

**THE ACADEMIC PERFORMANCE OF LEARNERS WHO HAVE  
RETAINED A GRADE FOR ANOTHER EXTRA YEAR IN  
MATHEMATICS, SCIENCE AND ENGLISH LANGUAGE  
A STUDY OF GOVERNMENT OWNED SECONDARY SCHOOLS OF  
MPULUNGU DISTRICT, ZAMBIA.**

**BY**

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**A Dissertation submitted to the University of Zambia in partial fulfillment of  
the requirement for the award of the Degree of Master of Education in  
Education Management**

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## Approval

I hereby certify that the Dissertation entitled *The Academic Performance of Learners who have Retain a Grade for Another Extra Year in Mathematics, Science and English Language in Government Owned Secondary Schools in Mpulungu District* has been prepared under my supervision and that I declare that it satisfies the demands of submission in the proceedings for the award of a degree.

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DATE

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NAME OF SUPERVISOR

### **Declaration**

With full awareness of legal implication and Research ethics, I declare that this dissertation submitted contains the original information free from duplication of the already existing studies.

I also declare that the dissertation submitted has not been submitted by any other Researcher in any proceeding leading to the award of any other University degree.

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Date

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Signature of the Author of the dissertation

## **Dedication**

Goes to my late Father Phannwel Mangani who would have lived to smile seeing me reach this far in my academic life. May his Soul rest in eternal peace. I also dedicate this work to my Mother and my lovely first born daughter Candy Chipu Mangani, friends and relatives for their inspiration during my studies.

May the good Lord bless you all.

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## **LIST OF ACRONYMS**

DEB- District Education Board.

ECZ- Examination Council of Zambia.

GCE- General Certificate of Education.

MoGE- Ministry of General Education.

OECD- Organization for Economic Cooperation Development.

PEO- Provincial Education Office.

PISA- Programme for International Student Assessment.

UNZA- ZOU- University of Zambia in Collaboration with Zimbabwe Open University.

## Abstract

The study was designed to examine the Academic Performance of learners who had retained a grade in Mathematics, Science and English Language. The problem under the study was that there were a lot of Learners who were retaining a grade with the view to improve the academic performance in the District. Having appreciated the study done by Phiri (2016) concerning grade retention in Grant-Aided Schools in Central Province, it was observed that even other government owned Schools were practicing the vice whose effectiveness was not known. Four objectives guided the study; to identify the measures put in place by government owned Secondary Schools in order to enhance grade retention, to establish whether these measures were followed or not, to ascertain the relationship between grade retention and academic performance, and to establish the views of Teachers, Learners and Parents over grade retention. The significance of the study was that other Schools, Districts, Provinces and eventually the Policy makers were availed to a picture of the effects of grade retention in Government owned schools.

The sample consisted of four Government secondary schools of Mpulungu District. Population sample comprised of 97 respondents: 28 Teachers, 39 Learners and 30 Parents. To obtain data from these respondents, Questionnaires, Interview guides and Score sheets were used. Questionnaires were administered to Teachers and learners while Interviews were conducted with the Parents. Score sheets were used to collect results from the guidance Teachers on marks obtained in mathematics, English and science before and after retention. Quantitative data was analyzed using SPSS and Statistical packages embedded in Excel while qualitative data was analyzed using themes, bar charts and pie charts.

The findings indicated that Government schools had interest in retained learners and that they did put up measures to enhance grade retention. However, it was found that they did not obey the measures set. When the scores were sampled to ascertain whether there was positive, negative or no relationship between the variables, the findings indicated that there was positive correlation. This means that there was improvement in learner performance. Furthermore, when Teachers, Learners and Parents were asked to state their perception of grade retention, it was also established that they had a positive perception. The findings were similar to the ones obtained by Phiri (2016) whose study focused on Grant-Aided schools.

The study recommended that grade retention be made a fully-fledged educational Policy backed by law. The study also recommended that the Ministry of General Education through District Offices develop interest in grade retained Learners and collect statistics in order to plan on how to improve educational standards in the Country.

## CHAPTER ONE

### INTRODUCTION

#### 1.0 Background of the Study.

Since long time ago it had been a concern by any government to improve its education system through formulation of both local and national policies. In fact, improving education system has been an endless activity. So many policies had been put in implementation all because of the desire to see an improved education system. One among such policies was retention policy which had been dominant in Grant-Aided schools (Phiri, 2016). However, it was necessary to note that education system in Zambia had never been easy to the majority such that passing an exam especially at grade seven and nine in olden days was very difficult. No one who had passed through the system of education in Zambia could deny that (Mudenda, 2017). For some people it was so hard especially at elementally level such that there was no way to avoid having to repeat a grade. Grade repetition was by then not well regulated as it was by then. To some extent, Learners of 1980s and 1990s probably were forced to retain a grade simply because there were few secondary schools to accommodate them especially that qualification to grade eight meant one repeating grade seven. Among such individuals are some of the best brains in this Country and they can only attribute their success to 'retention' (Mudenda, 2017).

