

**AN EVALUATION OF THE USE OF EARLY LITERACY LEARNING
AND TEACHING MATERIALS BY GRADE 1-4 TEACHERS IN
SELECTED SCHOOLS OF CHIKANKATA DISTRICT OF ZAMBIA.**

BY

GERTRUDE BASILA MOONGA

**A Dissertation Submitted to the University of Zambia in Partial Fulfillment of the
Requirements for the Award of the Degree of Master of Education in Primary
Education**

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LUSAKA

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DECLARATION

I, Gertrude Basila Moonga, declare that this dissertation represents my original work, and that the views stated therein are those of the author and not necessarily of the institution but all other people's work have been duly acknowledged, and that this dissertation has not been presented at this or any other university.

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APPROVAL

This dissertation by Gertrude Basila Moonga is approved as a partial fulfilment of the requirements for the award of the Master of Education in Primary Education by the University of Zambia.

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ABSTRACT

The government of the Republic of Zambia provided the early literacy learning and teaching materials in familiar Zambian Languages to support the newly introduced Primary Literacy Programme (PLP). The purpose of this study was to evaluate the use of early literacy learning and teaching materials in selected primary schools of Chikankata District of Southern Province.

The researcher purposefully sampled 64 participants . Simple random sampling was used on pupils. Data were collected using Focus Group Discussions and Semi-Structured Interviews.

This study employed both qualitative and quantitative methodologies to collect and analysis data. The method used to analyze data was the thematic approach.

The findings established that the training of teachers in the use of these materials was not sufficient enough to make them use them effectively. Furthermore, the study revealed that learners did not even easily access the reading materials in schools because they were either inadequate or not available at all. The other findings were that some of the learning and teaching materials were not culturally friendly to some pupils and in some cases had very strange contexts to the learners such that it may require a very skillful teacher to decontextualize the book contents to suit the learners' background knowledge. Some of the reading materials were found to be above the level of the learners in terms of the diction or words used.

The study therefore, recommends that training and retraining should be reinforced in the use of early literacy learning and teaching materials and methodologies. The government and other partners in the provision of education should supply adequate early literacy learning and teaching materials which are appropriate and at the level of the learners. Furthermore, the teachers should be trained in the production of early literacy learning and teaching materials to supplement government efforts.

DEDICATION

To my family, for enduring the long absence during my studies and for the remarkable support and encouragement towards my academic pursuit.

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To God be the glory for the great things He has done for me.

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ACRONYMS

ADEA	Association of Education in Africa
CPD	Continuing Professional Development
DRC	District Resource Centre
DRCC	District Resource Centre Coordinator
GRACE	Grade Meetings at the Resource Centre
GRZ	Government of the Republic of Zambia
INSET	In-Service Education and Training
LTM	Learning and Teaching Materials
MESVTEE	Ministry of Education, Science Vocational Training and Early Education
MOE	Ministry of Education
MOGE	Ministry of General Education
NBTL	New Break Through To Literacy
NLF	National Literacy Framework
PLP	Primary Literacy Programme
PRP	Primary Reading Programme
PTA	Parents Teachers' Association
ROC	Read On Course
RTR	Room To Read
SACMEQ	Southern African Consortium for Monitoring Educational Quality

SIC	School INSET Coordinator
SITE	Step In To English
UNESCO	United Nations Educational, Scientific Organization
ZIC	Zonal INSET Coordinator

CHAPTER ONE

INTRODUCTION

1.0 General

This chapter is an introduction to the study on evaluation of the use of early literacy learning and teaching materials by grade 1-4 teachers. The chapter begins with a background, presentation of the problem being investigated, purpose of the study, the objectives and research questions through which the objectives are addressed, the significance of the study, limitations, the scope and delimitation of the study, the theoretical framework, reflection of ethical issues and finally the operational definitions of terms as employed in the study.

1.1 Background to the Study

The provision of a variety of early literacy learning and teaching materials is one of the key components for reading achievements among learners. Several researchers have reported reading as a skill and knowledge base that begins developing in infancy and is enriched across the early childhood period by exposure to language, printed materials and opportunities for exploration and instructional encounters with literacy materials (Epe 2013; Kaunda 2013; Musonda 2011; Neumann, Hood & Ford, 2013; Zimba, 2011; Chansa-Kabali, 2014). One possible method of increasing access to reading materials is by increasing the number of available books as these create an interaction between the reader and text. Once the learners are motivated, they will have the desire to learn to read and read to learn.

Creating a culture of reading and writing for pleasure and information is important in cultivating a positive disposition to literacy. This can be enhanced through the provision of reading materials (print and digital) which children can also bring home to share and provide opportunities for children to collaborate and engage in high-level discussion about their books and texts they are creating: all of which promote the social dimension of literacy (Kennedy et. Al., 2012: 16). This creates opportunities for children to develop their conceptual knowledge, their creativity and their imagination, and to reach an understanding of literacy as a tool to be harnessed for fulfilment of personal goals both within and outside school.

The Government of the Republic of Zambia (GRZ) is determined to transform the nation into a middle income nation by 2030 as stated in the policy document “Vision 2030”. The attainment of this Vision can only be a reality if the literacy levels in Zambia improve. This is in line with the policy on education - Educating Our Future, (MOE 1996:29) whose aim, “...is to promote the full and well-rounded development of the physical, intellectual, social, affective, moral and spiritual qualities of all pupils so that each can develop into a complete person, for his/her own personal fulfillment and the good of society.” The development of a complete person entails that he/she must be literate. Literacy is a human right, a tool of personal empowerment and a means for social and human development. Literacy is at the heart of basic education for all, and necessary for eradicating poverty, reducing child mortality, achieving gender equality and ensuring sustainable development, peace and democracy.

This is also confirmed by the Association for Development of Education in Africa (ADEA, 2012) which states that, “Literacy – the ability to read and write – is recognized as being one of the most fundamental core skills contributing to academic achievement, lifelong learning and sustainable development.” However, in many African countries, including Zambia, literacy achievement in the formal education system has not attained the levels necessary to support any of these outcomes.

The most common used definition of literacy by many countries is the one used by Education for All (EFA) 2000 Assessment which states that “Literacy is the ability to read and write with understanding, a simple statement related to one’s daily life. It involves a continuum of reading and writing skills and often includes basic numeracy.” Another definition was proposed during the International Expert meeting in 2003 at UNESCO which stated that: “Literacy involves a continuum of learning in enabling individuals to achieve their goals, to develop their knowledge and potential, and to participate fully in their community and a wider society” (UNESCO 2004:13). Both of these definitions, emphasized the constructivist interaction of reading where readers actively construct meaning from the text. Countries and societies all over the world are concerned with ensuring that their populace is literate.

However, UNESCO Institute of Statistics (UIS) on behalf of UNESCO with 2015 estimates based on people aged 15 and above indicated that Africa is the only continent where more than

half of the parents are unable to help their children with homework due to illiteracy. The literacy rate varies throughout the world with developed nations having a rate of 99.2% (2013); Oceania having 71.3%; South and West Asia having 70.2% (2015) and Sub-Saharan Africa at 64.0% (2015). Zambia belongs to Sub-Saharan Africa where the literacy rate is still low. The situation is not good as literacy is a crucial step to acquire the basic skills to cope with many challenges children, youths and adults will face throughout their lives. It is for this reason that this study focused on evaluating the use of early literacy learning and teaching materials.

Children's success in school and later in life is to a great extent dependent upon the ability to read, write and make use of these skills and knowledge. Children need to develop their language skills, including the ability to write and read from an early age. The Zambian government and other stakeholders have invested both efforts and resources to improve the acquisition of reading skills in children. Among the efforts, is the introduction of familiar language of instruction in all subject areas from pre-school through to grade 4. To support early literacy and later English language instruction, the Ministry of Education introduced instruction in a familiar language so as to build learners' arsenal for learning to read in other languages as well as teach other content subjects (MESVTEE, 2013:5). The government also provided early literacy learning and teaching materials in familiar Zambian Languages to support the newly introduced Primary Literacy Programme (PLP). However, these were produced and supplied late and they were inadequate. The familiar Zambian Languages in this case refer to the seven Zonal Languages namely: Lunda; Luvale; Kiikaonde; Chitonga; Cinyanja; Ibibemba and Silozi.

Despite these efforts, Zambia continued to record low reading levels. The South African Consortium for Monitoring Education Quality (SACMEQ III) of 2010 noted that among Grade 6 learners that were tested in reading, only 27.4% were able to read at basic competency level. This gave the Zambian educationists a big homework to find ways and means of increasing learner achievement in literacy. Similar studies done in Zambia recently, continued to report that there has been very little success in improving the literacy levels among learners in Zambia (Jere-Folotiya et al., 2014; Matafwali, 2010; Chansa-Kabali, 2014; Mwanza, 2012; Mubanga, 2012). This still remained a concern to the Government of Zambia and other Stakeholders in the provision of quality education.

Apart from the language policy and the provision of early literacy materials, the teacher also plays a key role in teaching early literacy to make learners break through. The National Literacy Framework (2013) also emphasizes that the teacher's role in the delivery of quality and effective instruction in early literacy is critical to the success of literacy programmes. Therefore, teachers should be adequately trained in literacy instruction and teaching methodologies so that they are equipped with the knowledge and skills necessary to teach early literacy. According to some research findings in similar studies in Zambia, the low literacy levels were attributed to inadequate early literacy learning and teaching materials in schools (Lupele, 2012; Rukundo, 2013; and Zimba, 2011). But little was known regarding the use of early literacy learning and teaching materials in Primary Schools by teachers. To understand fully, the factors affecting the literacy levels, this study focused on establishing how early literacy learning and teaching materials were used by grade 1-4 teachers in primary schools.

