusion that the dominance of mother tongue, inadequate qualified teachers of English language, negative attitudes of students towards English language, improper use of method in teaching English language, inadequate instructional media

facilities, lack of language laboratory for teaching English language. What is not known is whether their findings would be applicable to the case of grade nine pupils in Lundazi District of Zambia as regards poor composition writing skills since no similar study had ever been conducted in Lundazi District schools.

2.2.5.3 Poor Composition Writing Skills in Zambia

Some studies done on poor composition writing were in French. One such researcher is Kalima (2012) in her study on pupils' poor performance in composition writing in French brings out the following as factors that influence performance; the basic-high school policy, insufficient time of learning, teachers' inadequate preparation, insufficient and unsuitable teaching and learning materials, lack of motivation, inadequate teachers and pupils' negative attitude towards French. Other Factors were; lack of reading culture among pupils and lack of financial and moral support from the education Managers and the French Government.

In as much as these factors may contribute to poor performance in French, the researcher did not examine the general environmental factors and the part parents may play in the learning of composition writing in French. This research investigated the role that all aspects and corporate partners play in inculcating in the learner appropriate composition writing skills. It also investigated the part that the environment plays in moulding one who aspires to be a scribe.

In her research, an analysis of written English errors made by Grade 11 pupils in a multilingual context, Moonga (2012), concluded that multilingualism (viewed from the pupils' L1) affects the quality of written English in the schools. In as much as this may be true, the researcher did not appreciate the fact that writing as an art transcends multilingualism. In any case, multilingualism can enhance one's writing abilities as it has been proved that one who knows more than one language is better placed cognitively than one who is incarcerated within the confines of mono-lingualism. Multilingualism can therefore be considered an ally rather than an enemy in this realm of Composition Writing.

Banda (2002) writing on the quick transition of the language of instruction (LOI) from Mother Tongue (L1) to English (L2) in Zambia, also recognises the importance of parents in literacy as he brings out in his document what the government did in 1965 to bring up two important developments in the promotion of non-formal literacy, which was commonly referred to as adult education. When parents are literally enough and have the necessary skills

and knowledge they can easily aid their children in composition writing. An absence of these skills has definitely contributed to pupils' poor composition writing skills.

Adult literacy would not just be an ingredient to composition writing but also a catalyst that would inject vim and verve in a child's hunger for learning. Despite these initiatives as observed by Banda D. literacy levels have remained low.

However, the researcher found no literature on reasons for poor composition writing in Lundazi district of Zambia.

2.3. Conclusion

The Chapter has discussed literature related to Pupils' poor performance in composition writing. The next chapter will now discuss methodology applied in this research.

CHAPTER THREE: METHODOLOGY OF THE RESEARCH

3.1. Introduction

This chapter presents the methodology that was used in carrying out the research. This chapter is organized under the following themes: research design, population sample, sampling procedures, instruments for data collection, data analysis and ethical considerations.

3.2. Research Design

The study used a Case study Research Design which was both ethnographic and phenomenological in approach. A case study design was used because the researcher intended to analyse the problem in detail by interacting with the respondents and the data collected over a long period. Data was collected through use of qualitative methods of interviews, observations and focus group discussion meetings. A review of important documents such as schemes of work, lesson plans and pupils exercise books was also done. This type of design was used because a detailed and thorough investigation was employed in a natural setting where the researcher had less control over responses.

3.3. Study Population

Kothari (1995) defines study population as a group one has singled out to generalize the research to be carried. The research targeted all the secondary schools of Lundazi District of Eastern Province. All teachers, parents and grade nine pupils were part of the population from Lundazi district.

3.4. Sample Size

Grade Nine Pupils from three (3) different schools were sampled and interviewed. Language teachers were observed and interviewed. Parents were also sampled and interviewed. The sample size was a total of seventy-two (72) respondents. Sample size was thirty (30) pupils, ten from each of the three selected schools thirty (30) parents of the thirty selected pupils respectively plus nine (9) teachers, three from each of the three selected schools and three (3) administrators, one from each of the selected schools.

3.5. Sampling Procedure

Purposive sampling was used to select the pupil respondents. Purposive sampling was used to select the sample because the researcher intended to explore and understand the audience by targeting groups of people reliable for the study. Purposive sampling was used because the study depended on selecting information rich for in-depth analysis. Purposive sampling was also used to select administrators, teachers and the parents.

Purposive sampling according to <http://scholarspace.manoa.hawaii.edu> (19.10.18) is a type of non- probability sampling technique that is most effective when one needs to study a certain cultural domain with knowledgeable experts within. It is a tool for informant selection, continues the site.

3.6. Research Instruments

The researcher relied on unstructured interview guides to collect information from the parents, teachers and children. See Appendices A, B, C and D. Unstructured questions were used because this usually helps probe responses from respondents and as a way of getting detailed feedback on pupils' poor skills in composition writing.

Focus group discussion guides were also used in focus group discussions with pupils because they provide an opportunity for the shy ones who would otherwise not give information freely on a one on one interview basis to participate. This also ensures carefully planned and designed information about the participants is quickly obtained and produces a lot of information on identifying and exploring ideas, beliefs or opinions from Grade Nine (9) pupils as regards their composition writing skills. Interviews were conducted in order to ensure accurate data capture as regards Grade 9 pupils' poor composition writing skills. In focus group discussions, the researcher had specific topics that were discussed and a recording list of the discussions was made. A tape recorder was used to keep the records.

3.7. Data Collection Procedure

Data was mainly collected from primary sources in form of interviews, observations and focus group discussions in the three (3) secondary schools. Pupils were interviewed first, and then their parents. Teachers were then interviewed and then administrators were interviewed last. Pupils were then engaged in focus group discussions. Secondary data was also collected

in form of document analysis of schemes of work, lesson plans, pupils' exercise books, as well as data from departments and the guidance office. In addition, consent forms for the participants were designed. See Appendix F. The consent forms were intended to enable the researcher to seek permission from relevant authorities such as the District Education Board Secretary (DEBS) for Lundazi and from the school Head teachers. See Appendix E. Before the interviews, the purpose of the study was explained to the respondents and confidentiality of the information was given and assured to them.

3.8. Data Analysis

The data collected from unstructured interviews, observation and focus group discussions was analysed thematically in a descriptive form. A qualitative approach of data analysis was used to ensure accuracy of the findings of the study. Qualitative research according to Creswell (2014), is an approach for exploring and understanding the meaning individuals or groups ascribe to a social or human problem.

3.9. Ethical Considerations

The ethical considerations for this study included seeking prior permission from the University of Zambia's, School of Education, in order to go out and conduct the research in Lundazi rural schools. The researcher also did seek permission from The Provincial Education office (Eastern Province) and District Education Office (Lundazi District). The researcher further did seek permission from school administration (of selected schools) and the parents of the pupils before conducting the research at the selected schools. Although the respondents were purposively selected, they did participate voluntarily, with written consent. No form of force or inducement was used on participants due to considerations and respect for their social values and laws that govern our society. The researcher assured the respondents that they would get maximum anonymity.

3.10 Conclusion

The chapter has discussed the methodology that was adopted for this study. The next Chapter will now present the findings.

CHAPTER FOUR: RESULTS AND FINDINGS

4.1 Introduction

In this chapter the researcher will present the findings according to the research questions. These are considered in accordance with the target groups and the observations made by the researcher. The first to be presented are challenges that pupils face in composition writing. This will be followed by materials that teachers use to teach composition. The chapter will also look at how teachers teach composition. It will also present quality of marking composition; and to wrap it up, the chapter will present findings according to samples of what pupils wrote and also samples of selected lesson plans. This chapter will also usher the report into the discussion chapter.

4.2 Challenges pupils face in composition writing?

Findings that pupils face in composition writing were obtained from pupils themselves, teachers, school administrators and parents.

4.2.1 Findings from pupils

When asked if they knew what a paragraph is, many of them said “yes” quickly but failed to elaborate what a paragraph was. The best answer given by six of the pupils is that:

“A paragraph is a group of sentences”

They however failed to qualify this group of sentences so that it can stand to be a paragraph. Furthermore, none of them knew that there were styles or types of paragraphs; i.e. synthesis and analysis.

Most of the pupils interviewed mentioned that they knew two types of composition; and these being, narrative and descriptive Composition respectively.