Generally, repeating a grade was always associated with failure such that the affected learners were usually subjected to victimization by their friends. In fact, learners who struggled academically after they have retained a grade were subjected to ridiculousness by their friend (Anderson, Jimasson and Whipple, 2005). Equally, learner whose performance changed slightly better or became excellent were usually hated as they were thought to be taking advantage of their previous experience and having an upper hand over the young ones (Mudenda, 2017). Probably it was because of the positive side that some Grant-Aided Schools in Zambia especially Secondary schools opted to make grade retention a serious policy in their schools. There is little research which has been done by researchers who had expressed interest in this field in Zambia and these include Malambo (2012) and Phiri (2016) who reported that mission Schools were performing better than government schools. One among many factors was Retention Policy which had been in implementation for a long period of time.

At that point, it was important to highlight that even some government schools had started borrowing retention policy from Mission Schools though no much research was done in order to unveil what really was going on. This was happening probably due to the desire by government owned schools to emulate the standards of Grant-Aided secondary schools. However, it was important to acknowledge that grade retention received overwhelming castigations from various researchers especially American Writers such as Jacob and Lefgren (2007), West (2012) and the Organizational for Economic Cooperation and Development (2013) who argued that grade retention increased the cost on the attainment of education especially in the developing countries. However, that did not rule out the fact that there were other researchers such as Jimerson (2001), Phiri (2016) and many others who praised Retention policy and established that it was a good mechanism in improving the results of the struggling learner who in return work hard so as to avoid failure.

In Zambia, retaining or repeating a grade was something acceptable and normal and could occur at any grade apart from grade twelve for several reasons such as risking the examination number to expire once entered in the system resulting in the candidate writing under GCE (Examination Council of Zambia, 16, June, 2016). Also, no pupil was to be allowed to retain a grade more than once only if he had failed to pass an examination conducted or on grounds of ill-health or when the Head of the School was satisfied that the repetition of a grade by the pupil did not prevent any Pupil in a lower class from progressing to the next grade (Laws of Zambia chapter 134, Act 13, 1994 revised in 2012). This implied that grade retention was legally backed by the Law in Zambia.

Considering the fact that grade retention had been there and was prominent in Grant Aided schools whose excellent performance was in the public domain (Phiri, 2016), it was right to assume that probably it was out of higher failure rate in government owned schools and desire to improve standards that they had then intensified on grade retention. But the question remained as to whether or not it was as effective as it was in Grant-Aided Secondary Schools and how justifiable it was that when a Learner retained a grade for another extra year the performance automatically improved and also those schools being government owned school it was not clear what happened to Learners who refused to retain a grade. It was out of that inquisitive mind that the researcher intended to assess Learner, Teacher and Parental views towards the policy and

analyze the results of retained learners in order to have a clear picture of what really happened to their scores in Mathematics, Science and English Language after retaining a grade for another extra year.

### **1.1 Statement of the Problem**

Creswell (2009) stated that a research problem was the problem or an issue that led to the need for a study. Furthermore, he indicated that the problem might spring from an experience researchers have had in their personal lives or work places. The problem noticed in the area under study was that there were a lot of learners who were retaining grades with the view to improve their academic performance. This study investigated the measures Government Schools had put in order to enhance grade retention. The performance of the learners who had retained a grade for another extra year in Mathematics, Science and English Language was considered. The choice of the subjects was motivated by the fact that the sampled subject areas are compulsory in all the Zambian schools and are usually the ones which give challenges to most of the learners in schools and yet they are among the key subjects needed for entrance into Universities and Colleges. The study also looked at the views of teachers, learners and Parents towards grade retention. There were very few studies in Zambia done in that area. The similar one was done by Phiri (2016) whose focus was on perception and academic performance of retained learners in Grant-Aided Schools of Central Province. Phiri found that learners and teachers in such Schools perceived grade retention as a good alternative.

Despite Phiri's findings, it was realized that there were also other government owned Secondary Schools which borrowed the approach but there was little if any or almost no research of that nature that had been conducted in Zambia which left out a lot of issues unknown. It was therefore, the desire of that study to establish how effective grade retention was in Government owned Secondary Schools and show either or not it was true that learners who retained a grade improved in their academic performance. If no research was done in that focus, grade retention might have been wrongly implemented and would actually disadvantage other learners who were not supposed to retain a grade at all cost and eventually affect the results of Seventh National Development Plan No.2 of 2017 which placed its emphasis on investment in education and other sectors. Thus, it was the desire of this study to look into this area and establish how learners, Parents and Teachers responded to grade retention.