1.2 Statement of the Problem

For many years now, Zambia has continued experiencing low literacy levels in most primary schools despite the government and other partners getting involved in the provision of quality education by providing early literacy learning and teaching materials. The success of any literacy programme does not only depend on the availability of suitable reading materials to sustain and reinforce literacy skills but also how those materials are used by the teachers (MESVTEE, 2013). The problem is that we do not know how teachers teaching grade 1-4 use the early literacy learning and teaching materials introduced in the new language policy nor do we know the availability and suitability of these same early literacy learning and teaching materials; issues this study intended to establish.

1.3 Purpose of the Study

The aim of the study was to evaluate how teachers of grade 1-4 use the early literacy learning and teaching materials introduced in the new Primary Literacy Programme (PLP) in selected schools of Chikankata District.

1.4 Objectives of the Research

The objectives of the study were to:

1. Assess how grade 1-4 teachers use the early literacy learning and teaching materials in selected primary schools in Chikankata District.
2. To establish the availability of early literacy learning and teaching materials.
3. Determine the appropriateness of early literacy learning and teaching materials in terms of age, gender, wording and culture.
4. Establish the training of grade 1-4 teachers teaching early literacy classes in the use of the newly introduced literacy learning and teaching materials.
5. Find out the challenges teachers face in the use of early literacy learning and teaching materials.

1.5 Research Questions

1. How do grade 1-4 teachers use the early literacy learning and teaching materials?
2. What kind of early literacy learning and teaching materials are available?
3. How appropriate are the learning and teaching materials for early literacy in terms of age, gender, wording and culture to both learners and teachers?
4. What training do teachers have in teaching early literacy?
5. What challenges do teachers face in the use of early literacy learning and teaching materials?

1.6 Significance of the Study

The findings of this study may be helpful in improving the use of early literacy learning and teaching materials by early grade teachers and also contribute to the existing body of knowledge on the use of these materials. The findings may further be helpful to the Ministry of General Education and other stakeholders in procuring sufficient, quality and variety early literacy learning and teaching materials.

1.7 Limitation

The findings of this study cannot be generalized due to limited sample size of only selected schools in Chikankata District. The other challenge experienced was that the researcher could not observe literacy lessons as planned because at the time the research was being conducted, the learners were writing end of term examinations.

1.8 Scope and Delimitation of the Study

This study focused on how grade 1-4 teachers use early literacy learning and teaching materials in selected schools of Chikankata District.

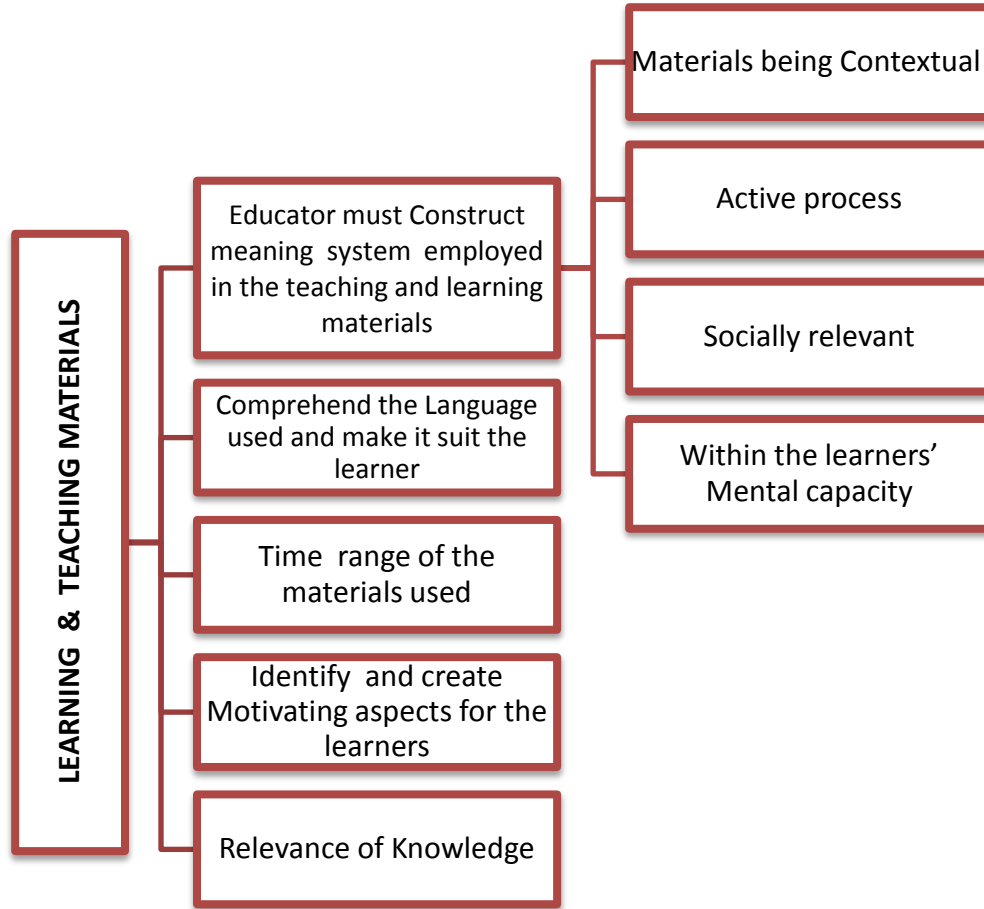
1.9 Theoretical Framework

The study was guided by the constructivist learning theory by Hein (1991) which argues that the teachers must be provided with the opportunity to interact with learning and teaching materials before they can use the same to train their learners. Their sensory data must comprehend what is being presented in form of learning materials so that they construct their own world before they move to pupils' world (Hein, 1991). Once this is done, then learners will be able to learn concepts from working with the materials, rather than direct instruction.

This theory postulates that learning is active when the teacher fully understands the learning and teaching materials for them to construct ideas that make sense to their learners or concepts based upon their learners' current or past knowledge taking into account the cultural and context familiar to both the teacher and learner.

Since reading and writing are meaning-filled activities, learning to read and write must also be meaning-based: this means that among other things, it must be done in a language which both the teacher and learner understand. The use of the child's language as a language of learning and language of reading, according to (ADEA 2012: 7), accelerates learning and allows the child to develop skills and knowledge that will enhance his or her potential for lifelong learning.

Figure 1: Hein’s nine (9) principles of constructivist learning theory.



Source: Hein (1991)

Figure 1 above shows Hein’s nine (9) principles of constructivist learning theory. He states that the teacher must construct meaning and meaning systems employed in learning and teaching materials to ensure that pupils learn to learn as they learn. As such, the early literacy learning and teaching materials should have content which is related to what is known to learners. The use of these materials must be planned in such a way that they actively involve the learner since learning is an active process. Furthermore, the teacher should bear in mind that the literacy materials should be socially relevant to the learner and engage him/her mentally. As to whether or not this is the case in selected schools of Chikankata District is what this study intended to establish.

Other principles that may be considered are: to comprehend the language used and make it suit the learner, otherwise no learning and teaching may take place; time range of the materials

used as it is a well-known fact that learning takes time; to identify and create motivating aspects and activities for the learners; and the teacher to have relevant knowledge of the early literacy learning and teaching materials for the learners to assimilate new knowledge using the already developed structures. This study would like to establish if this is the case with the teachers in selected schools when it comes to the use of the early literacy learning and teaching materials introduced in the PLP programme.

Kennedy et. Al., (2012) confirms that there is need to include motivation and engagement as key aspects of literacy development in the use of early literacy materials. The levels of motivation and engagement have been found to predict achievement and as such are key factors in determining children's academic success. They are critical to ensuring that children or learners develop both the skill and will to engage in literacy activities (Fredericks et al., 2004).

1.10 Operational Definitions

Operational definitions of terms are terms used in the study that are extraordinary or not widely understood by everybody. These are defined so that the reader can understand their precise meaning. The following are some of the operational definitions:

- ❖ Conventional Literacy Skills: More mature skills such as decoding, oral reading, fluency, reading comprehension, writing, and spelling that are the focus of instruction in primary school learners.
- ❖ Early Literacy: Elements (skills) children know about reading and writing before they can actually read and write, such as alphabet knowledge, phonological awareness, letter writing, print knowledge, and oral language.
- ❖ Early Literacy Learning and Teaching Materials: Equipment and materials used to help young children develop early literacy knowledge and skills.
- ❖ Environmental Print: Print of everyday life, such as the letters, shapes, numbers, and colours found in the logos and signs for products and stores for instance bill boards, road signs, calendars, foods and clothes labels and is usually the first print children recognize.
- ❖ Familiar Language: Language that is well understood in a certain locality.

- ❖ Literacy: Activities involved in speaking, listening, reading, writing and appreciating both spoken and written language.
- ❖ Literate behaviour: Children's behaviour exhibited as a result of coming in contact with literacy.
- ❖ Literate home: A home where literacy is part of everyday experiences.
- ❖ Reading readiness: Point in time when a child is ready to begin to learn how to read and write in life.
- ❖ Shared book reading: Practice aimed at enhancing young children's language and literacy skills and their appreciation of books.
- ❖ Zonal Language: Language which is considered to be a regional language for communication and being used as a language of learning for early grades.