The pupils also unanimously agreed that the teachers were doing their best to teach them composition but they admitted composition writing still left much to be desired. They put the blame for poor composition writing squarely on their own shoulders. The pupils blamed themselves for their own poor composition writing skills. *Our teacher does her best to teach us composition, said one pupil.*

The pupils also pointed to a crowded curriculum as one reason for poor performance in composition writing. Twelve of those interviewed said there was little attention given to not only composition writing, but all subjects because if all teachers gave them homework, there was very little time to attend to all tasks. This is due to the nine subjects which are in the curriculum.

When further probed as to what was wrong, they echoed that they were not paying much attention to the teacher`s instruction.

“We are not paying attention when the teacher is teaching”

“Most of us are playful especially the girls”, Said one boy, giggling.

“There are so many things to learn”, Said another pupil, at one of the three schools.

They said this was made worse by so much homework that each teacher gave in their respective subjects.

When asked whether they found pleasure in learning composition, many of them said they did not enjoy composition and these were the responses:

“It is difficult”

“It is not easy”

“I prefer rewrites”

Twenty of the respondents said they did not like composition as they found it challenging. Three of them even said they preferred other lesson types with one specifying that he preferred rewrites in structure to composition. It is clear from such responses that pupils saw rewrites as a topic and not as a way of learning or teaching structure (s).

When asked whether they planned their work when writing composition, fifteen of them

“I do not plan”

Three of them had this to say:

“A plan confuses me when I start writing”

Eight of the respondents saw planning as a waste of time.

“Planning is a waste of time”, they said.

Only one respondent said he planned his work, adding in vernacular that one who did not plan is a hyena which does not have a plan;

“Cimbwi no plan”

Translated, this means only a hyena does not plan, or has no plan. Many however, did not plan and hence ventured straight into writing. Many did not even write a draft out of ignorance with others deeming it a sheer waste of time.

As to the pupils favourite type of composition, many of them were dumbfounded on this one. Most of the answers the researcher got were in form of sighs and groans “Mmm!” “Uuumh!” an indication that they did not know that compositions were categorised into types. Yet five of the respondents were courageous enough to say; *“Narrative.”*

The findings generally is that pupils found composition writing challenging as most of them responded that composition was the toughest component of the English language as a subject.

‘Niyovuta’, this is in a local language, Cinyanja, and it means it is tough.

‘Njizito’, this is in a local language, Tumbuka, and it means it is tough.

Most of the students said in a focus group discussion that composition writing is tough and they said they preferred rewrites to composition writing.

‘Composition niyovuta nkhasako na ma rewrites’.

This means rewrites are better and easier than composition.

An analysis of pupils’ exercise books and test papers revealed serious lapses in terms of pupils’ writing skills. Below are samples of selected scripts written by Grade Nine candidates:-

Question

Write about 'Keep Your Surrounding Clean' Programme (Preventive Maintenance) introduced in your school.

Here are some notes to help you.

- Explain when it is done at your school.
- Areas mostly cleaned.
- How you manage to do the cleaning.
- What changes have taken place in your surrounding?
- How it has benefited learners.
- Why you think it should continue.

Using the above notes, write a **composition** of between **200** and **250** words. You **may use your own ideas as much as possible**.

I am write about my school surrounding. It help my surrounding. It promote good health to my school. explain when it is done at your my school. it is every important to the help the school clean. it promote good health. Clean mostly cleaned preventive maintenance. It very important to keep the surrounding preventive of diseases, malaria, Cholera and so on. How you manage to do the cleaning. to be cleaning person position. I manage my cleaning. because I don't use dirt in my surrounding. this the reason why I don't use there in dirt surrounding. we not change have health place in your surrounding. My change is we have reason to have in clean surrounding. please that now continues there in my clean surrounding preventive my good.

Figure 2:

Comment: - pupil does not understand the context

- Vocabulary is poor
- There is no subject verb agreement
- Poor spelling skills
- No expansion of points
- No or poor paragraphing

Question

Write about 'Keep Your Surrounding Clean' Programme (Preventive Maintenance) introduced in your school.

Here are some notes to help you.

- Explain when it is done at your school.
- Areas mostly cleaned.
- How you manage to do the cleaning.
- What changes have taken place in your surrounding?
- How it has benefited learners.
- Why you think it should continue.

Using the above notes, write a **composition** of between **200** and **250** words. You **may use your own ideas as much as possible**.

The clean Programme is done on every school day at 14:30 hrs. Most of the hard work is given to the senior upper secondary. The areas mostly cleaned are the class rooms and windows, the departments, the hall and mostly the toilets and dining hall.

We manage to clean the ~~sur~~ surrounding because one of our sisters (Sister Kiren) has brooms, mops, newspapers and dishes for us to use. It is now very easy to clean the surrounding because of sister Kiren's help.

The ~~re~~ changes that have taken place in our surrounding are very good. It has become more clean, neater and smarter. It even look much better than it use to when we did ^{not} have this programme. I for one really like the way the surrounding looks now.

Figure 3:

Comment: - although the pupil has some understanding of the context and has knowledge of paragraphing and punctuation, there is limited use of vocabulary and lack of variety in sentence construction.

- Poor spelling skills
- No expansion of points

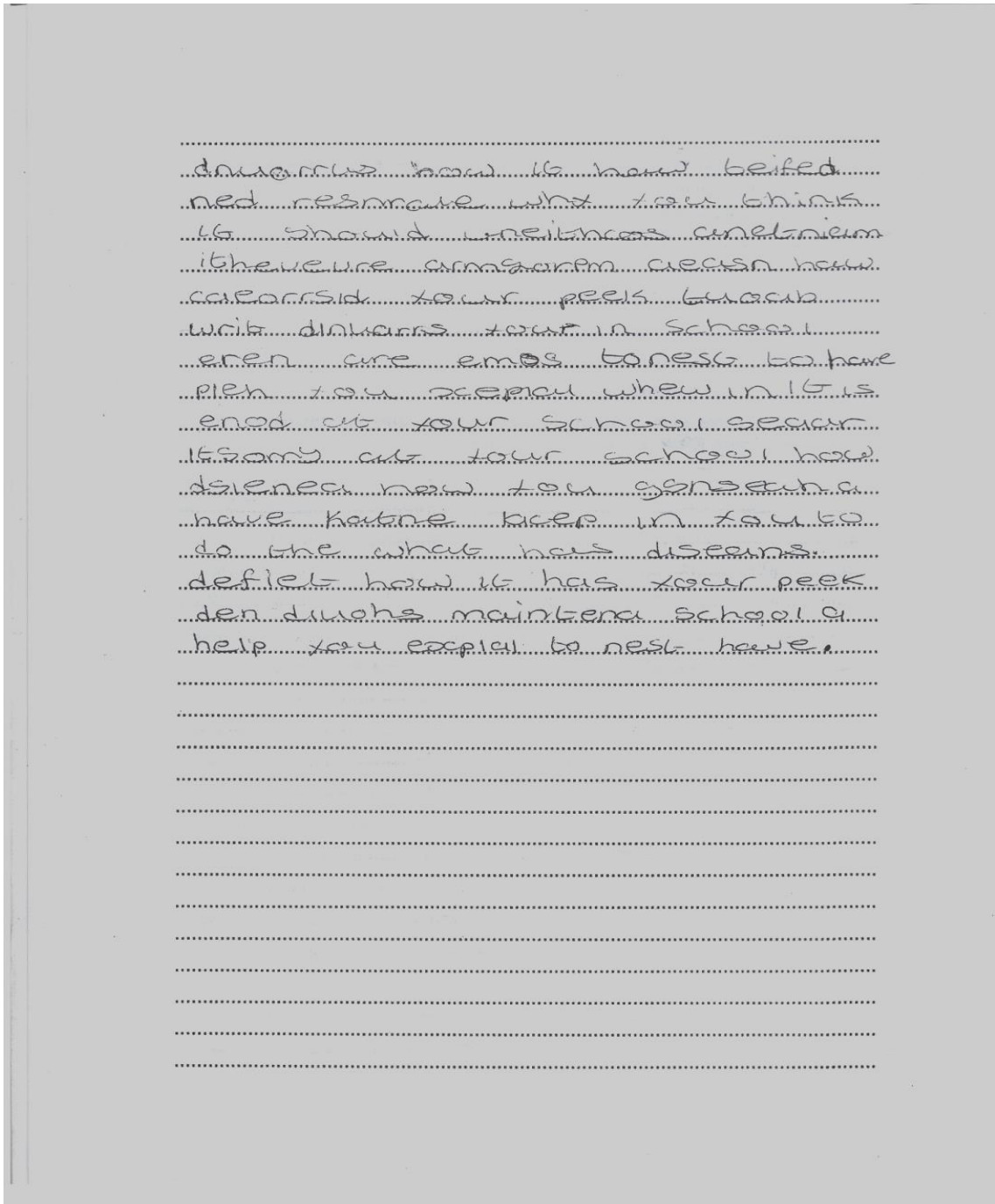


Figure 4:

Comment: candidate does not understand context and the essay is too difficult to decipher.