## **1.2 Significance of the Study**

Creswell (2009) described the significance of the problem as the most important statement in the entire research and it need to be clearly and specifically presented because it states why the Researcher wanted to do the study and what they intend to accomplish (Lock et al, 2007). The study intended to unveil the academic performance of learners who had retained a grade in Government owned Secondary Schools and also the perception of Learners, Teachers and Parents towards grade retention.

The significance of the study was that when it was disseminated to other schools, District Education Boards, Provincial Education Offices, the Parents, Teachers, Learners and other Stakeholders including Policy makers gave a clear picture of how Parents, Teachers and Learners viewed grade retention and also showed how much grade retention influenced learner performance in Government owned schools in the named subjects. The other significance of the study was that it provided the literature concerning grade retention in government schools since there was no study of that nature conducted in Zambia apart from one which was done by Phiri (2016) whose focus was Grant-Aided Secondary Schools.

Without this study it meant that a lot of issues related to grade retention in government owned Schools would have remained silent. However, it is important to note that many studies such as Jacob and Lefgren (2007), Martin (2011) and OECD (2013) done in many other countries pertaining to grade retention were based much on Kindergarten (Pre-school children) and also early primary education with less emphasis at Secondary level. In Zambia the issue of retention policy was well-known in Grant-Aided Schools and little of it was known in Government Schools. Thus, the findings of the study were of help to the educational Planners.

## **1.3 Research Objectives**

The objectives of the study were to: -

- 1) Identify the measures put in place by the Government owned Secondary schools in order to enhance grade retention.
- 2) Establish whether the measures put in place to enhance grade retention were followed or not.

- 3) Ascertain the relationship between grade retention and academic performance in Mathematics, Science and English Language in Government owned Secondary Schools.
- 4) Establish the views of Teachers, Learners and Parents over grade retention in Government owned schools.

#### **1.4 Research Questions**

The research questions which were addressed by the study were: -

- 1) What measures did the Government schools put in place so as to enhance grade retention?
- 2) To what extent are the measures put in place being followed?
- 3) What relationship existed between grade retention and improved academic performance in Mathematics, Science and English Language?
- 4) What were the Learners', Teachers' and Parents' perceptions about grade retention?

#### **1.6 Delimitation of the study**

The study was conducted in four out of five Governments owned Secondary Schools of Mpulungu District within four (4) months' time. The fifth school was left out because it was just recently upgraded. For that reason, it was found not fit to be included in the study. The place was chosen because the problem which was being studied was more common and the researcher felt that it was necessary to conduct a study in order to establish what was transpiring to the learners who retained the grades for another year with a view to improve academic performance.

#### **1.7 Limitation of the Study**

Best and Kahn (2003) defined limitation as conditions beyond the control of the Researcher that may place restrictions on the conclusion of the study and application to other situations. Oradho (2004) supported Best and Kahn's definition and added that a limitation is an aspect of the study that the Researcher knows may adversely affect the results over which he or she has no direct control.

The limitation of the study was the fact that the study was limited to Mpulungu District which is in a rural set-up with few Secondary Schools. Therefore, generalization of the findings remained

limited especially to the rural centers. However, it is imperative to note that results can be generalized to various regions of the similar characteristics to those of Mpulungu District and it is believed that the results of the study have given a good picture of what goes on in Government Schools in relation to grade retention.