To sum up, this chapter presented the background of the study. The next chapter will focus on the literature review related to the study under discussion.

CHAPTER TWO

LITERATURE REVIEW

2.0 Introduction

This chapter reviews some of the literature on early literacy which is related to the study in order to have a wider view on early literacy learning and teaching materials. The review focuses on: overview of early literacy; relationship between early literacy and conventional literacy; language policy for early literacy; home literacy environment; home-school connection; effective literacy instruction and early literacy learning and teaching materials.

2.1 Overview of Early Literacy

There are many definitions of literacy depending on which angle one is looking at it and how one understands it. The United Nations Educational, Scientific Organization (UNESCO) defines literacy as, “The ability to identify, understand, interpret, create, communicate and compute using printed and written materials associated with varying context. Literacy involves a continuum of learning to enable an individual to achieve his/her goals, to develop his/her knowledge and potential, and to participate fully in the wider society (UNESCO,2005).

It is all the activities involved in speaking, listening, reading, writing and appreciating both spoken and written language. Early literacy is, therefore, according to the Annual Edition (2005/06: 103), the knowledge, skills and dispositions that precede learning to read and write in the primary grades. It is what children know about reading and writing before they actually read or write. Early literacy is an emerging set of relationships between reading and writing. These relationships are situated in a broader communication network of speaking and listening, whose components work together to help children negotiate the world and make sense of experience (Thelen & Smith 1995; Lewis 2000; Siegler 2000 cited in the Annual Edition for 2005/06). Children need ‘writing to help them learn about reading, they need reading to help them learn about writing; and they need oral language to help them learn both.’ Waldfogel (2012:42), adds to say, ”The quality and nature of experiences in early childhood lay the groundwork for early literacy development and may also set a stage for potential problems.” Effective early literacy instruction provides children with developmentally

appropriate settings, materials, experiences, and social support that encourage early forms of reading and writing to flourish and develop into conventional literacy.

Literacy and play must be linked because it is one of the most effective ways to make early literacy activities meaningful and enjoyable for children. Juel (1998) supports this assertion and says,

It is important to lay a solid foundation for literacy...because the trajectory of a child's reading progress at the end of first grade holds fairly steady during the course of primary school: A poor reader in the first grade continues to be a poor reader in the fourth grade: just as a good reader in the first grade continues to be a good reader in the fourth grade – unless instruction is improved.

A solid foundation in early literacy is critical because it determines the future well-being of an individual. As to whether the early literacy learning and teaching materials used by PLP are able to enhance the aforementioned skills is what this study intended to establish.

2.2 Relationship between Early Literacy and Conventional Literacy

Early literacy skills have a clear and consistently strong relationship with later conventional literacy skills, such as decoding, oral reading, fluency, reading comprehension, writing, and spelling (National Institute for National Literacy 2009). Research indicates that even before children start school, they can become aware of systematic patterns of sounds in spoken language, manipulate sounds in words, recognize words and break them apart into smaller units, learn the relationship between sounds and letters, and build their oral language and vocabulary skills.

Additionally, six variables representing early literacy skills had medium to large predictive relationships with later measures of literacy development. These variables are alphabet knowledge (AK), phonological awareness (PA), rapid automatic naming (RAN) of letters or digits, RAN of objects or colours, writing or writing name and phonological memory. As to whether there is a relationship between early and conventional literacy in the use of early literacy learning and teaching materials is what the study intended to establish.

2.3 Language Policy in Zambia for Early Literacy

The language policy in Zambia has been consistent throughout the colonial and much of the Federal Period until 1963 when a group of Australian educationalists, sponsored by UNESCO recommended that the language of learning be changed to English (UNESCO, 1964). After independence, this recommendation was endorsed and enshrined in the 1966 Education Act, for the reasons of national unity and a belief that the earlier a language was started the better. English, therefore, became the language of learning from grade 1 to the end of tertiary education.

Considerable resources were committed over the following years to establishing and running what was initially called, the English Medium Scheme, later to be called, the New Zambia Primary Course (ZPC) and later came the Zambia Basic Education Course (William, 1993). However, these programmes did not make much difference to the bleak picture seeing that the children who completed lower and middle basic levels did not exhibit the expected fundamental reading, writing and numerical skills (MOE, 1996). It was during this period when the language of learning was English that the Zambian education system turned upside-down because the language of learning was alien to the children.

Between 1965 and 1995, there were a number of moves made to reverse the policy of English as a language of learning. Both the “Educational Reform: Proposals and Recommendations of 1977 and the 1991, Zambia policy on Education For All, called Focus On Learning (FOL) proved that Zambian Languages were the best as languages of learning especially for early literacy. However, no attempt was made to implement this new policy until 1995 despite a number of studies that were showing increasing signs of reading disability in primary schools in both English and Zambian languages. Even then during the Primary Reading Programme (PRP) the use of a familiar language was only for one hour of literacy learning and the rest were done in English. According to the study done by the Zambia Ministry of Education (MOE) under the auspices of Southern African Consortium for Monitoring Educational Quality (SACMEQ) in 1995 (report published in October 1997) revealed that, the thirty years period when English was used as a language of learning, less success was achieved because learning and teaching in an alien language had meant that, for the vast majority, school was unrelated to real life.

In 1996, the government of Zambia produced a comprehensive policy statement for education, known as Educating Our Future. The policy document incorporated the recommendations of the Reading Forum held in November/December 1995 where it was agreed that the language of initial literacy will be in a familiar language as a child's right while English remained as the language of learning (Paper for UNESCO by Shay Linehan). It was at this time, in 2000, when the Primary Reading Programme (PRP) was designed. In Grade 1 - New Breakthrough to Literacy (NBTL) which was taught in a familiar language; Grade 2 – Step In To English (SITE), the transfer of literacy skills from Zambian languages to English; and for Grades 3 to 7, Read On Course was developed which provided for the bilingual literacy development.

The PRP programme was intended to reverse the illiteracy trend but with little success due to the challenges in the inappropriate methodology: Language Experience Approach. Zambian children have had difficulties in learning to read and write because of shortage of suitable reading and writing materials and the fact that initial reading and writing skills have been learnt and taught through a language which was not familiar to the majority of the children (Paper presented at the Symposium on Literacy, 12th July, 2012). The national policy on education, "Educating Our Future" (1996:39) states,

Research had shown that English was accepted as language of instruction but it was highly recommended that this policy be in such a way that initial literacy skills are taught in the seven official Zambian Languages, namely: Silozi, Chitonga, Cinyanja, Icibemba, Lunda, Luvale and Kiikaonde.

The reason for this demand is that Zambian Languages materials reflect the language of the child, hence meaningful to him/her.

In 2013, the National Literacy Framework (NLF) had been developed in Zambia to provide a strategy for literacy instruction. "To support early literacy and later, English literacy instruction, Ministry of Education, Science, Vocational Training and Early Childhood Education (MESVTEE) introduced instruction in a familiar language so as to build learners' arsenal for learning to read in other languages of instruction as well as learning content subjects (MESVTEE 2013: 5). According to this policy document, the language of learning from grade 1 - 4 was to be in a familiar local language in all subject areas except English as a

subject from grade 2. According to research, teaching in local languages supports the development of a learner's language abilities. Language policy coupled with the appropriate use of early literacy learning and teaching materials can enable learners read, write and compute. As to whether this is true with the use of the early literacy learning and teaching materials believed to have been ushered in the schools by the new PLP programme is what this study aimed at establishing.

2.4 Home Literacy Environment

Children begin to learn about reading and writing in infancy where they come into contact with print in their environment. Children who have been read to, who have had the opportunity to 'read' their stories, who regularly see others reading and writing and who tend to experiment with writing, begin to understand that print has meaning, as stated by one of the literacy paper presented. Goldenberg, Reese and Gallimore (1992) also confirm that children's home experiences have a profound effect on their academic achievement. Academic learning activities at home promote achievement at school and as such, teachers should find ways to promote academic learning at home for their learners through homework. As stated by the cited researchers (Goldenberg, Reese, and Gallimore, 1992), children's homes provide a print-rich environment which most parents might not realize. In the home, there are prints such as food labels, advertisements on television, clothes labels, names of utensils and equipment. These must be fully utilized by parents at home to help their children develop the language and skills required to learn how to read.

According to Annual Editions (2005/2006), parents also use printed matter in one or more of the variety of ways while interacting with their children, as a source of entertainment, as a skill to be learned and as an integral ingredient of daily life. The home environment, therefore, should be appealing to young children to support their reading and writing skills. They should be provided with age-appropriate materials for reading and writing such as pencils, crayons, paint brushes, paper, markers, magazines, story-picture books, reading games and other materials. Children's exposure to printed material in the home appears to be facilitated by through parents' teaching and reading styles (Annual Editions 2005/2006: 52).

Early literacy experiences in every day context in the home provide a useful foundation for successful learning in school. Experiences that are actively encouraged by interested and supportive adults provide a useful foundation for successful literacy learning in school (Nyamu, 2015). Research further indicate that home literacy activities that were positively related to achievement included parents reading for enjoyment , the availability of reading resources in the home, parental confidence in their ability to assist their children with reading or mathematical homework, and learners spending no more than a moderate amount of time on school days on internet, televisions or playing computer games (Nyamu, 2015:45).