- *There are only a few words of English the rest are strange words from an unknown language.*

These reviewed samples of composition texts (2015) showed a number of problems such as: -

- Poor spelling
- Limited vocabulary
- Poor logical sequencing
- Lack verb subject agreement
- Run on sentences
- Ordering of points and
- Lack of expansion of points

With the aforementioned weaknesses, composition writing becomes a nightmare.

The study also revealed that pupils got very little or no help at all from parents and or guardians because they (parents/guardians) were either too busy or did not have the necessary knowledge and skill with which to help.

4.2.2 Findings from Teachers on pupils' poor composition skills

Teachers were also asked to give their opinion on the reasons for pupils' poor composition writing skills. They attributed pupils 'poor writing skills to a poor reading culture, technology, lack of support, exam malpractice, language and generally a bad attitude towards composition.

One teacher answered thus:

“Pupils do not read nowadays and reading supports writing”.

Another teacher from one school in the district further said that pupils did not know how to write because they did not read and that reading was one of the four macro skills that was closely linked to writing.

Another teacher said that;

“It is because people do not write letters nowadays and so they do not improve their writing skills, I personally learnt a lot through letter writing in those days”, he added.

“Technology has contributed to the poor writing skills as most pupils just use the phones instead of writing when they want to communicate”.

“Pupils are just lazy these days and depend so much on leakage”,
Said two teachers from two different schools.

“Most of our pupils cannot speak English fluently and this has a direct impact on their writing skills”, Lamented some teachers.

4.2.3 Findings from Parents on pupils writing skills

Parents play a very vital role in their children’s academic endeavours but the study conducted in Lundazi revealed the sad fact that parents do not help their children with school work.

The following are parent`s responses in accordance with the question asked as regards their helping with children’s homework.

-yai nkubawovwira yai cifukwa nkhuvimanya cala.

-yai ine bana bakunipa yai.

“I do not help because I do not know,” responded most of the parents with some saying their children never asked to be helped.

Three of the parents interviewed said they did help somehow:

-Enya ine nkhubabovwirako pala banifumba.

“I do help each time I am asked to”.

Enya nkhubabovwira pala navimanya kwene ivyo vyanitonda nkhubabovwira yai cifukwa nindamalizye sukulu.

“I do help where I can because I did not finish school”

This particular parent said he did help where he could because he did not finish school.

Those parents who said they did help were further asked as regards subjects in which they helped and the following were the responses:

-Nkhubabovwira cizungu panyake zibalo pala navimanyako.

“I help my child in English and Mathematics where I can,” responded one parent when asked whether she rendered any help with school work.

Regarding how often they did render help, these are some of the responses:

-yai nkubabovwira kabili – kabili yai

When asked as to whether they asked to help their children, the parents gave varied answers:

- Nyengo zinyake nkubafumba kwene kuti nkhanandi cala.

“Sometimes I do ask to help my child though I seldom do so,”

Responded one parent

- Yai bakuleta bekha.

“They bring on their own,”

Responded two of the parents interviewed

- Yai bakuti bakuluwa kuti bapiwa visambizyo.

“They say they forget that they have been given homework,”

Two parents said their children said they forgot to ask their parents for help because they always forgot they had homework to do.

The parents also said something on their children's attitudes towards composition writing.

- Ine mwana wane wakuti womanya yai kalembelo kake cimangilizo.

“My child says he doesn't know how to write composition,” Three of the parents interviewed responded.

- wakuti basambizgi wosabizya kabili-kabili cala sono naye

Wakubikako zeru yai. Kuti wamanye kalembelo kake.

“My child says the teacher rarely teaches composition and so he too doesn't care much about it,” Was a response from four of the parents that were interviewed.

This response reveals that although children said it was their own fault, the parents' responses indicate that that infrequent lessons in composition writing probably caused by the teachers' attitude, creates in a child a negative attitude towards composition writing.

The study also revealed that parents' levels of educational attainment were very minimal and hence they could not complement teachers' efforts when it came to composition writing.

- Ine nindaluteko ku sukulu.

“I’ve never been to school.”

This was a common response when parents were asked about levels of their education.

“I’ve been to school but I did not perform very well.”

Four of the respondents were honest enough to admit that they went up to school certificate level but that they did not perform well academically. This response is supported by what the teachers said when asked if parents helped in composition writing. When asked whether parents or guardians helped their children with composition, most of the teachers said they did not think so.

When asked as to who was to blame for pupils’ poor composition writing Skills, there were varied reasons given by the parents as follows:

-Bana bane ndiwo balesi waka kulemba makola. Bana banandi bakoneska kuti cisambizyo ca cimangirizyo bakulemba

-Ine mwana wane wakumanya yai kulemba naumu cikupenjekera

-“My child doesn’t write in the manner composition is supposed to be written.”

Yet others blamed the teachers for pupils’ poor skills in composition writing;

-Basambizyi ndiwo boikako zeru cala

-“Teachers do not mind so much about teaching these days.”

Responded five of the parents, with one adding that, ‘many teachers were involved in trade these days’.

“My child is the one to blame because he is lazy,”

Responded seven of the parents interviewed. The children however defended themselves as below, this time around:

Bana bane bakuti wosambira kwene bakupilikiska cala kalemboro kake

“My child says he learns but he does not understand when the teacher teaches”, said four of the parents interviewed.

It is clear from the responses that children did not get the required help from parents or guardians.

4.2.4 Findings from Administrators

Administrators were also asked whether they were aware pupils were performing poorly in composition writing as regards their skills. The following were the responses.

“I’ve heard teachers complain about this but I do not know the extent of these poor writing skills”.

4.3. Question 2. What Materials are Teachers using to teach Composition Writing

4.3.1 Findings from Pupils

When asked what type of teaching aids their teachers used to teach composition, the respondents said they had never seen any teaching aids.

“Our teacher just comes with a question on a piece of paper and writes the question on the board or a past paper and then he asks us to write a composition of between 200 to 250 words”, this was a common response from most of the pupils.

4.3.2 Findings from Teachers

Although most of the pupils said their teachers used to write the topic on the board and ask them to write on the same, teachers’ version was different altogether. The teachers on their part said there were books on composition and charts which they used in the teaching of composition; because when asked whether pupils had books specifically on composition, all of them said they had. *“Yes we have,”* was a common response and the teachers went further to state that there were also additional teaching materials like pamphlets and charts.

The study revealed that there was no sincerity on the part of teachers as regards availability and use of Teaching/ Learning aids.

4.3.3 Findings from Administrators

The administrators were also asked to say whether they rendered help to their teachers as regards composition writing and this is what they said:

“We help in all areas as long as they are academic oriented”.

“We procure books and other teaching aids to help our teachers teach”.

“We support them financially even for conferences where they share ideas and new innovations”.

“CPD meetings are fully supported and we believe these help to keep teachers abreast of new methods, techniques and skills”.

4.4 Question 3. How do teachers teach composition

4.4.1 Findings from Pupils

When asked as to how teachers were teaching them composition many of the pupils had this to say:

“Our teacher just comes with a topic like, “the day I will never forget,” and asks us to write a composition on the same.”

This is a clear indication that there is no teaching but rather pupils are being tested. There is little or no guidance given to pupils in composition learning.

4.4.2 Findings from Teachers on Pupils’ Poor Composition writing Skills

When asked as to how often they taught composition, the teachers gave varied answers.

One of them said every week while two said every other weeks.

“Once a week”

“Every after two weeks”

In connection to the number of available teachers was the question as regards qualification of teachers. The general picture is that most of the teachers have the first degree while a number of them were upgrading from Diploma to Degree.

4.4.3 Types of composition

When asked as to how many types of composition they taught at Grade 9, these were the responses:

“Two (descriptive and narrative),” Said one teacher. Another one said “Quite a number of them”, without mentioning them.

When asked as to whether they had received additional training specifically for composition teaching, all the teachers said `no`. None was trained to specifically teach composition. It was just a component of the whole package of language teacher training.

4.4.4 Methods used in teaching composition.

Teachers were also asked to mention the methods that they use to teach composition and these were the responses.