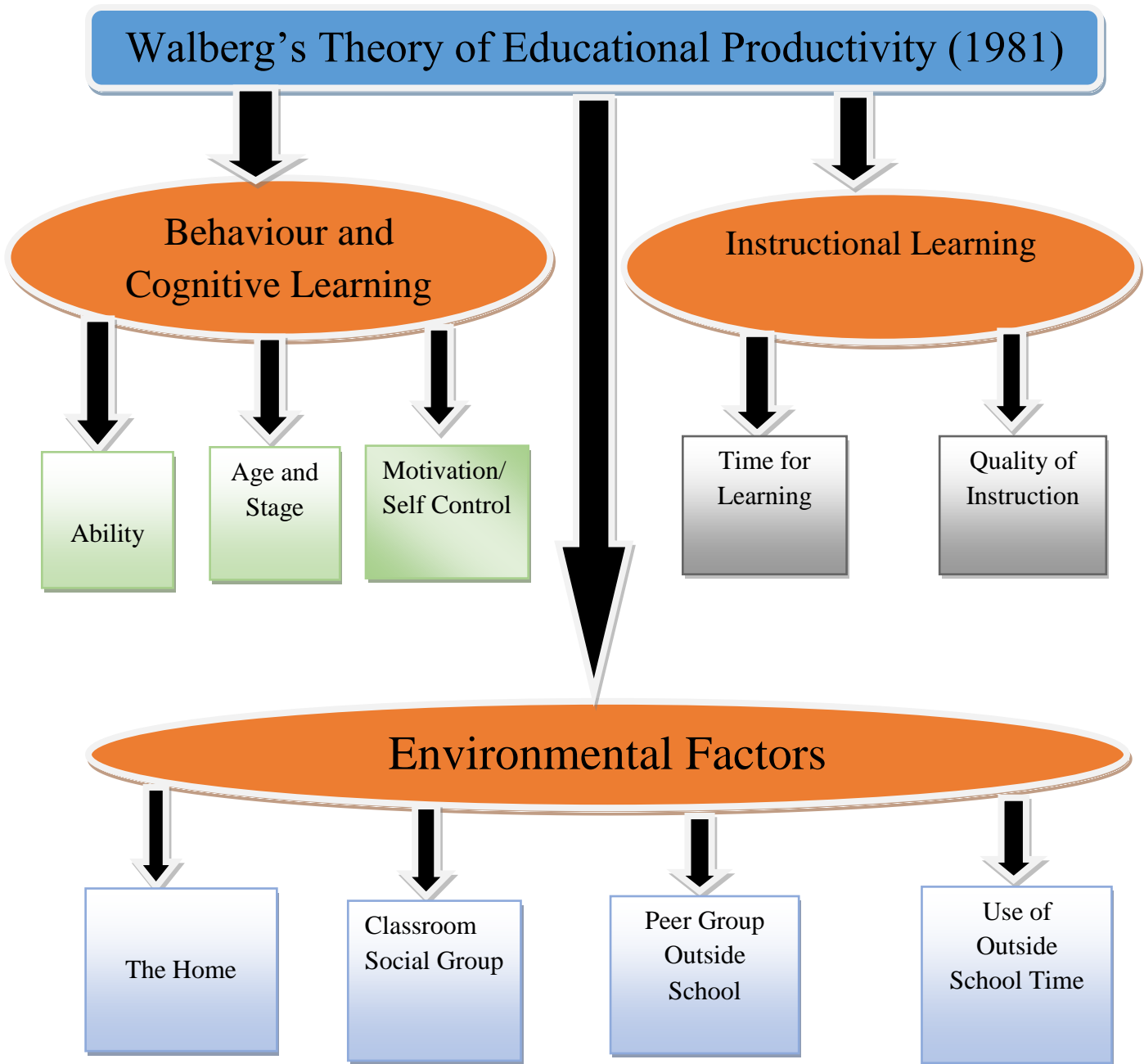
### **1.8 Definition of terms**

**Academic Performance-** In educational institutions academic performance meant how well a student met standards set out by local government and the institution itself.

**Grade Retention-** Meant being held back in the same grade when others had been promoted to the next one, or repeating a grade. It was the opposite of social promotion, in which children were allowed to continue to the next grade with their age peer regardless of their academic performance.

### **1.9 Theoretical Framework**

The part showed how the theory was embedded in the study and how the variables which were being tested responded to the theory. Creswell (2014) indicated that theories serve different purposes in the three approaches inquiry. In quantitative research, they provide a proposed explanation for the relationship among variables being tested. In qualitative they may be generated during the study. In mixed methods study, researchers employed them in many ways, including those associated with quantitative and qualitative approaches. In this study, the researcher used the theory generated by Walberg's Theory of Educational Productivity and it was presented as follows:



Herbert J. Walberg was described in his biography as a research Professor of Education and Psychology at the University of Illinois at Chicago born in December, 1937 (Walberg, 2003). He was holder of a PhD from the University of Chicago and formerly served as an assistant Professor at Harvard University. Furthermore, it was indicated that he had written more than fifty-five (55) books and nearly two hundred and fifty (250) articles in educational related topics. He wrote that since 1975 he and his Colleagues had tried to develop a comprehensive framework for the

analysis of productivity and test it out in a variety of classroom studies. Through determination, hard work and perseverance, by 1981 Walberg developed the theory of Educational Productivity and the applicability of his theory in education could not be over emphasized (Walberg 2003). Walberg's theory of Educational Productivity was one of the few empirically tested theories of school learning and was based on the review and integration of over 3,000 studies (DiPerna 2002).

The theory was chosen in the study because of the relationship that existed between its nature and the nine factors outlined by Walberg as shown in that framework presented. Walberg in his theory argued that there were nine factors that required optimization to increase effective, behavioral and cognitive learning and the factors fell into three groups as presented in the framework.

The theory was used to guide the research with reference to its three major groups. For instance, under behaviour and cognitive learning the theory considered the ability of the learner or prior achievement, as measured by the usual standardized tests which basically were used by the schools to determine which learner was to proceed and which learner was to retain a grade. The theory also talked about indexed by chronological age or stage of maturity of a learner. This concern was put forth due to the fact that there were age and maturity differences between the retained learner and those found in the retained class. Probably, Walberg argued that age differences were capable of influencing the performance of the retained learners due to the fact that they were more likely to be the oldest such that their friends would start teasing them or take advantage of age and maturity to perform better. The third concern on behavioral and cognitive learning was about how learners were motivated so that they develop self-confidence and be willing to persevere in the midst of challenges encountered due to retaining a grade. Here, Walberg emphasizes that those learners who are retained needed motivation for them to understand and appreciate grade retention.