Waldfoegel, of Columbia University, also notes that parents are critical to children's early literacy. More advantaged parents are more responsive to their children, interact with them more frequently, and provide a richer learning environment through reading and other cognitively stimulating activities such as use of a computer or visit to the library. However, parents should ensure that the use of Information Communication Technology (ICT) is not abused. Children must be guided on how to use these to learn how to read and write and also other academic benefits. On the other hand, the literacy skills of disadvantaged children are more likely to be affected by lack of cognitively stimulating activities in the home or other parenting practices that foster literacy knowledge. In such cases, the teacher should fill up this gap so that the learners do not continue being disadvantaged even at school.

Antilla (2013) also confirms that parents, as the first teachers of their children, play a very important role in their children's overall literacy development and readiness for school. She further states, ensuring that early literacy practices occur, especially reading aloud to a child, will not only prepare a child for kindergarten, but will affect their literacy success throughout their entire education and even adulthood.

2.5 Home-School Connections

The link between supportive parental involvement and children's early literacy development is well established. Snow et al. (1998) and others have shown that children from homes where parents model the use of literacy and engage children in activities that promote basic understanding about literacy and its uses, are better prepared for school (Strickland, 1998; Riley, 1996). It is a well-known factor that parents are the major providers of their children's

education from birth to adolescent. They guide the development of their children's character and mental help and help form the foundation from which they will develop lifelong attitude and interests. The home is the primary environment in which the child's potential and personality will take shape. Therefore, it is very important to create an enabling environment that will not only support what goes on in the classroom, but will also instill the desire to learn (www.scholastic.com/parents/resources>article).

When parents and teachers work well together, everyone benefits. Parents and teachers can provide each other unique insight and different perspectives about the same child, resulting in a more complete understanding of that child, his/her abilities, strengths and challenges. A successful parent-teacher relationship also shows a child that an entire team is on his/her side. The parent should provide details about his/her child's life to the teacher. The most effective teachers have a fairly complete understanding of each child in their class. For both parents and teachers, the goal is to play active roles in the child's life and to work towards forming a real bond (www.scholastic.com/parents/resources>article). Children benefit a lot when you help them bridge their two most important worlds (home and school). Research CIE shows that when bridging these two worlds together, learners will do better in school, teachers gain high esteem, and parents become empowered and invest in their child's life.

Education is a partnership; our children benefit from the alliance between school and home. That is the reason we have Parent-Teachers Associations in our Zambia schools and dutifully volunteer to carry out some school programmes and projects like field trips, special projects that bring them to school (providing unskilled and skilled labour during construction projects at school), open days and celebrations. Collaboration between home and school is important, especially during times of conflict and uncertainty in a child's life. It is a winning formula to keep in mind: Student + teacher + parent = the 'new math' of effective education (Wenston, 2013).

Therefore, teachers should encourage parents to buy and provide reading materials to help support their children's literacy learning, highlighting the important role they play. Antilla (2013) emphasizes that it is important for teachers and educational leaders to make every effort to reach out to learners and their families to create long lasting, beneficial bonds to help ensure learners' success in the classroom. In addition, she says creating nurturing relationships

between the school and home are also fundamental in increasing parental involvement and support to increase learner achievement gains. As to whether these early literacy learning and teaching materials are so user-friendly to an extent that parents at home can use them to support the learning of literacy by their children is what this study intended to establish.

2.6 Effective Literacy Instruction

For learners to acquire intended literacy outcomes, literacy instruction must be effective. Effective literacy instruction develops individuals who are able to recognize and decode words, read fluently and comprehend what has been read (Adams, 1990; Anderson et al., 1985; Chall, 1967). Furthermore, effective instruction leads to individuals being able to mentally process what has been read and react to this through thought, writing, or speech (Bergeron, 2004). The learners should reflect on what has been read and understand to create meaning (Allington, 2001; Flippo, 2001; Gambell & Mazzoni, 1999; Pressley, 2002). This is based on past experience or previously learnt information with new knowledge gained through reading. As such, effective literacy instruction is viewed as an approach that meets the individual needs of children.

2.7 Early Literacy Learning and Teaching Materials

The aspect of learning and teaching materials for literacy development is also a critical issue. Many schools and communities in developing countries do not have library facilities, and as a result, children often lack access to textbooks, supplementary reading materials, and educational resources (Schmitt, Maribeth Cassidy, Ed. 2000/2001). Teachers work in schools or programmes regulated by administrative policies as well as available resources. Therefore, secondary audience for this position statement are school Head teachers and programme administrators whose roles are critical in establishing a supportive climate for sound, developmentally appropriate teaching practices, and policy makers whose decisions determine whether adequate resources are available for high-quality early childhood education. It is important that both the child's home and school environments provide rich-literacy resources.

The Annual Edition report of 2005/2006 states, "Resources also are insufficient to ensure teachers continuing access to professional education so that they can remain current in the field..." All teachers of early literacy need foundational knowledge in language acquisition,

including second-language learning, the processes of reading and writing, early literacy development, and experiences and teaching practices contributing to optimal development an issue this study intended to establish if this is the case with the teachers using the early literacy learning and teaching materials under the PLP programme.

According to the Zambia Education Curriculum Framework (2013:57-58), learning institutions are encouraged to use and manage learning and teaching materials prudently in their institutions. They should expose learners to a variety of learning and teaching materials that can be used in a learning and teaching process, taking into consideration the learners' needs. Giving learners freedom to choose reading materials that suit their interests is very helpful in building positive attitudes towards reading. It calls for the government and other partners to provide a variety of learning and teaching materials in schools to enable children have a rich early literacy environment. Many of the researches agree that, "A broad spectrum of sources for student reading materials" is most effective in the reading classroom" (Flippo, 2001: 14).

Early literacy learning and teaching materials or instructional resources that promote early literacy include a variety of print materials such as big books, easy-to-read picture books and books of different types and genres (Snow et al., 1998). Other examples of classroom literacy materials are: magazines, alphabet posters, maps. Library cards, note books, variety of paper, children's dictionary, pencils, paint brushes, labels, rhyme posters. Such materials do not only guide learners through learning of essential reading and writing skills, they also provide them with a critical link between skills acquisition and meaningful use of literacy throughout the learner's life (ADEA, 2012).

Allington (2001) emphasizes the need for appropriate reading materials. He calls for extensive use of text books that learners are able to read with accuracy, fluency, and good comprehension. He says, "lots of easy reading is absolutely critical to reading development" (p,44) with improved learning resulting from low error rates in reading. Allington suggests determining reading level of materials to match books to learners. An effective classroom should have access to a large number of books that range in difficulty and genre, including magazines, series of books, or other reading materials of interest to the learners.

Research findings in similar studies done in Zambia revealed that the low literacy levels are attributed to learning and teaching materials being inadequate, large number of pupils in a classrooms, inadequate time allocation for literacy teaching, some teachers lack knowledge and skill to teach literacy, poor classroom management; teachers not perceiving early literacy as the foundation for conventional literacy development (Lupele, 2012; Rukundo, 2013; and Zimba, 2011). This study tried to evaluate the use of early literacy learning and teaching materials by grade 1-4 teachers and it is hoped that the findings may help to suggest solutions to the education system and the policy makers to improve the use of early literacy materials. All educational opportunities depend on early literacy. Literacy depends on learning and teaching materials and these must be used appropriately to achieve the desired outcomes. The focus of this study was to establish if teachers were able to use these learning and teaching materials appropriately for the maximum benefit of their learners.

2.8 Summary of the Reviewed Literature

The reviewed literature on early literacy suggests that for children to acquire literacy skills and competencies, the medium of instruction should be familiar to the children. The review has also shown that children need to be provided with literacy rich environment both at home and at school. This kind of environment should allow them to interact with reading materials that interest them. Adequate and diverse reading materials need to be available to create readers.

CHAPTER THREE

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

3.0 Introduction

This chapter presents the methodology and methods used in this study. Methodology, according to Msabila and Nalaila (2013) is the systematic, theoretical analysis of the methods applied to a field of study. It refers to a discussion of underlying reasoning why particular methods were used. Its components are; the research design, target population, sample size, sampling techniques, data collection instruments, data collection procedures and data analysis.

3.1 Research Design

A research design is a plan on how a study will be conducted or detailed outline of how an investigation will take place. It provides a series of sign posts to keep one in the right direction (Msabila and Nalaila, 2013). This study employed a mixed method design where both qualitative and quantitative methodologies were used to collect and analysis data. The method used to analyze data was the thematic approach. The findings were integrated during interpretation phase of the study. The researcher settled on this design because the integration provided a better understanding of the research problem than using one alone.

3.2 Target Population

The target population is a group of individuals, objects or items from which the samples were drawn. These elements should have common characteristics defined by the sampling criteria established by the researcher. Therefore, for this study, the target population comprised of all grade 1-4 teachers, grade 1-4 learners, grade 1-4 learners' parents, DEB officers, Zonal and INSET coordinators and Head teachers in Chikankata District.

3.3 Sample Size

The sample size is the number of participants selected from the universe to constitute a desired sample (Bless, 1995). The sample size consisted of 64 respondents: 2 DEB Officers, 6 Head teachers, 12 Zonal/School INSET Coordinators (ZICs/SICs), 18 grade 1- 4 teachers, 20

grade 1- 4 learners and 6 grade 1- 4 learners' parents. This variety of the sample size provided rich information on the use of early literacy learning and teaching materials.