“Exposition, Group work, Class Discussion and Question and Answer”

One teacher however responded in a nonchalant way by saying,

“Quite a number of them”

Another teacher said,

Teachers were also asked if parents were helping them with composition when they gave pupils homework. The finding is that pupils did not get much help from parents as one teacher observed and had this to say,

“It’s the case of one blind man leading another”. “This is so because most of the parents are illiterate”, continued one teacher.

Another teacher at a certain school said he was not sure as the school was a weekly boarding. *“I am not sure if parents help as this is a weekly boarding school”. “Pupils usually go home on Friday and they come back on Sunday, mainly to replenish their stock of food and I doubt if they have time for school work during these visits”.*

The teachers were also asked as to whether composition was discussed during Continuing Professional Development (CPD) meetings.

In response, most of the teachers said it was; with one teacher saying:

“It is discussed though it is not given the attention it deserves”.

“More time is spent on other components of language such as structure and comprehension though in the recent past composition is also being taken seriously”.

When asked to comment on other teacher`s attitude towards composition lessons the following were the responses:

“Most teachers don’t like teaching composition”.

“Most teachers do not even teach composition”.

“Most teachers only test composition”.

“Not very good most of them think it is involving in terms of marking”.

When further probed as to why this was so the chorus answer was that:

“Most of the teachers find it hard to teach composition”. It is clear from the findings that composition was not handled in the manner that it is supposed to be.

The teachers were then asked to comment on pupils` attitude towards composition lessons.

“Pupils do not like composition”.

“They dilly dally to hand in books”.

“There is too much absenteeism”

These two were the common responses by most of the respondents.

“Only a handful of them have a positive attitude”.

“Not very good as most tend to be lazy when it comes to writing”.

The teachers were also asked as to who, in their own opinion were better at writing between boys and girls. The response was clear and unanimous.

“Girls write better than boys”.

The researcher also asked whether administration rendered any form of help for the teacher to teach composition.

The following are the responses that were given:

“Not at all”

“Material support such as manila paper for the preparation of teaching aids”

When asked whether the test questions were suitable for the pupils in the school the respondents had this to say:

“Yes they are”

“Yes because the school is not in the interior”

“Yes test questions are ok but the problem comes with the final paper”.

The teachers were then asked to give their opinions as to who was to blame for pupil’s poor composition writing skills. The following were the responses.

“Teachers; they just follow and do whatever they are told, hence everything has to start with the teacher”, lamented one teacher.

“Pupils are to blame as they are too playful and they spend most of their time on TV and phones”.

“Most of them do not have time for school work, busy with home chores”

Lesson Plan

Teacher: Date: 6th February 2016.

Class: Grade 9A Time: 08:20 - 09:40 Hours

Topic: Writing a Composition Sub Topic: 'Ing'ombe Ilede'.

Objectives: PSBAT

1. paragraph their compositions as taught.
2. Write Compositions within the specified amount
3. of time.

References: English pupil Book 9 page 15.

Teaching / Learning Aids: pupil activity, chalk, board and duster.

Stage	Time	Teacher's Activity	Pupils Activity
Introduction	10 minutes	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Tr ask pupils what the previous lesson was. - Tr revises how to plan a composition with the learners. - Tr introduces the day's lesson 'Writing a Composition' 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Give various responses. expected answer: 'planning a composition' - Listening and Writing
Lesson Development	25 minutes	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Tr ask learners what is expected of them when writing a composition. - Tr explains that when writing a composition, one see is expected to think, plan, write and check. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Give various responses - Listening.



Application	40 minutes	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Tr ask learners to mention the parts of a composition. - Tr discuss the following parts of a composition with the learners <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Introduction 2. Main body 3. Conclusion. - Tr ask learners if they have any questions - Tr ask learners to write the exercise from the text book on page 16. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Give various responses. - Discussing and writing - Asking - Writing
Conclusion/Summary	5 minutes	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Tr revise the main points with the learners - Tr praise learners for their efforts 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Cognitive closure - social closure.

Evaluation:

The lesson was very successful. About 80% of the class did the work nicely.

/ang*

Figure 5:

Ministry of General Education

Day Secondary School

Lesson Plan

Teacher _____ Date: 7-06-2017

Class: 8A ENGLISH Time: 80 MINUTES

Topic: COMPOSITION Sub Topic: SEMI-FORMAL LETTERS

Objectives: L.S.B.A.T

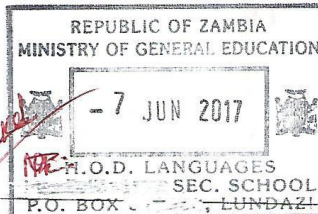
1. Define semi-formal letters
2. Identify key points of a semi-formal letter
3. Write a good formal letter

References: English 8 pupils book 2

Teaching/Learning Aids: Textbook, A chart showing a semi formal letter.

Stage	Time	Teacher's Activity	Pupils Activity
1	5 MIN	<p><u>INTRODUCTION</u></p> <p>Teacher introduces the lesson by defining a semi-formal, which is a letter written to people we know but are not close to us.</p>	<p>- pupils respond by giving examples of people whom they know but are not close to</p> <p>- Expected answer</p> <p>- friend of your father.</p> <p>- A priest</p> <p>- your class teacher</p>
2	40 MIN	<p><u>LESSON DEVELOPMENT</u></p> <p>Teacher explains that semi-formal letters usually have a definite purpose such as asking someone for something. This can be money, advice, a testimonial, a favour or information.</p> <p>Teacher also explains that a semi-formal</p>	<p>pupils listen attentively.</p>
		<p>letter must be polite and formal. It does not contain greetings or an inquiry about somebody's</p>	

Checked



		<p>Teacher also explains the following important points</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> -The salutation is generally, dear mr --- Dear mrs ---- Dear uncle- -The beginning of the letter states the purpose of the letter. -The ending is generally 'yours sincerely' <p>Teacher also reads an example of a semi-formal letter to the pupils</p>	
3	20 MW	<p><u>LESSON APPLICATION</u></p> <p>write a semi-formal letter using the following information :</p> <p>(i) during a meeting of the schools conservation club, of which you are a member, it was decided that the club should go on a conducted tour of murda wanga Botanical gardens. The purpose of the tour is to see the plants and animals there. At the meeting it was resolved that each member should contribute K50 towards the cost of the trip. you are very excited about</p>	pupils write the exercise
	Evaluation:	<p>the trip but you haven't the money as your father, who had promised to send you pocket money has... not yet done so. Therefore you decide to ask your class teacher to lend you money.</p> <p>⊕ mention the dates for the proposed tour</p>	

④	15 min	<u>CONCLUSION</u> Teacher goes through main points of the lesson.	-pupils correct their work and listen attentively
		Evaluation: most pupils understood and did well though they need some difficulties in spellings.	

Evaluation:

The lesson was a success, pupils did very well and participated fully in the lesson.

/ang*

Figure 6:

Comment: the above lesson plans clearly fall short of the four important steps that Ellis and Tomlinson (1980) recommend. These are;

- i. *Illustrate and explain a particular teaching point.*
- ii. *Drill the language point (s).*
- iii. *Stimulate the pupils` imaginations and thinking.*
- iv. *Prepare orally the actual exercise.*

4.4.5 Findings from Administrators

Administrators said the teachers planned what to teach every term under the supervision of the Head of Department and these were some of the responses:

“They schedule every term”.

“They plan termly”.

“They plan every term under close supervision of the HOD”.

The Head teachers also responded as below when asked whether CPD meetings were being conducted.

“Every department plans its own programme for the term and the whole year”. They have individual work plans and they also plan at departmental level as regards continuing professional development meetings”.

“They also include lesson study cycles in the CPD meetings,” responded one administrator; clarifying that this was an innovation adopted from the Japanese Pedagogical system and adapted to the Zambian set up.

Administrators were asked whether parents helped their children with composition writing. The following were the responses.

“The school has homework policy and parents are required to sign after checking their children`s work but I am not sure if they check because most of them are illiterate”.

“I doubt if they do because most of the parents are illiterate”

“Although this is a boarding school, parents are required to check their children`s work”, Answered one administrator.

4.5 Question 4. What is the Quality of Feedback Teachers give in marking Composition

4.5.1 Findings from Pupils

When asked whether they got feedback promptly on their written work, one girl said in the local language that:

“Aticha boconga yai”

Translated, this means the teacher does not mark. This was a common response among the respondents such that eighteen out of the thirty pupils interviewed said their teachers do not mark their written work.