Under instructional learning the theory outlined two elements which included the amount of time students were engaged in learning and the quality of instructional experience, including psychological and curricular aspects. This part considered the fact that when learners retained a grade there was time related factor which arose. Time factor meant how much extra time Teachers created to attend to the retained learners so that they could catch up and did not retain a

grade again. On the other hand, Walberg talked about the quality of instructions given to them when learning to avoid another repeat especially that the curricular aspect and the content remained the same. The suggestion was that when teaching the grade retained learners, there was need to ensure that better instructional methods were employed with a view that the previous ones did not work so well.

The theory also identified four environmental factors which were important where learning was concerned. The factors included home environment, Classroom social group, Peer group outside the school and the use of out of school time. Walberg stressed that home environment had a direct impact on Learner performance and this meant that it had a hand in grade retention. It was therefore just imperative that Parents were included in the study because it enabled the Researcher to be exposed to the home environment of the Learners and conducted interviews with the Parents. On classroom social group, it was anticipated that learners who retained a grade would find it difficult to socialize normally with their friends. It was from that point of view that Walberg probably came up with the notion of classroom social grouping. Perhaps there was need to formulate a class specifically for the grade retained learners. Anyway, this remained a Subject for further studies.

Walberg in his theory also talked about peer groupings outside classroom environment. The general view was that such Learners would wish to isolate themselves from general membership simply because of their similar characteristics. As a teacher, it was highlighted that there was need to encourage such learners to mix with their friends so that they could learn from one another. Under the same environmental factors Walberg was concerned about how grade retained Learners spent their leisure time. Maybe they spend much of it watching television at the expense of studying or doing any other activity that was not helpful in improving their academic performance. At the end of nine factors, Walberg and associate concluded that despite living in disadvantaged and risk environment, certain children over came and attained high level of achievement, motivation, and performance. In view of his statement, it would be correct to argue that even if learners face difficulties associated to grade retention such as stigmatization from friends and other challenges, they can still achieve highly provided that conducive learning environment is created for them.

## **CHAPTER TWO**

### **REVIEW OF RELATED LITERATURE**

#### **2.0 Introduction**

The following chapter reviewed the related literature to the study. Creswell (2009) wrote that literature review in the study help to determine whether or not the topic was worth to be studied, and it also provided insight into ways in which the researcher could limit the scope to the needed area of inquiry. However, it is important to state that literature that directly talked about the academic performance of the learners who have retained a grade in Zambia was very scarce but there was much on the merits and demerits of Retention Policy done in other countries. It was from such literature and others that this chapter was relating to the discussion and reviewed how others had perceived the performance of learners who retained a grade for another extra year. For better coverage of the study, the chapter was divided into two parts: those who believe that grade retention was a better move and also those who argued against it. After that the chapter revealed the gap in literature.

#### **2.1 Arguments in favour of retaining Learners**

This part of review of related literature discussed the views of those scholars who argued that Learners who retained a grade had their academic performance improved. The relevance of those views to the study was that they showed how those who had experienced grade retention viewed it. This helped the researcher to confirm with the views which were collected and also in interpretation of the findings. Below were the scholars and their views who wrote positively about the grade retention:

Researchers such as Eisenmaon and Schwille (1997) and Jere (2006) reported that grade retention as a policy was more prominent in developing countries unlike developed ones. They confirmed that huge evidence of such was seen in the research conducted in Sub-Saharan African Countries. However, that did not mean that developed countries did not implement the policy. For example, Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD) (2013) estimated that the cost to society of retaining 2.3% of the total student population in the United

States of America was higher than \$ 12 billion per year. OECD estimates justified the point that even other developed countries of this world upheld retention policy.

Furthermore, OECD (2011) provided a comparative International description on retention across countries. In the report, data for Programme for International Student Assessment (PISA) (2009) was used and showed that the learners who had retained a grade in 2009 were at an average of 13% of the total population. The other research which was done in European countries as reflected in OECD (2011) reported that the countries' variation was high, running from 0% of Students retained in Japan, Korea and Norway, to 25% in countries such as Belgium, France, Luxembourg, the Netherlands, Portugal and Spain. The major reason for revealing grade retention in those countries was to enable the reader understand that there were many countries all over the world that practiced grade retention and also how it spread to other countries.

Entwisles and Kabbani (2001) argued that earners who had missed a lot of school due to illness, emotional trauma or a move may benefit from repeating a grade. In their view, they suggested that there was always a reason that made a learner to perform poorly. They highlighted health factors, mental aspects and social disorders which were also propounded by Walberg in his theory of educational productivity. These health hazards were a recipe to missing lessons which culminated into poor academic performance. The relevance of this point to the study is that it gave the researcher a pre-assumption that learners with the stated challenges were likely to understand the importance of grade retention and were therefore willing to retain a grade.