3.4 Sampling Procedures

Sampling procedure is a plan of how the sample will be collected from a given population before any data are collected. Purposive and simple random samplings were employed. The DEB officers, Zonal Head teachers, teachers and ZICs were purposively selected (non-probability sampling) because they monitor the use and availability of early literacy learning and teaching materials in schools and zones, and they conduct Continuing Professional Development programmes. Parents were also purposively selected because the researcher wanted to have an interview with the parents of the learners who were involved in the focus group discussions. As for learners and SICs, simple random sampling (probability) was used where each member had an equal chance of being selected as a subject. To select learners, the class registers were used. The researcher assigned numbers to all the grade 3 and 4 learners' names in the register. Then, each number was written on a piece of paper. The pieces of paper were randomly drawn from the box for each class that participated in the study. This process was consistently done in the two schools where focus group discussions were done.

3.5 Instrument for Data Collection

Interview guides were used to collect data from the DEB officers, ZICs/SICs, Head teachers, grade 1-4 teachers and parents to generate useful data for the study. According to Tromp and Kombo (2009), an interview has an advantage over the questionnaire because the language of an interview can be adapted to the ability or educational level of the respondents and this avoids misinterpretation of the questions. Focus group discussions were used to collect data from the learners which were in relation to the study. Lesson observations were not done as planned because at the time of data collection, schools were administering end of term examinations. The lesson observations could have added more information on how teachers use the early literacy materials. However signed lesson plans were checked and a lot of information was obtained.

3.6 Data Collection Procedures

The researcher must have a clear understanding of what she hopes to obtain and how to obtain it. In this study, confidentiality and anonymity was maintained. The DEB officers, Head teachers, ZICs /SICs, teachers and parents were interviewed. Focus Group Discussion was used for grade 1-4 learners. Notes were taken from the interviews and focus group discussions. The researcher could not record the proceedings because of lack of the recording garget/instrument.

3.7 DATA ANALYSIS

Data was grouped into emerging themes and analysed thematically.

Figure 2 : Study sample, sampling procedure and instruments.

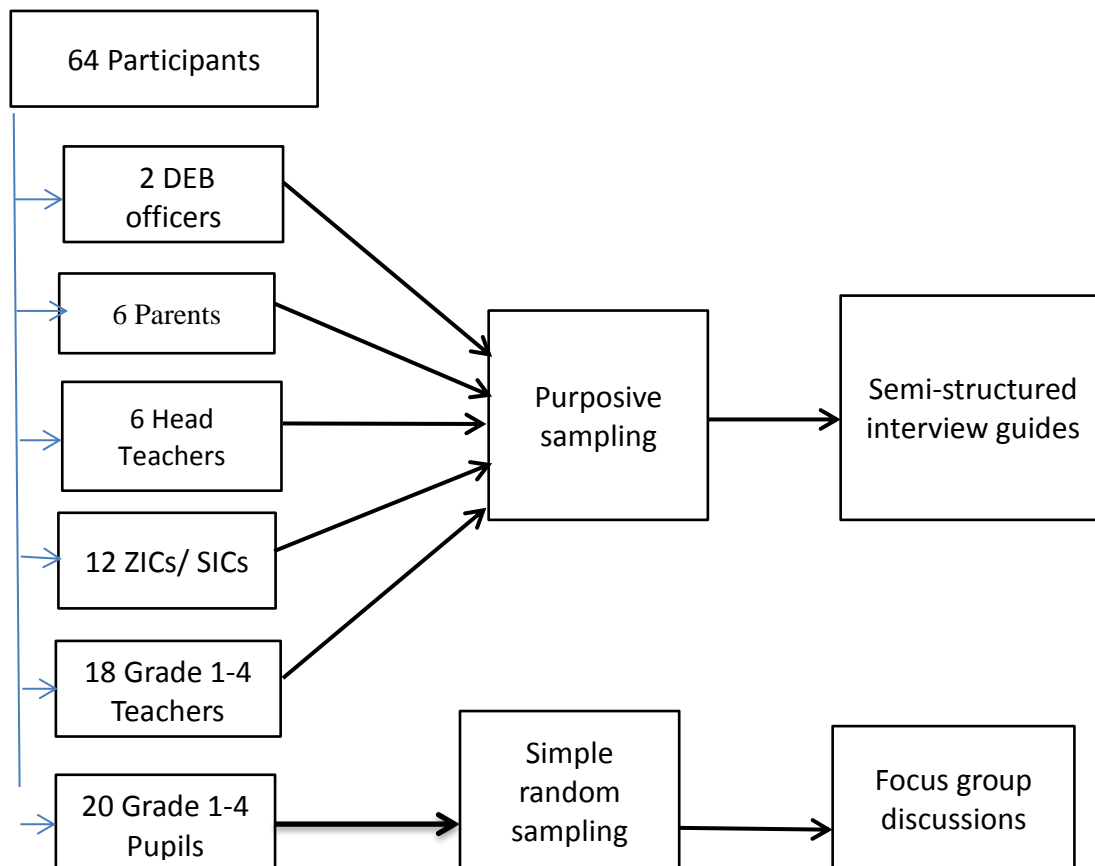


Figure 2 above summarizes the study sample, sampling procedures and the research instruments that were used in the study.

3.7 Data Analysis

Data analysis is examining the data that has been collected in a survey and making deductions and inferences. It is the manipulation of the collected data for the purpose of drawing conclusions that reflect on the interests, ideas and theories that initiated the study. Since the study was mainly qualitative, the data was grouped into emerging themes and analyzed thematically. The study also used quantitative techniques to analyze some data. The combination of the two approaches rests on the premises that the weakness of one method will be compensated by the strengths of another which is very powerful for gaining insights and results, and assisting in making inferences and drawing conclusions (Blackwell, 1994)

3.8 Ethical Considerations

To do the research, permission was sought from the District Education Board office and School Administrators to conduct the research in the district and selected schools. The researcher explained the aim of the study to all the respondents and the need for their involvement before the commencement of the research. The respondents' rights to privacy and confidentiality were assured.

3.9 Validity

Research instruments were piloted in two schools before the actual research.

3.10 Summary

Chapter three (3) discussed the research design, target population, sample size, sampling procedures, research instruments, data collection procedures, data analysis and ethical considerations. The next chapter presents the result findings.

CHAPTER FOUR

PRESENTATION OF THE FINDINGS

4.0 Introduction

This chapter presents the findings on the use of early literacy learning and teaching materials by grade 1-4 teachers. As it has already been stated the techniques used to collect data were face-to-face interviews and focus group discussions. The findings were grouped under the following themes generated from the objectives:

- ❖ Use of early literacy learning and teaching materials by grade 1-4 teachers
- ❖ Availability of the learning and teaching materials.
- ❖ Appropriateness of early literacy learning and teaching materials
- ❖ Training of teachers
- ❖ Challenges teachers face in the use of early literacy learning and teaching materials.

The above themes provided solutions to the research questions in this study which were outlined as follows:

- How do grade 1-4 teachers use the early literacy learning and teaching materials?
- What kind of learning and teaching materials is available for early literacy?
- How appropriate are the learning and teaching materials for early literacy in terms of age, gender, wording and culture to both learners and teachers?
- What training do teachers have in teaching early literacy?
- What challenges do teachers face in the use of early literacy learning and teaching materials?

4.1 Use of early literacy learning and teaching materials by grade 1-4 teachers

Table 1 : How early literacy materials help in the learning and teaching process.

Response	Frequency
Planning and delivery of lessons according to learners' ability	11
Learners grasping concepts and associate pictures to words	3
Introduction of learners to familiar language for effective learning	2
Improvement of pre-reading and pre-writing ability	1
Learners practicing reading and writing	3
Reading partners	2
Help learners recognize sounds, syllables and words	1
Motivates learners' interest to learn because of colourful pictures	3
Learners get confused and loose interest because there is too much content	3
Total	29

Table 1 shows the responses on how early literacy materials help in the learning and teaching process. All the respondents indicated that early literacy is an initial or early writing and reading skills a learner acquires. With this knowledge of early literacy, 11 respondents said that they got knowledge from the early literacy materials to help them plan and deliver the lessons according to the learners' abilities. The findings also showed that 3 respondents said the early literacy learning and teaching materials helped learners to grasp concepts and associate pictures to the words. 2 respondents believed that these materials introduced learners

in their familiar language for effective learning. Another respondent indicated that early literacy learning and teaching materials improved pre-reading and pre-writing skills. 3 of the respondents attributed these materials to helping learners practice reading and writing while 2 confirmed that partnering learners who were unable to read with the able ones, using these materials could improve reading and writing, and 3 associated early literacy materials to learners' motivation to read because they had attractive pictures. One (1) indicated that these materials helped learners recognize the sounds, syllables and words. This was what one respondent said,

The early literacy materials help teachers learn the language of instruction and the pictures help pupils to be able to read sentences. These materials helped me to teach grade 1s. I did not know how to handle these. They also helped the learners recognize the sounds and syllables. I write words on flash cards for the pupils to read at home during the holidays.

Lastly, 3 respondents who had a different view said that learners were losing interest in learning because there was too much content to be covered. As for the other respondents, who were neither teachers nor INSET Coordinators, said that some teachers did not have adequate knowledge and skills to use early literacy learning and teaching materials.