Twelve others said their teachers delayed to mark their books. One pupil even said that the teacher lost his book because of delaying to mark.

“I’ve not seen my composition book for two terms now”, lamented one girl.

At the time of data collection, it was even difficult to access books from the pupils as most of them were still with teachers. It was revealed that apart from not getting feedback promptly, the pupils also got a raw deal as regards quality of marking.

Below is a figure (7) which illustrates the type of marking teachers do:

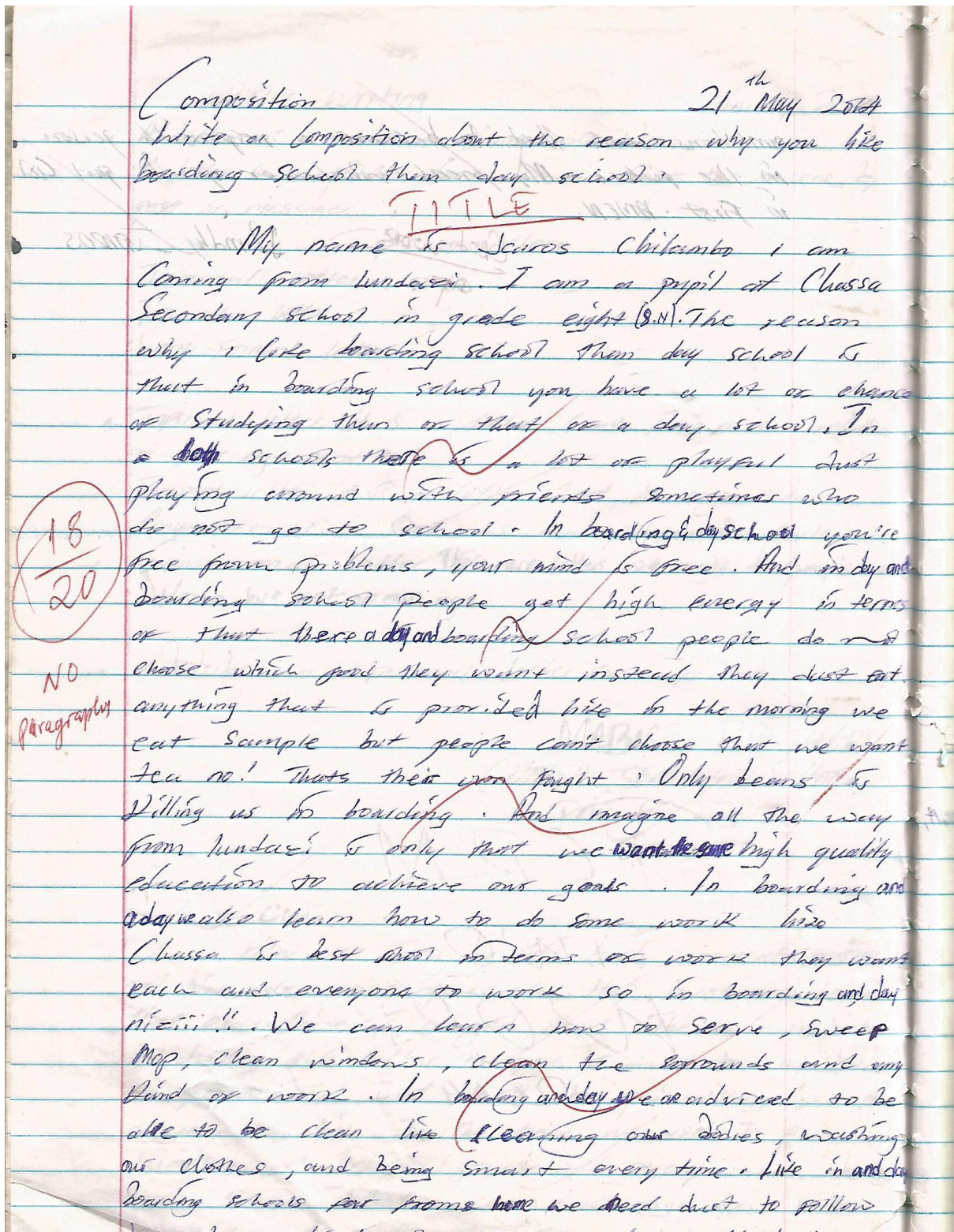


Figure 7:

Although the writer exhibits serious organizational and language problems, the marker does not indicate these as he gives feedback. He only gives ticks randomly and goes on and gives an unjustifiably high score of 18 out of 20.

4.5.2 Findings from Teachers on Pupils Poor Composition Writing Skills

The teachers were also asked as to how long they took to mark composition each time they gave their classes an exercise. Here, answers varied as the teachers said it depended on the number of pupils in class. The following are some of the responses the researcher got:

“Three hours”

“Two weeks”

“A week”

Although these were the responses the findings by the researcher revealed that teachers took too long to mark pupils’ books.

The question of how many teachers the English section had had various responses depending on size and location of the school. The general picture is that all the schools visited had sufficient numbers of teachers handling English and or language in their schools. It was also discovered that where there were shortfalls was in the Cinyanja section. Comparatively, most schools had more teachers handling English than there were in Cinyanja. The study revealed that there was little time allocated to composition and that this little time was further stolen by other activities in schools.

4.5.3 Findings from Administrators on Pupils Poor Composition Writing Skills

These were the responses the researcher got.

As to the question of whether composition was time tabled, all the respondents said it was.

“Yes it is”

This was a response by all of them.

4.6 Conclusion

This chapter presented findings of the survey by describing the demographics of the sample. Characteristics of administrators, teachers, parents and pupils who were interviewed and engaged in focus group discussions were explored irrespective of gender but qualifications, subject specialisation in pre and post teacher training. Current teaching assignment and experience in years were presented. Teacher and pupil attitudes towards composition writing

together with methods and techniques used as related to professional development and experience were presented in a descriptive manner. The next chapter will discuss these findings in more detail.

CHAPTER FIVE: DISCUSSION OF FINDINGS

5.1 Introduction

The previous chapter presented findings which were generated from the data collected. This chapter will discuss those findings in more detail. This chapter will discuss the findings in detail according to themes drawn from research questions.

The first section will discuss challenges pupils face in composition writing. The second section will discuss materials that teachers use to teach composition. The third section discusses methods teachers use to teach composition; and the fourth section discusses quality of feedback teachers give in composition lessons.

5.2 Challenges Pupils face in Composition Writing

The study revealed the fact that pupils writing skills leaves much to be desired. Inextricably interwoven with the skill of writing, is reading. The study revealed according to both teachers and administrators the fact that pupils do not read. They lamented that technology in form of the phone and Television had taken over, leading to the death of a once healthy reading culture. This finding is also in agreement with what Kalima (2012), in her research on poor composition writing in French unearthed. She goes on to say that reading affects writing and that writing affects reading. She then cites Clay (1999), who asserts that when children read extensively, they become better writers.

Scripts examined, indicated an absence of the characteristics of good composition writing as described above. There is a general display of:

1. Limited vocabulary
2. No logical order
3. Poor word choice
4. Poor or no expansion of given points
5. Rampant spelling errors
6. Poor punctuation resulting in run on sentences and,
7. A general lack of creativity.

This type of writing in the environment of inconsistent and inaccurate feedback, coupled with an unsystematic way of marking will cement this weakness of poor composition writing.

5.2.1. Social Setup and Attitude

Lundazi being a rural district, the majority of the pupils are brought up in homes where parental education is poor or non-existent. They may not see much value in their children's education and this may create an unhealthy environment for a child's academic development. Many conform to the same old traditional way of doing things. Not that this is bad but its structures may not fully support the structures of a strategically advanced education system. Change too may be very slow and this may affect such pupils whose mind-sets may be carved in pure traditions, whose scope of concentration on school work may be very limited. The study revealed that parents do not have the necessary skills and knowledge with which to help their children. Hence, composition writing may not be appreciated fully and may be taken to be more alien than the whole modern education package.

Some pupils are pre-occupied with home chores like farming, pounding, cattle herding, and many other chores in most remote areas of the district, and this may ultimately undermine the value of education. This may especially be true in composition writing hence forming a negative attitude towards the component. This was attested to in the findings according to teachers. Attitude is key in all aspects of life, and pupils may develop a poor or wrong attitude towards composition writing because they are not motivated. This finding is in tandem with other research findings as motivation and the lack of it according to Brown's (2007) study in Kalima (2012), is the factor that was contributing to poor performance of pupils in composition writing. She also goes on to quote Syamujaye (1975) that pupils needed to be motivated in order for them to learn.