Cannon and Limpscomb (2008) Xia and Kirby (2009) Dobkin, and Ferreira (2010) further stated that certain groups of students were more likely than others to be retained. They pointed out to such student characteristics as age, gender, socio-economic background. These researchers further observed that children with multiple risk factors were more likely to be retained than children without those risks factors although there were some variations in which combination of risks mattered most. Students with no risks or one risk factor had very low likelihood of being retained (Xia and Kirby, 2009). The issues raised in this paragraph were relevant to the study in that they equipped the Researcher with better knowledge of the kind of learners who were retained. The literature showed that there were other factors apart from a mere poor academic performance of Learners which may result into grade retention. Thus, as the Researcher went in the field to collect data, he was very particular in finding out the nature of the Learners who were

retained for another extra year by putting into consideration home background, health matter and see how those factors led to grade retention if they did so at all.

The other argument that favored grade retention stressed that grade retention was motivated by the belief that an extra year in the grade could give struggling students an opportunity to master the content that they failed to master the previous year, and consequently leave them better prepared to succeed in higher grades in the future (Jimerson 2001). Grade retention occurred in countries that required students to pass examinations to qualify for secondary or post-secondary education (Jere, 2006). Voluntary repetition that enables students to pass Examinations or learn content that was not learnt the year before was viewed by students and their families as rational decisions that led to desired out-comes (Mudenda, 2017).

There was overwhelming evidence from grant-aided schools that learners' academic performance in some grant-aided secondary schools especially of Central Province was better than some of the government schools (Phiri, 2016). The justifications were among them, retention policy. The similar findings were also brought out by Jere (2006) and Malambo (2012). All what was needed was to intensify on guidance and counseling to make learners understand why they needed not only to proceed but to pass the examination (Ndhlovu, 2015 and Mudenda 2017). since retention policy had worked well in Grant-Aided Schools, it was a good reference point to the researcher though he was not doing a comparative study but at least a clear picture was set which enabled the Researcher to consider the role of Guidance and Counselling in grade retention.

Those who favored grade retention also tended to believe that it was important for schools to maintain high standards (McCay and Elizabeth 2001). This implied that grade retention was good provided it was meant to uphold the standards of the institution. Young (2012) conducted a research on the administrators of educational institutions and reported that different views were forwarded. Those who supported grade retention gave two most common reasons and these were: prevention of future failure and maintenance of high standards. The similar finding was also brought forward by Phiri (2016) whose focus was on Grant-Aided Secondary schools. Literature of this nature helped the Researcher to verify whether or not there were standards set by the schools which prompted them to allow grade retention in government own secondary schools.

It is reasonable enough to believe that the threat of grade retention motivated students who did not apply themselves to invest more efforts in their studies (Banhart, 2009). The belief was that when learners were told that they were going to retain a grade once they failed in agreed number of subjects, they tended to study hard and avoided missing lessons with impunity. As they did so, they were preparing for the examinations adequately. Thus, casualties in schools were drastically minimized to the lowest levels. Both Jere (2006) and David (2008) agreed that one rationale advantage for grade retention was that it made the classes more homogeneous in achievement levels and thus easier to teach. Therefore, the significance of the issues raised in this paragraph is that whether or not it benefited the repeater, grade retention was supposed to improve the achievement for the majority who never needed to repeat.

In America recent research on grade retention tied to performance on tests was showing positive results (David, 2008). If positive results were obtained in United States of America as a result of retention policy, then it was correct for the grade retention advocates to advocate for it. However, despite such arguments, it was still reliable to conclude that learners passed due to fear of retaining a grade. There are other factors which could have contributed to that. The relevance of such an argument in this study was that it equipped the Researcher with information that other places which have tested grade retention using test scores have proved it working so well and Learner achievement was attributed to it. This helped the Researcher to link his findings when the test scores were used to ascertain the effectiveness of grade retention in government schools of Zambia.

Basing on age and grade retention, Cannon and Limpscomb, (2008) argued that the proponents of grade retention policy maintained that promoting children to the next grade before they mastered the requisite knowledge and skill was to set them up for failure down the road. When Cannon and Limpscomb conducted a research in California some of their findings were that some learners decided to retain a grade on their own. They further reported that evidence suggested that those students who retained the grade achieved higher rate of proficiency in the retained grade. This kind of research really was relevant to the study simply because it made the Researcher to realize that some Learners did not retain a grade simply because they had failed to pass the promotion tests but because they volunteered to do so basing on their self-evaluation and age factors. Miyako and Garcia (2014) added that an extra year to catch up might benefit

students whose low achievements were due to limited maturity or readiness. Maturity is a factor in education. On the other hand, many learners failed the examinations simply because they were still young to handle the demands of the subjects. To such learners, grade retention remained a plus (Mudenda, 2017).