Table 2 : How learning and teaching materials for early literacy activities were used.

Literacy activities	How they are used	Respondents
Reading trees	Reading materials on trees	1
Letter sounds, pre-reading and locomotive skills games	Played literacy activities not easily forgotten	9
No answer	N/A	2
No materials	N/A	2
Library visits	Interacting with books	4
Total		18

Table 2 outlines the responses given by grade 1-4 teachers only, on the use of early literacy materials for early literacy activities. The activities cited by the majority of the respondents were literacy games which reinforce the learning of letter sounds, pre- reading and writing through games and play; followed by library visits for the children to interact with books of their choice to help cultivate a culture of reading and reading trees to help children learn to read. However, the responses from the learners did not indicate that the school environment had reading trees. 2 participants indicated that there were no learning and teaching materials for early literacy activities and the other 2 did not give any response as shown in table 2 above. The findings also revealed that there was no literacy materials used at home to help children learn how to read. This was confirmed by some parent and learner respondents.

Table 3 : Factors to consider when creating an early literacy classroom environment.

Factors	No. of Respondents		Total
	Teachers	ZICs/SICS	
Colourful and large print materials	1	0	1
Appropriate early literacy materials	8	13	21
Classroom organization	8	5	13
Ability of learners	1	0	1
Qualified staff	0	1	1
Commitment and time	0	1	1
TOTAL	18	20	38

Table 3 shows the factors that the teachers and INSET coordinators considered for creating an early literacy classroom environment. The total number of responses to this question was 38. The findings showed that some respondents gave more than one factor. The factors mentioned were: availability of colourful and large print materials; appropriate early literacy materials; classroom organization which included talking walls, reading space, furniture and class libraries; ability, age and gender of learners; qualified staff; teachers' commitment and adequate time. The study revealed that appropriate early literacy materials scored highly with 21 respondents as one of the factors to consider when creating an early literacy classroom environment followed by classroom organization which had 13 scores out of 38.

4.2 Availability of Early literacy Learning and Teaching Materials

Table 4 : Availability of early literacy learning and teaching materials.

Type of materials	Responses	Frequency
Teaching materials	Available (only for grade 1 & 2)	29
	Not Available	0
	Total	29
Literacy play materials	Available	19
	Not available	10
	Total	29

All the 29 respondents said that the early literacy learning and teaching materials were available for grade 1 and 2 only in the newly introduced curriculum although in some cases, these were not adequate. Other materials which were indicated to be available were decodable stories, flash cards, flip charts, story books, posters, word cards, a few story books, some old curriculum books and other locally teacher-made literacy materials. As for literacy play materials, 19 indicated that they were available while 10 said they were not. The other respondents which included the officers from the district and Head teachers said that these materials were in short supply especially the reading materials. However, it was revealed that the early literacy learning and teaching materials were not available in most homes.

It was also revealed that supplementary story books in most cases were not available and in few incidences decodable stories and locally made charts for the sounds of the day were used by innovative teachers. The study also showed that some teachers were still using grade 1 PLP books to teach grade 2 classes as a catch up strategy because most learners had not yet known

how to read. This was attributed to absenteeism of some learners. As a teacher, one respondent narrated:

I am using grade 1 literacy books for my grade 2 class because the school has no grade 2 books and also that some learners have not 'broken through' (are not yet able to read). There are also no supplementary readers for the class library. I get these from the school library although they are not enough for all the pupils to have access. Because of this, I use locally made learning aids such as word cards, charts showing the sounds of the day and decodable stories.

Table 5 : Easy access to the available early literacy learning and teaching materials by learners.

Response	Frequency	
	Teachers/INSET Coordinators	Learners
Easily Accessible	14	7
Sometimes	8	4
Not Accessible	7	9
Total	29	20

Table 5 shows that out of 29 respondents comprising of teachers and INSET coordinators, 14 confirmed that the early literacy learning and teaching materials were easily accessible to the learners, 7 indicated that they were not and 8 said they were rarely accessed. The findings revealed that most of the learners did not have access to the literacy reading materials to help them learn how to read at school and home because they were either not available or inadequate. They mostly depended on what they wrote in their exercise books and this was what some committed parents read to their children. Out of 20 learner respondents, only 7

indicated that they had some materials to read, 5 said that sometimes these were accessed while 9 indicated that they had no access to reading materials. The findings also revealed that despite libraries being established in schools, few learners visited these. Some respondents said that they did not usually visit the libraries because they also served as computer laboratories and therefore, were restricted. One learner respondent said,

Ndakaukkide buyo ciindi comwe ku library nkaambo muli makompyuta. (I only visited the library once because there are computers).

4.3 Appropriateness of early literacy learning and teaching materials in terms of age, gender, wording and culture?

Table 6 : Appropriateness of early literacy materials (user friendliness).

Response	Frequency		
	Teachers	INSET Coordinators	Total
Appropriate/User friendly	9	7	16
Not Appropriate	5	3	8
Sometimes	4	1	5
Total	18	11	29

In response to the question which required respondents to explain briefly the appropriateness of early literacy learning and teaching materials available, in terms of age, gender, wording and culture: the teaching and learning materials for early literacy having attractive pictures depicting both gender emerged as a dominant theme amongst the responses. The following were the responses: they had attractive pictures which attract and motivate learners; the teaching of early literacy was in a familiar language from known to unknown; the sounds go

with the words and pictures; the materials depicted the culture which learners were familiar with; the materials were age appropriate and most of the words used were familiar to the learners.

On the other hand, some respondents revealed that the literacy materials were not appropriate for the following reasons: the language used in the locality was different from the one in the early literacy books, for example words like ‘cikamu’ instead of ‘cisakulo’, ‘laango’ instead of ‘mango’, ‘kutimbula’ instead of ‘kugonka’ ‘ring’ instead of ‘nweenwe’ were used. The words were not familiar to some learners; the curriculum kept on changing and too much content to be learnt which made learners get confused and lost interest. However, some indicated that the materials were fairly appropriate although there were a few concerns such as being taught in local languages which may not have been familiar to both some learners and teachers.

However, the findings also revealed that most of the learners were happy with the early literacy books because they had colourful pictures and large print. On the other hand, some learners indicated that the literacy materials had some sounds and words which were difficult for them, for example /hh/ in ‘hheete’, /ng’/ in ‘ng’ola’.

4.4 The trainings teachers had in teaching early literacy?

Table 7 : Professional qualification of teachers teaching grade 1-4 by gender.

Qualifications	Gender		
	Male	Female	Total
Degree	0	0	0
Diploma	5	3	8
Certificate	3	7	10
Untrained	0	0	0
Total	8	10	18

Table 7 shows that 8 teachers out of 18 had diplomas while 10 had certificates. 12 of these had been teaching early grades (grade 1-4) for more than 5 years. There was no teacher who had a degree and was teaching lower classes or early grades. The findings revealed that, there was no untrained teacher who was handling early classes. Out of 18 grade 1-4 teachers, 10 were female.

Table 8 : CPD and INSET programmes available in schools.

CPD/INSET programmes in schools	No. of Respondents
Shared- experiences in early literacy teaching methodologies and improvisation of literacy learning and teaching materials	17
Teachers discussed problems faced in learning and teaching early literacy and new methodologies from others through lesson demonstrations	7
Not fully implemented due to under staffing	1
No Continuing Professional Development programmes due to lack of materials	2
Time wastage because materials were limited	2
Total	29

In order to bridge the gap in literacy teaching skills, the Ministry of Education and other partners in the provision of quality education, embarked on training and retraining teachers in early literacy teaching methodologies. With regard to the continuing professional development/In-service programmes, 17 out of 29 respondents indicated that these were implemented to share experiences in early literacy teaching methodologies and improvisation of early literacy learning and teaching materials as shown in table 8. The findings also revealed that Teacher Group Meetings (TGMs) helped find solutions to the challenges teachers encounter when teaching literacy. Furthermore, the findings showed that re-training in Teaching Handwriting, Reading and Spelling Skills (THRASS), PLP methodologies and other professional development programmes were being implemented.

However, four respondents indicated that professional development programmes were not implemented because it was a waste of time due to inadequate materials. It was also revealed that in some cases these programmes were not fully implemented due to understaffing.

4.5 Challenges teachers face in the use of early literacy learning and teaching materials

Table 9 : Challenges teachers face in the use of early literacy materials.

Challenges	Responses
Inadequate early literacy learning and teaching materials	14
Language of instruction for early literacy, to some teachers and learners was not familiar	3
Incorrect spelling of some words and the vocabulary used in some books was different from the learners' locality	2
Teachers unable to sound some letters correctly	2
Learners not passing through Early Childhood Education before Grade 1	2
Insufficient contact time between the teacher and the learners	2
Lack of innovativeness by some teachers	1
Lack of class libraries	1
Over enrolment	1
Absenteeism of learners	1
Total	29

Table 9 shows some of the challenges cited by the respondents. From the discussion that the researcher had with the respondents, the findings revealed that inadequate early literacy learning and teaching materials in schools was the major challenge which affected the use of these materials. For example, one respondent had this to say,

There are no supplementary and story books. The grade 2, term 1 pupil's books are available but nothing for term 2 and 3. The grade 3 books are not available and not even for grade 4.

Other challenges cited were: unfamiliar language of literacy learning and teaching by some learners and teachers, incorrect spelling of some words and different words used in books from the ones used in the locality, inadequate contact time for literacy teaching and incorrect letter sounds, lack of class libraries, over enrolment and lack of innovativeness by some teachers.