A lot of pupils do not practice on their own. Once they knock off from school they forget to go through their books hence they don't remember the concepts that they are taught. The teachers said that the pupils were playful. According to Akey (2006) in Frempong (2007), engagement in schoolwork involves both behaviours such as persistence, effort, attention and attitudes such as motivation, positive learning values, enthusiasm, interest, and pride in success. Thus, engaged students seek out activities, inside and outside the classroom, that lead to success of learning. They also display curiosity, a desire to know more and positive emotional responses to learning. It is important to know that this is possible only in an enabling environment, conducive for learning.

In order for practice activities to be successful, learners need both a clear instruction and a clear demonstration or example. While learners are doing the activity the teacher should monitor carefully, checking that they are all doing it correctly providing individual help to weaker pupils and noticing any general problems that a teacher can help them with during revision. After the practice activity, revision should be conducted. After every exercise the teacher must always check if the pupils have understood the lesson. The study however, found a situation contrary to what is recommended above.

Two of the pupils said their teacher just brought questions or topics which they were given as a class to write a composition on. This means that there is no teaching going on. Without any form of guidance in composition writing, most of the pupils will not plan when writing composition and this leads to ideas that are muddled. Their work will lack expansion and will have limited use of vocabulary as seen in samples in chapter 4 above. The study revealed that teachers have not done much to not only explain the different types of composition but also to emphasise the importance of planning when writing composition. The finding is in contradiction with what the pupils said when they said they (pupils) were to blame for their own poor composition writing skills.

The pupils need an environment conducive which is conducive, guidance, monitoring and motivation, if they are to do well in composition writing.

5.3 Materials Teachers are using to teach Composition

The research unveiled the sad fact that teachers do not use Teaching Aids to teach composition. Even though the teachers claimed they had Teaching Aids, The pupils' responses and a document analysis of lesson plans proved otherwise. The finding on the ground is in contrast with available literature.

The availability, appropriateness and use of teaching and learning materials affect teachers' motivation and effectiveness of their lessons as well, Frempong quoting Etsey (2005). She further says that according to studies conducted by Etsey (2005), on causes of low academic performance in some schools in Ghana, one of the causes of poor performance identified was inadequacy of teaching/learning materials in the schools. This finding is also true to the Zambian situation and Lundazi in particular where teachers rarely or never used Teaching/Learning Aids in their teaching of composition. Broom (1973) pointed out that the creative use of a variety of media for learning increases the probability that students should learn

more, retain better what they learn and improve their performance on the skills that they are expected to develop.

Ausubel (1973), also stated that young children are capable of understanding abstract ideas better if they are provided with sufficient materials and concrete experiences with phenomena that they understand. It has been noted however, by Elis and Tomlinson (1980) that in recent years, teachers and administrators have been subjected to persuasive propaganda designed to convince them of the qualities of a variety of sophisticated and expensive teaching aids. They continue to say that , “many of these aids undoubtedly help to make the teaching of ESL more effective and efficient but sometimes such aids are purchased without a critical appraisal of their limitations and without sufficient awareness of how and when to use them ” (1980: 301).

Suffice to say that teaching aids must be relevant and situational and cannot be static. An aid that is appropriate at a particular time, place and space may not enjoy the same privileges in a different setting. This particular study unveils the fact that teachers did not use any Aids in their lessons, despite the ministry’s initiative of encouraging teachers to embark on Teaching And Learning Using Locally Available Resources (TALULAR); A localized policy.

These teaching /learning aids that are either Audio or Visual, should, according to Elis and Tomlinson (1980):

1. Help the teacher- the teacher should not become the assistant of the aid
2. Only be used when they can be useful and not merely to justify their purchase.
3. Be chosen because they can help a particular teaching situation instead of a particular situation being chosen because it can be helped by a particular aid.
4. Be able to achieve things which the teacher cannot do himself.

The teacher must therefore bear in mind the points above and to examine individually the various teaching aids available to the teacher of ESL. It could be because of how critical the issues pointed out above are that most teachers interviewed in the survey rarely or never used any teaching aids at all in their composition lessons. Initiative and creativity is cardinal in this aspect.

5.4 How teachers teach Composition

Methodology is the general term that teachers use to impart skills/knowledge to pupils. There is a belief that many teachers don't use good methods and techniques of teaching and as such many are labelled as bad teachers. This sweeping statement may not always be true as situations and circumstances are unique. Methods of teaching pupils are situational. A good teacher is one who reads the situation and adjusts himself/herself to make the learning of pupils suitable. A good teacher is not rigid to the methodology because it may suit the situation but may fail at times. Sometimes teachers might completely do away with laid down methodologies which leads to children learning things completely different from other schools and it leads to pupils failing to do well in composition. Linked to the issue of methodology is quality of the teacher. According to Mayer (1960), a teacher's influence can be unlimited and his/her ideas can affect thousands. He further states that one of the foremost problems of education deals with the recruitment and preparation of teachers. Recognizing this and the fact that pupils' performance at the basic level cannot be improved without a conscious effort at upgrading the knowledge of teachers at this level of education, the Government of Ghana has initiated certain policies aimed at improving the quality of teachers at the basic level. The Teacher Training Colleges have been upgraded into Diploma Awarding Institutions (Colleges of Education) and infrastructure upgraded to offer better facilities to enhance teaching and learning. This is also true of our own nation Zambia where colleges of education have been upgraded to offer Diploma so that the methodologies may be upgraded to handle basic level of education. This effort can also be complimented however by offering scholarships to teachers of Language as has been done in the Science and Mathematics sectors. The study revealed that the teachers had recently acquired the first Degree or were studying for their first degree with respective universities. Qualification was not an issue as even the Diploma which the least qualified had qualified them to teach at junior level.

5.4.1 Motivation

Lack of motivation contributes to poor composition writing skills. Pupils need to be motivated in order for them to find composition writing interesting. A teachers' needs and their fulfilment plays a vital role in this aspect because a teacher whose needs are not met may be psychologically unstable and consequently not productive Asamoah (2009). On the other hand, a satisfied teacher is stable and thus, efficient and effective. In line with this,

Cook (1980) observed that the key to improving performance is motivation and for this reason employers need to understand what motivates their employees. The absence of motivation in composition writing has greatly contributed to poor performance in this field. Motivation is a good tool for composition writing, although many teachers have ignored it completely. Both teachers and pupils need to be motivated. On the part of a teacher, motivation can come from the pupils, parents, local administrators and most of all, the government which is the employer. Once a teacher is motivated, it will be very easy for him to motivate his pupils. This kind of motivation is spiral and an absence of it will definitely have a domino effect on composition writing in the pedagogical fraternity. The study revealed that the teachers' morale to teach composition was so low though it was difficult to tell what demotivated them. The pupils were invariably the victims of the teachers' demotivation.

5.4.2 Teaching and Remedial Work

A document analysis of lesson plans revealed that teachers do not follow the correct procedure of a composition lesson as recommended by Ellis and Tomlinson (1980:211-212). It is not enough to choose a composition exercise from a textbook and then instruct the pupils to write it. They go on to say that this approach is not adequate because it only provides practice and does not teach the pupils the skill of writing.

They go on to recommend steps that a teacher must take to teach composition:

6. Illustrate and explain a particular teaching point (which will be later practiced in an exercise).
7. Drill the language point(s) connected to the chosen exercise. (Often these will not be completely new items so the purpose of the drilling will be to recall and reinforce correct usage in order to avoid errors which might otherwise occur)
8. Stimulate the pupils' imaginations and thinking.
9. Prepare orally the actual exercise. He should go through part of the exercise (or even the whole of it if the exercise is very difficult) orally before the pupils write.
10. Be prepared to stop the pupils writing if he observes a common error in language or organisation. He should then re-teach the particular point causing difficulty and to

guide the pupils into correcting where they have gone wrong. The caveat is that the teacher should not stop the pupils if only one or two of them have strayed as these can be handled individually and remedially. Although the teacher's task is to develop suitable techniques for demonstrating and explaining specific teaching points, literature reviewed reveals a situation which is otherwise. This is exacerbated by what Ellis and Tomlinson (1980) observe, that most text books only provide practice exercise minus the teaching or language points listed below:

14. Organising a paragraph: logical sequence; chronological sequence; the main point.
15. Order of paragraphs in a composition: when to start a new paragraph.
16. Style: formal and informal writing.
17. Punctuation: full stops and commas; colon and semi-colon; parenthesis (brackets and dashes).
18. Using a variety of sentence structures.
19. Connecting ideas together.
20. Writing plainly (i.e. being concise).
21. Writing in an interesting manner: using 'pictorial' words (e.g. adjectives); using detail for particular effects; using humour.
22. Suiting the language to the type of writing.
23. Registers.
24. Point of view: objective and biased writing.
25. Relevance.
26. Making a plan: paragraph outline; composing notes.