It was also noted that if a teacher assured the Parents and Guardians that not even extra lessons could change a child's status for the better academically, due to grave challenges in terms of understanding the material in their current grade, retaining a grade was the best (Mudenda, 2017). It was also emphasized that there was need to appreciate the fact that some children may be developmentally immature either physically or emotionally (Brophy, 2006). Such learners might be negatively affected by the stress or trying to keep up (Walberg's theory, 1981). The issue here was that some learners could have been made to retain a grade due to teachers recommendations based on poor achievements by the learners. Thus, if that happens, making them retain a grade is the best alternative so that they became free to mingle with their age-mates which would actually enhance their performance (Mudenda, 2017).

## **2.2 Arguments against Grade Retention.**

When some researchers glorified grade retention, others painted it black and emphasize that it was a bad act. Their views guided the researcher into how others perceived grade retention contrary to the first part. The importance of this section in the study was that it balanced the literature review which was also helpful in data analysis and generalization of findings. Discussed below were some of the writers who negatively criticized grade retention.

Although Cannon and Limpscomb (2008) argued that the proponents of retention policy maintain that promoting children to the next grade before they have mastered the requisite knowledge and skills sets them up for failure down the road, Rothstein (1998) and Hacsı (2002) strongly opposed the view by stating that grade retention did nothing to address failing students' low achievement problem or helped them to catch up with their peers. Consequently, automatic promotion supplemented with intervention strategies designed to help low achievers was preferable. Research indicated short term gain and long term problems because grade repeaters eventually fell further behind (Brophy, 2006). The measures suggested by Rothstein and Hacsı helped the Researcher to establish the intervention measures put by the Teachers in order to

prevent another grade retention. It was also expected that some learners had their performance go down than the previous year. Thus, Brophy (2006) helped the Researcher to cross check.

Many writers argued that grade retention led to school dropout. Using the data from Chicago, Jacob and Lefgren (2007) revealed that students retained in 8<sup>th</sup> grade were more likely to drop out than their peers. Cannon and Limpscomb (2008) stated that grade retention did not significantly increase academic achievements. It actually negatively affected children's social and emotional development by harming self-esteem, for example, thus, raised the odds that there was drop out of school. David (2008) also reported that grade retention increased the likelihood of student drop out of school. He further noted that Students who dropped out of school were five times more likely to have been retained than those who graduated. The school dropout issue mentioned above enabled the researcher to assess whether those learners who dropped out of school did so because they were meant to retain a grade.

Jacob and Lefgren (2004) further argued that a child who was often absent from class was already at higher risk for dropping out of school. Thus, retaining a grade for another extra year to such a child increased risks of dropping out. Cannon and Limpscomb (2008) reported that learners who had behavior issues or stress related to the classroom environment typically did not benefit from staying in the same class for another year. On the other hand, OECD (2013) explained that learners who were taught the same skills in the same way without any different support in place typically didn't benefit from repeating. OECD perhaps suggested that if a learner had retained a grade, there was need to introduce them to new teaching approaches different from the ones in the previous year. If those changes were not made, then retained learners would still fail in the retained grade. The issues raised by the researchers gave an insight to the Researcher based on how retained learners related with their friends in classes and whether Teachers devised different approaches when teaching for the benefit of the retained Learners.

Xia and Kirby (2009) and Malambo (2012) agreed that retained students tended to have more disadvantaged socio-economic backgrounds, which were measured by proxy variables such as living in poverty, lower parental educational attainment and also lower measures of intellectual. They therefore discouraged that retaining such student would be advising them to drop out of school. Manacorda (2012) reported that the paper done in Uruguay showed that grade failure led to substantial drop-out and lower educational attainment both in the immediate term and also

four to five years after grade failure first occurred. The issues raise here were important in the study because the problem under discussion was involving grade retention and experiences. The writers therefore made it easy for the Researcher to establish whether or not some Learners dropped out of school due to hatred of grade retention.

Karweit (1999), Hong and Raudenbush (2005) and Jere (2006) all found that grade retainers literally repeated the same lessons and activities they experienced the previous year and teachers did not make adjustments based on the notion that their classes were now more homogeneous. Brophy (2006) noted that high levels of grade repetition led to increased class size and classroom management problem due to large age differences among learners in the same class. Brophy further denoted that other learners were not receiving an offer of enrollment due to an additional place being allocated to a repeated learner. The argument which was raised here led to the desire by the researcher to assess whether grade retention led to congestion in the lower grade and eventually reduced the chances and spaces available for new entrants into the school.