The officials from the district and the school administrators also confirmed that schools did not have adequate literacy materials and worse still from learners' homes. The other challenge which was cited was teachers lacking skills and knowledge to effectively handle literacy classes and lack of class libraries. The findings showed that parents could not afford to buy reading materials for their children. The learners among the challenges cited seriously complained of lack of class libraries since they could not access the school libraries. A few parents indicated that they did not have enough time to read to their children or help them with school work because they were too busy. One parent said that,

I am a very busy person. I am always out to look for food for my family and therefore I rarely find time to read to my child. Moreover, why should teachers transfer their responsibility to the parents and yet they are paid to teach our children? What will be their work?

Another parent had this to say,

I really want to help my child to learn how to read and write but I cannot because I am not educated. How I wish I could.

One of the emerging themes revealed were the interventions to help grade 1-4 learners with reading difficulties. The following were suggested:

- ❖ Improvisation of useful early literacy learning and teaching materials
- ❖ Re-enforcement of workshops and CPD programmes for grade 1-4 teachers to learn how to produce early literacy materials; and
- ❖ Having remedial work and individualized education plans for such learners.

CHAPTER FIVE

DISCUSSION OF FINDINGS

5.0 Introduction

Chapter five (5) provides a discussion of the findings on the use of early literacy learning and teaching materials. The chapter is divided into five sections, each discussing the findings in relation to each of the five objectives of the study.

5.1 Use of Early Literacy Teaching and Learning Materials by Grade 1-4 Teachers

The study confirmed that the teachers were using early literacy learning and teaching materials but using examples only from grade one and two newly introduced literacy learning and teaching materials and the old books. It was clear that the grade three (3) literacy books were not yet in schools and there were also no reading materials for the learners to interact with.

The implication drawn from the study is that there were limited classroom opportunities by teachers to explore a variety of early literacy learning and teaching materials among learners. Access and interaction with these materials would help learners acquire the literacy skills easily. This observation is in line with Cramer (2012) who states that reading materials are mandatory for persons wanting to develop, maintain and improve their literacy skills. This is an indication that there is need to support adequate supply of interesting and relevant materials which teachers can use to teach learners how to read and write.

The study also established that these materials were not easily accessible to the learners to learn how to read because learning is an active process. Chansa-Kabali (2014: 6) also asserts that,

Children learn to read and write successfully when they engage regularly with authentic and enjoyable reading and writing activities, and when they are given the building blocks of text (letters, syllable, words) within the context of meaningful use of reading and writing.

Ignoring either of these two crucial components of literacy makes learning extremely difficult for most children.

Therefore, the teacher should construct meaning systems employed in learning and teaching materials which will help the learner use sensory inputs and construct meaning out of it (see Hein, 1998 under the theoretical framework). Furthermore, these materials should not isolate facts from the situations and environment in which the learners are found. Learning takes place in relation to what else is known.

Allwright (1990) emphasizes that materials control learning and teaching. It is true that in many cases teachers and learners rely heavily on text books and text books determine the components and methods of literacy learning. That is, they control the content, methods and procedures of learning. In many cases, he further states, materials are the centre of instruction and are one of the most important influences on what goes on in the classroom (p,5). This implies that many teachers do not have enough time to make supplementary literacy materials, so they just follow the text book to teach learners how to read. Although it is the mandate of the government to supply literacy materials, individual teachers should supplement government efforts where learning and teaching resources are inadequate to produce holistic learners.

5.2 Availability of Early literacy Learning and Teaching Materials

To establish the availability and adequacy of learning and teaching materials which is an aspect of effective use of these in early literacy learning and teaching, it was apparent from the study that even if teachers claimed to have been using the early literacy learning and teaching materials, these were inadequate and in some cases, they were not even available especially for the revised curriculum for learners to use. The study revealed that most of the sampled schools did not have a variety of story books in school libraries. Classroom libraries were not in existence. However, it was difficult to ascertain whether the grade1-4 teachers used the literacy materials effectively. This implies that achievement in reading is compromised by limited learning and teaching materials. In order to provide rich learning experiences for a broad range of children, teachers must use a wide range of materials to accommodate each learner's unique readiness, interest and learning styles for example, the classroom library

should be stocked with smaller cardboard books, hard and soft cover books, big books, and interactive books- all in a variety of genres, with interesting topics and varying levels of difficulty (Purcell, 2007).

Strong and diverse reading materials need to be available in order to create readers. Not only does the ability to read and write open up numeracy opportunities, ideas and educational outlets for individuals, reading also increase curiosity, knowledge and improves writing and communication skills (Cramer, 2012).

Literature reviewed shows that teachers being aware of all the factors that are involved in successful literacy education programmes and knowing learners' attitudes towards reading would greatly benefit learner's individual literacy gains (Aram, 2006 & Cremin 2011). The other Implication is that learners whose homes do not offer reading materials may suffer twice because they would not have an opportunity either at school or at home to interact with these materials and develop the love of reading. However, teachers should encourage parents to supply their children with reading materials and provide these to learners whose parents cannot afford to buy.

The researcher argues that adequate and appropriate literacy materials can be provided in schools if there is a 'will' from all stakeholders. 'Where there is a will, there is a way' as the saying goes. Priorities are misplaced in our country. Education should be ranked first in the national budget, if we are to meet "vision 2030".

5.3 Appropriateness of early literacy teaching and learning materials

The study established that most teachers indicated that the early literacy learning and teaching materials were not appropriate in terms of age, gender, wording and cultural aspects. This implies that while learners are treated as unique individuals, all practices should be appropriate to the child's age and developmental stage and build on previously taught concepts. As such, teachers must effectively plan literacy instruction, reflect on developmental stages of children, interest of those children, and allow them to engage in learning and problem solving process which has found support in Copple and Bredekamp (2009).

It was established that the language of instruction in teaching early literacy was in a familiar language which is in line with the language policy in Zambia. Instruction in local language gives the learner a strong foundation on which to build literacy and language skills in English later. As a measure to improve the literacy levels in Zambia, a new language policy which emphasizes the learning and teaching of early literacy from grade 1 to 4 in a familiar local language was introduced (MESVTEE 2013). This implies that teachers should comprehend the language used and make it suit the learners. They need to know and understand the language of instruction to be able to teach early literacy.

Teachers must use the zonal language which may or may not be familiar to the learners according to the language policy. But where the zonal language is not familiar to the learners then the teacher can use the learner's familiar language to explain concepts in order to ensure that learning is taking place. I strongly feel that teachers can also learn any Zambian language and be able to teach in it. After all Zambian languages have same autography. This makes it very easy for any Zambian teacher to master any of the Zambian languages for teaching purposes.

However, the fact that the study has also established that some early literacy materials were not user friendly because some words in the books for the new curriculum were different from those used in the locality as indicated in the chapter on presentation of findings, it means that teachers should do a bit more to make the lessons meaningful to their learners. This is to avoid making the learners get confused when they discover that the words are not familiar to them. The findings also imply that in an event where early literacy teachers do not make an effort to possess adequate capacities and authority to teach reading, and especially in using sounds (phonemes) in the correct medium of instruction effectively in helping learners to read, then, reading will remain a challenge.

5.4 Teacher Training and Continuing Professional Development in Early Literacy Teaching

Although the study has established that teachers had professional qualifications at different levels to teach early literacy, this did not indicate that all these were using the early literacy materials effectively. Early literacy teachers must be well trained to enable them use a variety

of instructional methods that are age and developmentally appropriate and have the ability to adjust those methods to specific needs of individual learners. This is confirmed by Bodrova et al. (2000) who say that, “By investing in the preparation of high quality early remediation.” The curriculum at Teacher Colleges and Universities for early literacy teachers should meet the demands of teaching early literacy. The teachers should be versed in the latest research about literacy development.

However, research has indicated that pre-service training alone is not adequate to assure life-long agency among teachers, and that on-going professional development delivers value in improving the quality of teachers in schools (Dubeck et al., 2012). This implies that teachers are expected to know the characteristics of the early literacy learning and teaching materials and the learners, and only then can they determine the levels of difficulty of the contents that they present. Therefore, teachers should take continuing professional development programmes and other INSET activities seriously to sharpen their literacy knowledge and skills to improve reading achievements.

The study also established that there were In-service Education and Training /Continuing Professional Development programmes which were conducted locally at district, zonal and school levels. But some argued that these were not implemented fully. The need for highly capable teachers is a constant theme in the literature on early childhood education, particularly in the area of early literacy. Early literacy teachers are encouraged to upgrade and expand their knowledge and skills.

Furthermore, the study revealed that school leadership team should accept the need to invest in professional development and in improving the conditions under which teachers can seek to continuously improve their classroom teaching. Effective teachers are professionals who are able to articulate what they do and why they teach the way they do (Hill & Cre’vola 2005). This implies that there is need to invest in continuing professional development to improve classroom practice. This also calls for teachers’ commitment and innovativeness in teaching early literacy.

5.5 Challenges teachers face in the use of early literacy teaching and learning materials:

Among the many challenges teachers face, the study revealed that inadequate early literacy learning and teaching materials was ranking high, followed by unfamiliar language of instruction for early literacy by some learners and teachers. These challenges have already been discussed under the first objective.