All this which makes composition teaching, teaching, is missing according to the literature reviewed. Composition therefore, becomes testing rather than teaching and this is what the survey unearthed.

Some pupils are slow learners; hence, they need special attention from their teachers. A good teacher is like the Biblical good shepherd, who notices that one out of a hundred sheep is lost and he leaves the ninety nine secure to look for the one lost. He won't rest until he finds that one lost sheep. (Matthew 18:12-13). A teacher, like the good shepherd, must be able to spot slow learners in his class and find a way of remedying them. Elis and Tomlinson (1980:277), say, remedial lessons should take place when it has been discovered that many pupils in a particular class frequently make an error which the teacher considers to be significant. A teacher therefore, needs to have the necessary knowledge and skill to identify these errors; common of which is the run on sentence. If composition writing is taught at long intervals as the study discovered, there may be no time for remedial work and error not remedied becomes error accepted as the norm. It was disheartening to discover at the time of research that most of the teachers did not give feedback promptly after a composition exercise. The implication is that remedial work cannot be conducted.

5.5 Quality of Feedback teachers Give

The fourth question looked at quality of feedback in composition teaching.

Apart from one teacher who said composition was taught once a month, all respondents said they taught composition fortnightly on the utmost. These responses are a clear justification of pupils' poor composition writing skills. Composition which is only introduced as an examinable component of the English language is poorly handled by the pupils and this situation is made worse by frequency with which it is taught. The situation is made worse in some cases where lateness to class and absenteeism are part of a school's culture as it is in most rural schools. This lateness and or absenteeism may be attributed to issues that range from geographical, social, cultural and or economic in nature. Suffice to say that this impacts negatively on performance as it further reduces on the little time allocated to composition. According to Etsey (2005), lateness and absenteeism reduce the amount of instructional time and these results in syllabi not being completed.

In her research, Kalima (2012) attributes poor performance in composition writing in French to the few periods allocated to French as a subject. This is clearly a similar fate suffered by composition in English which is only accorded eighty minutes fortnightly. She continues to say that the Zambia pupils are not spending enough time on learning composition if they only

have three or four periods per week. Kalima (2012: 42-43). Her finding is in agreement with what was found in this particular study.

As already alluded to, composition in English is allocated eighty minutes and taught or rather tested as the case is in most cases, fortnightly. This may not create an environment conducive for feedback as marking may be delayed due to various reasons that stem mainly from attitude. The teachers may also lack the necessary knowledge and skills of error analysis as evidenced by lack of specialized training in composition marking. A document analysis in this particular study, in fig. 7, shows poor marking strategies by the teacher, where ticks are shown but no comment, despite the text exhibiting all kinds of weaknesses. The teacher only reckoned “paragraph”, whose spelling he even misses. Error analysis is cardinal as Ellis and Tomlinson (1980), point out that pupils’ errors provide valuable evidence of learning problems and thus supply the teacher with information on which he can base his remedial teaching.

Due to limited time too, composition may be given as homework; especially with the homework policy being implemented in all schools. The advantage that that this may have on the part of the learner is that they may solicit the help of the more experienced other. Peers, relatives and parents may come in handy on this issue of homework. This is what Vygotsky calls the Zone of Proximal Development.... The distance between the actual developmental level as determined by independent problem solving and the level of potential development as determined through problem solving under adult guidance or in collaboration with more capable peers. (Vygotsky, 1978: 86)

The research however unearthed a totally different scenario where the pupils received little or no help at all as the supposedly more capable adults are semi illiterate or completely illiterate in composition writing. They lack the necessary skills, knowledge and attitude to render any kind of scaffolding in composition writing. *‘Tikubaovwila yai’- ‘tindasambilile yai’* were common responses among the parents. Butler (1985) asserts the importance of homework, that it is a correlate of academic performance. He continues to say that homework augments the efforts of teachers in completing the contents of the syllabus for a particular year.

5.6 Conclusion

The previous chapter presented a discussion of the findings which were generated from the data. Following on from that, the following chapter will give a conclusion of the research according to the findings.

CHAPTER SIX: CONCLUSION

6.1 Introduction

Composition which is one of the components examined at grade nine has remained in the shadows of components such as reading, which has enjoyed a fair share of support from government and other cooperating partners. Pupils have continued to exhibit poor writing skills as evidenced by the ECZ report of grade nine performances by province, ECZ (2016). Teachers, administration and the general public have complained about pupils' poor writing skills, but no one has come out to explain reasons for this phenomenon. This study attempted to explore reasons for pupils' poor composition writing skills in Lundazi district in Zambia.

1. The study found that composition writing is not accorded the space, time and attention it deserves. Although Ministry of General Education has recommended a period of eighty minutes for composition writing fortnightly, reality does not permit this. Mohammed (1998), observes that the teaching of English language is bedevilled with many problems such as inadequate period of teaching, method of teaching and lack of adequate and useful resources. The implication is that if on that allocated day there are extra-curricular activities such as games in school, then time is further lost and consequently syllabus completion is affected. This may ensue into there being no time for remedial work and the slow learners are adversely affected. Continuity is also affected as learning is spiral.

2. Teachers are the bedrock to pupils' learning in the acquisition of knowledge, attitudes and skills. They play a major role of scaffolding before a child becomes competent enough to stand on his own two feet in the realm of composition writing. Needless to mention, that the one who guides must have knowledge, skills and attitudes superior to the ones being guided. Want of specialized skills and knowledge in composition writing may hinder teachers from guiding the pupils properly in the same. The study revealed that no teacher had received extra training to teach composition. The initial training one undergoes in any college or university does not prepare one adequately to teach composition writing competently. Composition writing is not even given a priority in School Based Continuing Professional Development (SBCPD) programmes. It may seem like an illusion but some countries have trained their teachers to specialize in composition teaching.

3. The study also revealed that teachers did not use appropriate methods to teach composition. Most of them did not even teach composition but tested it instead. Testing is

okay at the right time and for the right purpose such as to determine level of competence so that planning can ensue accordingly, but it must not substitute composition teaching. For error identification, the teacher can for instance use diagnostic testing so as to take the appropriate action in the pedagogical fraternity. This must however not be overused in composition teaching as was discovered during the survey. Most of the teachers will just go to class and write on the board a title such as “The Bus Journey,” and ask the pupils to write a story based on the same. Apart from being disoriented with the testing aspect of this approach, the child may be completely lost as the idea of a bus journey may be so remote and abstract to him. Some people have never experienced a bus journey in the rural parts of this district- Lundazi. A title that is within the realm of the learner such as “Harvest Time” or “Mouse Hunting” would be more appropriate because, a writer always communicates to the reader how the world appears to the unique personality of the writer, Rego (2009: 15). This is also true according to social constructivists’ views. As the environment plays an important role in an individual’s cognitive development, it is important that teachers teach pupils and direct their questioning to what is within the child’s environment. There is need in this regard to have a variety of questions in a test or examination respectively from which a learner or candidate can choose. It is also easy to write from one’s own experiences for every writer is influenced by his own experiences.

4. In the pedagogical fraternity, just like in all aspects of life, support is needed. The survey unearthed the sad truth that they do not get help from the supposed helpers in their quest for the acquisition of knowledge and skills in composition writing. The child embarks on the composition writing voyage in isolation with the teacher assuming the position of the judge, instead of facilitator, with the poor methods as instruments with which justice is dispensed. The child is literary left to fend for himself because even the parents who can also play their role to help do not do so as evidenced by the responses from the children and the parents themselves. Well, one may argue that it is not the duty of the parents to teach their children, but doing so would be running away from a responsibility and this would be deemed utter childishness. The parents on their part, are either too busy to help their children or out rightly illiterate in issues of writing. The responsibility as regards composition writing and its teaching and learning, lies squarely and heavily on the shoulders of the teacher. Composition writing must however, be seen and treated as a product of concerted collaborative efforts and parents can help where they can even by just encouraging their children to work harder in composition writing.

An aggregate of the aforementioned findings may invariably lead to a child developing a negative attitude towards composition writing. This may be exacerbated by lack of motivation because they may see no one who subsists on writing. The common occupations of the local people are small scale farming and trade.

6.2 Conclusion

Based on the findings of this study, the following conclusions were drawn:

That writing, one of the four macro skills has not been assigned the space attention and respect that it deserves by administrators, teachers, and pupils in Lundazi District. Pupils do not have proper command of the English language to enable them write composition competently. This is evidenced by their use of wrong words such as *their*, where they are supposed to use *there* and vice versa. They also exhibit lack of expansion of points and also poor punctuation. Teachers and pupils do not have the right Knowledge, skill, and attitude towards composition teaching and learning. Correct methods such as modelling and project work are not employed in the teaching of composition, so composition is tested instead of being taught. Teaching aids are seldom used in the teaching of composition. Time allocated to composition is too little and also that there is no time or consideration for remedial work. There is need for pupils, teachers and administrators, to put in place certain strategies in composition writing teaching and learning if they are all to benefit from the fruits of this seemingly elusive productive skill.

6.3 Recommendations

In view of the above findings, the following recommendations were made;

6.3.1. Pedagogy

- i. There is need to revisit the component of composition teaching in colleges and universities.
- ii. More time need to be spent on composition writing teaching which should include the aspect of marking to conform to Examinations Council of Zambia expectations and standards. Marking according to Elis and Tomlinson (1980:289), provides:

- a) Guidance
 - b) Feedback
 - c) Assessment and
 - d) Motivation
- iii. Teachers and pupils must develop a positive attitude towards the teaching of composition writing.
 - iv. To avert pupils' negative attitude towards composition, the teacher must mark accurately, consistently and in time so that the aforementioned aspects of marking are fulfilled.
 - v. There is need to equip practicing teachers with the necessary knowledge and skills through School Based Continuing Professional Development meetings. SBCPD which is an integral part of teacher retraining should take into serious consideration, the aspect of composition writing.
 - vi. Teachers must teach rather than test composition.

6.4. Future Research

- The study recommends further research into the realm of composition writing especially if a larger target group can be considered.
- There is need to do research to establish how pupils write composition at grade 12.

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APPENDICES

Appendix A: Unstructured Interview Guide for Pupils

I am a student at the University of Zambia (UNZA) pursuing a Master of Education Degree in Literacy and Learning. I would be grateful if you could find time to answer the following questions.

1. a) Do you know what a paragraph is?
b) Where/when do you use it?
- 2 How many types of composition do you know?
3. How many times do you learn composition?
4. Do you find pleasure in composition writing?
5. Do you plan when writing composition?
6. Do you write a draft before you write your composition?
7. What is your favourite type of composition?
8. Do you find composition writing challenging?
9. When did you last write a letter?
9. In which language do you find composition writing easier?
 - a) Tumbuka
 - b) Cinyanja
 - c) English
10. Does anyone help with your composition exercise?
11. If yes in 10 above, who helps you more?
 - a) Teachers
 - b) Parents
 - c) Siblings
 - d) Friends
12. Pupils are performing poorly in composition writing, what do you think is the problem?

End

Thank You So Much for your time and Information. Be assured that whatever we have discussed, will not be shared with anyone else

Appendix B: Interview Guide for Teachers – Unstructured

I am a student at the University of Zambia (UNZA) pursuing a Master of Education Degree in Literacy and Learning. I would be grateful if you could find time to answer the following questions.

1. How often do you teach composition?
2. Is composition time-tabled?
3. How many types of composition do you teach at Grade 9?
4. Have you received any extra training to teach composition?
5. What methods do you use to teach composition?
6. a) Do pupils have books specifically for composition?
b) Are there other materials that you use to teach composition?
7. Do parents /guardians help their children with composition exercises?
8. Is composition discussed during CPD meetings?
9. What are fellow teachers' attitudes towards the teaching of composition?
10. What are pupils' attitudes towards composition lessons?
11. How long does it take you to mark composition exercises?
12. Who are better writers; boys or girls?
13. What type of support do you get from administration to teach composition?
14. Are the examination questions suitable for the pupils in your school?
15. In your opinion, who is to blame for pupils' poor performance in composition?

End

Thank you so much for your time and Information. Be assured that whatever we have discussed, will not be Shared with anyone else

Appendix C: Unstructured Interview guide for parents

I am a student at the University of Zambia (UNZA) pursuing a Master of Education Degree in Literacy and Learning. I would be grateful if you could find time to answer the following questions.

1. Do you have a child/ward in Grade Nine (9) in any school?
2. Is your child/ ward in a boarding or day school?
3. Do you help your child/ ward with homework?
If no to question 3 above then skip questions 4, 5 and 6.
4. In what subject(s) do you usually help?
5. How often do you help?
6. Do they ask you to help or you offer to help them?
7. What are your child/wards' attitudes towards composition writing?
8. What level of education have you attained?
9. Pupils are exhibiting poor composition writing skills as evidenced by their results in national examinations, what do you think are the reason for this?

End

Thank you so much for your time and information. Be assured that whatever we have discussed, will not be shared with anyone else.

Appendix D: Unstructured interview guide for administrators

I am a student at the University of Zambia (UNZA) pursuing a Master of Education Degree in Literacy and Learning. I would be grateful if you could find time to answer the following questions.

1. How many teachers does the English section have?
2. What are the minimum and maximum qualifications of teachers in this section?
3. How do teachers plan their work?
4. Do they conduct CPD meetings?
5. Is composition scheduled in their CPD meetings?
6. Do parents help their children with composition writing?
7. Are aware pupils are performing poorly in English especially in composition?
8. What in your opinion is the reason for this poor performance?
9. What type of support do you render to the teachers in their composition writing lessons?

End

Thank you so much for your time and information. Be assured that whatever we have discussed, will not be shared with anyone else.

Appendix E: Letter of Authority to Conduct a Research

The District Education Board Secretary,
Lundazi District,
P.O. Box 510241,
LUNDAZI.

Date:

Dear Sir,

**SUBJECT: REQUEST FOR AUTHORITY TO CONDUCT AN ACADEMIC
RESEARCH IN LUNDAZI DISTRICT.**

I write to request for your authority to allow me to conduct an academic research in Lundazi District of the Eastern Province in Zambia. This is a case study design in partial fulfilment of an award of Master of Education Degree in Literacy and Learning being pursued in the School of Education at the University of Zambia.

My research focuses stakeholders' perceptions of poor performance in composition writing at Grade 9 in rural Lundazi Schools.

The target participants in this study are educational administrators, Secondary School Head teachers, Language teachers and selected pupils. The teachers will be subjected observation of classroom teaching, interviews and focus group discussion sessions in order to elicit accurate data for the research. This is in a bid to capture their perceptions as regards poor performance in composition writing. All the ethical considerations will be taken into account.

Your favourable response in this regard will be highly appreciated.

Kondwelani Tembo

TS. No. 46176

H.O.D (Languages)-Lundazi Boarding School

Appendix F: Letter of consent to participate in research:

Dear Participant,

My name is Kondwelani Tembo. I am a Masters Student of Education in Literacy and Learning (M. Ed. Lit) at The University of Zambia in the school of Education. I am undertaking an academic research “Reasons for poor performance in composition writing of Grade 9 school pupils in rural schools of Lundazi District”.

The University requires that informed consent be obtained from participants. I am inviting administrators, Language teachers and learners to participate in this study. Participants will be interviewed face to face, observed and also focus group discussions will be conducted. Pupils’ composition books will also be sampled and checked for work coverage.

Should any participant feel the need to withdraw from the study, they may do so without question at any time before the data is analyzed. Just let me know at that time of withdrawal.

Responses collected will form the basis of this research study and will be put into a written report on an anonymity basis. It will not be possible for you to be identified personally. Only grouped responses will be presented in this report. All material collected will be kept confidential. No other person besides me and my supervisor, Dr. G.K. Tambulukani will have access to the raw data. The thesis will be submitted for marking to the School of Education and deposited in the University Library. It is intended that one or more articles based on the information obtained will be submitted for publication in the Education journal.

My contact details are as follows:

Researcher: Kondwelani Tembo

Contact email: kondwelani.tembo@gmail.com

Mobile phone: +260 977 946393

My Academic supervisors details are:

Dr. G.K. Tambulukani. Senior Lecturer

Language and Social Sciences Department.

School of Education

University of Zambia

I give my permission for my responses and test data to be used in this project.

Name of participant: (please use capitals): _____

Signature of participant: _____

Participant Number: _____

Date: _____