The study also established that class libraries were not available while school libraries were. It was revealed that even if school libraries were available, these were not accessed by learners for either independent or guided reading. These were restricted because they also served as computer laboratories. This implies that learners could not be allowed to interact with the few reading materials which were in the libraries.

The study also revealed that most of the books that were in school libraries were mainly donated books from the western world which could not serve the literacy purposes. Cramer (2012) confirms this by saying that some donors send discarded and outdated books to economically challenged countries. Our school libraries are full of irrelevant books which learners cannot use to learn how to read as they are in a language which is not familiar to them. This implies that a defined reading culture in Zambia may persist due to the high price of materials, weak local publishing companies or industries, and lack of relevant interesting materials, acquired mostly as donations from abroad. Research indicates that a high number of challenges are experienced in the use of textbooks such as high pupil-text book ratios, inadequate story books and limited number of teachers' guides. However, talking walls consolidate learning and teaching when used frequently and effectively.

It is high time our government put a deliberate policy in re-stocking the school libraries with relevant books and re-establish public libraries to bring back the lost glory of the reading culture. Class libraries should equally be established to allow learners have access to a variety of story books that motivate them. The study revealed that the challenge of not having the class libraries was due to lack of classroom accommodation specifically for early grades where a library corner can be set to allow learners interact with books.

The implication on over-enrolment in early grade classes is that learner-centred instructional practices which promote literacy in learners in a developmentally appropriate way were not possible. Activity based learning strategies could not work out because of the high pupil/book ratio. The result is that learners were not breaking through. Greaney cited in (Cremer, 2012) reinforces the belief that literacy comes into two stages (1) attaining skills and (2) practicing and improving the ability to read through daily exposure to various materials. With large classes, it is difficult for learners to improve the reading achievement. Furthermore, since it takes time to learn, time range of the materials used is required (Hein 1998). With this state of affair, time will be difficult to find where the teacher will have adequate contact time with the materials and the individual learners bearing in mind their specific needs. The findings suggest serious implications on the children's literacy development. Firstly, because early literacy teachers are not usually innovative to carry out catch up strategies by creating extra time for such learners. Secondly, each learner is unique and therefore, should be taken as such.

5.5 Summary

From the findings discussed under the headings drawn from the research objectives, this study has established that the grade 1-4 teachers may have knowledge of the use of early literacy learning and teaching materials. However, a number of factors have made it difficult for them to use the materials effectively. The first factor is lack of adequate early literacy learning and teaching materials in schools. This is because the government and other partners in the provision of quality education have not fulfilled their obligation to provide the appropriate early literacy materials in required quantities. Coupled with this, some early literacy teachers lack knowledge and skill on how to use literacy materials. Therefore, there is need for adequate monitoring on the use of the available early literacy learning and teaching materials in schools. These factors may attribute to the low reading levels.

This chapter discussed the findings of the study in relation to the objectives. Chapter six will look at summary, conclusion and recommendations of the study.

CHAPTER SIX

CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

6.0 INTRODUCTION

6.1 CONCLUSION

The general conclusion from this study is that teachers lack knowledge on how to use early literacy materials although they claim otherwise. This is evidenced by their failure to create literacy learning materials to supplement the few that the government and other stakeholders in the provision of quality education provided. The assumption is that effective use of these materials could be confirmed if most early grade learners were able to read and write. Therefore, teachers should bear in mind that teacher effect on teaching and learning plays a major role in achievement of literacy among learners. Aspects of effective use of literacy teaching and learning materials, teacher qualifications, knowledge of subject content, methods of content delivery (pedagogy), language of instruction, beliefs and attitudes are the themes emerging from the study. Therefore, all these must be taken care of, to have a learner who will be able to interpret, evaluate and react to what has been read. This is in line with Freire's frequently quoted passage (1987: 37), "Reading the world always precedes reading the word and reading the word implies continually reading the world."

6.2 RECOMMENDATIONS

In view of the findings discussed above and the objective of improving literacy levels through effective use of early literacy teaching and learning materials. The researcher makes the following recommendations:

- i. On effective use of early literacy materials, early grade teachers should be empowered with relevant skills and knowledge at colleges and CPD/INSET programmes to teach early literacy;
- ii. Early literacy teachers should be encouraged to re-discover a sense of industry and the opportunity to invent their own materials within their context ;

- iii. The Ministry of General Education and other stakeholders should stock school libraries with appropriate literacy materials including story books in familiar languages and provide a variety of adequate literacy materials in school for effective teaching and learning.

Recommendation for further research:

The further study should focus on a large scale research on the effective use of early literacy materials.

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APPENDICES

Appendix A: Interview Schedule for Grade 1-4 Teachers

1. What is your professional qualification?
2. How long have you been teaching early grades?
3. What do you understand by early literacy?
4. What early literacy teaching and learning materials are available for your literacy lessons?
5. How helpful are the available early literacy teaching and learning materials in the learning process?
6. Are these materials easily accessible by learners?
7. How user friendly are the available early literacy teaching and learning materials in terms of age, gender, wording (diction) and culture?
8. What factors do you consider when creating an early literacy classroom environment?
9. Does the school have teaching and learning materials for early literacy play activities?
10. What kind of continuing professional development (CPD) or INSERT programmes do you have in the school?
11. What challenges do you face in the use of early literacy teaching and learning materials?
12. How can the challenges faced in the use of early literacy materials be addressed?
13. How have you involved parents in their children's education?

Appendix B : Scheduled Interview Guide for ZICs/SICs

1. What do you understand by early literacy?
2. What kind of early literacy teaching and learning materials are available in the school for grade 1-4?
3. How are the reading levels grade 1-4 learners in the school?
4. How do these early literacy teaching and learning materials help in the learning process?
5. Are these materials easily accessible by children from grade 1-4?
6. How user friendly are the available early literacy teaching and learning materials to the learners and to you as a teacher?
7. What factors do you consider when creating an early literacy classroom environment?
8. Does the school have teaching and learning materials for early literacy play activities?
9. If the answer is yes, how do you use them to teach early literacy?
10. What kind of continuing professional development (CPD) or INSET programmes do you have in the school?
11. What challenges do you face as a teacher in using early literacy teaching and learning materials?
12. How can the challenges faced in the use of early literacy materials be addressed?

Appendix C : Interview Guide for Education Standards Officers and DRCC

1. What do you understand by early literacy?
2. How are the literacy levels in the District from grade 1-4?
3. What materials has the Ministry of General Education provided for early literacy so far in the District?
4. What interventions or strategies have been put in place to improve early literacy in schools?
5. Do the teachers have the knowledge and skills in the use of early literacy teaching and learning materials to build a solid foundation for literacy in young children?
6. What challenges do teachers face in the use of early literacy teaching and learning materials?
7. How is the District and other stakeholders addressing the challenges teachers have in the use of early literacy teaching and learning materials in the provision of quality education?
8. How often does the District office monitor the use of early literacy teaching and learning materials in schools? Comment
9. In your view, are the early literacy teaching and learning materials user friendly to both teachers and learners?
10. What recommendations would you suggest concerning the use of early literacy teaching and learning materials by grade 1-4 teachers in schools?

Appendix D : Interview Guide for school administrators

1. What do you understand by early literacy?
2. How is the performance in early literacy (reading levels from grade 1-4) in your school?
3. What kind of early literacy teaching and learning materials does the school have?
4. How have you made the school to be a rich-literacy environment?
5. What interventions have you put in place to improve the use of early teaching and learning materials in school?
6. How have you involved the parents in the use of early literacy teaching and learning materials?
7. What strategies have you put in place to reinforce the availability and use of early literacy teaching and learning materials?
8. What challenges do teachers have in the use of early literacy materials from grade 1-4?
9. In your opinion, why do you think teachers experience these challenges in the use of early literacy materials?
10. What interventions have you put in place to address the challenges teachers face in the use of early literacy material?

Appendix E: Interview Guide for Parents/Guardians

1. How much time do you spend to read to your child in a week?
2. How much reading materials do you have in the home which are accessible to your child?
3. What does reading to your child mean?
4. Why do you think the teacher often requests you to read to your child?
5. Do you understand what the teacher means when he/she asks you to read to your child?
6. What difficulties do you have when reading to your child?
7. Is story book reading an important part of your daily interaction?

Appendix F : Informed Consent Form

This serves to give you an understanding of the purpose of this research and procedures that will be followed. Further implications for your participation are explained. Finally you are being requested to sign this form to indicate that you have agreed to participate in the study.

Thank you.

1. Description

This exercise is an educational research: the researcher is a student at the University of Zambia pursuing a Master of Education in Primary Education. This research is a major requirement for the researcher to complete this programme. Thus, this exercise is purely academic.

2. Purpose

The researcher wishes to find out how early literacy learning is carried out in primary schools. The researcher will be interested in looking at the classroom environment, learning and teaching materials and the appropriate use of these.

3. Consent

Participating in this study shall be voluntary, you are free to decline to participate.

4. Confidentiality

All data collected from the research will be treated with confidentiality. Participants will be assured that they will remain anonymous and untraceable in this research.

5. Rights of Respondents

All effort will be taken to ensure that the rights of participants are protected and respected. Participants will be assured that they shall suffer no harm as a result of participating in this exercise.

The participants will be free to ask for clarification at any point of the exercise and inform the research if they feel uncomfortable about any procedure in the research

6. Declaration of Consent

I have read and fully understood this document. I therefore agree to participate in this exercise.

.....

Signature

.....

Date