Jere (2006) and Cannon and Limpscomb (2008) recommend that to avoid repetition, early intervention was the best strategy. Teachers had a range of knowledge on how to help slow learners perform better. If repetition was tolerated, it was going to bring other negative effects on the school. School system could not hold back every student who failed since too many would pile up in the lower grade (David, 2008). Since Teacher influence had a direct effect on learner performance, the issues raised here were relevant in that they enabled the Researcher to collect the remedies put by the Teachers handling the retained learners especially that there was an increased class size and also confirmed whether or not they were able to follow them or not. This helped in establishing how true it was that some Teachers did not change the teaching techniques when teaching retained learners.

Jacob and Lars (2004) in their findings found that retaining learners for another extra year was expensive on the part of parents and the state. This was because it meant paying twice within a year. Cannon and Limpscomb (2008) also noted that an additional concern was the additional cost to the State of an extra year of schooling for retained students. Besides, grade retention delayed entrance of the students into the labour market which possessed substantial monetary cost on students over a life-cycle (Barnhart, 2009). Furthermore, Barnhart clarified that learners who were already the oldest in their grade were almost two years older than the rest of the class.

David (2008) explains that retention left an equity question to the policy makers as the cost associated with wide-spread retention was levied on all students in terms of an increase in class size and a reduction of per pupil resource.

Furthermore, West (2012) estimated the cost to society of retaining students that it was by then at 2.3% of the total student population in the United States. It was higher than \$12 Billion per year. The scenario was similar to other countries such as Belgium, Spain, the Netherlands and Portugal and 5 to 10 percent in Brazil and Germany (West, 2012). On the view of expenses incurred on retaining Learners, the Research engaged the Parents and collected their views. This helped in justifying the validity of these arguments related to cost.

Researchers such as George, (1993), Cannon and Limpscomb (2008) rendered the grade retention policy unnecessary. They argued that it lacked government commitment. In a research done in Californian schools, the use of retention policy in schools had been going on but the state did not collect information either directly or from school district-on how frequently that practice occurred or whether grade retention led to proficiency (George, 1993). However, Cannon and Limpscomb (2008) reported that even if the Californian department of education recommended against student retention on the ground that research did not support the practice, the recommendation did conflicts with current State law, enacted by Assembly Bill (AB) 1626.

The other evidence that explained lack of government intervention in this kind of a local policy was that it lacked legal backing in many instances and evidence from Californian schools showed that schools used retention especially in elementary grades, but the State did not collect information either directly or from school districts on how frequent the practice occurred or whether grade retention led to academic improvement (George, 1991 and Cannon and Limpscomb, 2008). In Zambia, retention policy was not very common and it was also not known whether the Government through the Ministry of General Education collected data in schools concerning the grade retention. These issues helped in establishing the government position in the implementation of grade retention. This was addressed through interacting with Teachers.

### **2.3 The gap**

The chapter looked at both sides of how different Writers perceived grade retention. Evidence from the review of related literature showed that the views against the grade retention were more than those that supported it. However, the strongest point that came out from them was that retention led to school dropout. The views that supported the grade retention were limited but brought out various reasons. However, the similar gap like the one noted by Cannon and Limpscomb (2008) who observed that literature review on grade retention was large but despite that, it did not provide a clear view of how effective grade retention was. Yet grade retention continued across the countries, indicating that some Educators and Parents felt that it had merits for certain students.

Despite all what was discussed under literature review, the gap still remained that there was no emphasis on how effective grade retention was in terms of addressing performance of learners. The justification was seen from continued retaining of learners whose performance was poor. In Zambia, failure especially in Mathematics, Science and English Language had been high such that it was still not clear whether the academic performance improved or not after learners retained a grade. The gap showed that there were issues pertaining to grade retention which were not reflected in the available literature.

The other gap especially in the Zambian context was that grade retention had been prominent in Grant-Aided schools and there was no much emphasis on government owned schools yet the vice was happening on the ground. Again, the discussed literature review did not give much information on what really happened to the scores of the learners who retained a grade. Much of the arguments presented were based on perception. Meaning, there was no provision for enough evidence on the academic performance of the grade retained learners which would be used as evidence to base on when justifying the validity and reliability of grade retention. Literature review did not provide adequate findings. The other gap noted was that the Zambian literature on this topic was biased towards Grant-Aided Secondary schools leaving a number of concerns on what really happened to those government schools that allowed grade retention.

## The summary of Literature Review

The literature review discussed above was summarized in the table form as presented below:

Themes	Key issues	The Gap
<b>Literature in Favor or Grade retention</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Grade retention the best alternative to helping the academically struggling Learner to catch up.</li> <li>-Promoting a child to the next grade before they mastered the requisite knowledge &amp; skill sets them up for failure down the road.</li> <li>-Teachers and Learners perceived grade retention to be working well and it was welcome.</li> <li>-grade retention improved study skills</li> <li>-Grade retention improved attendance</li> <li>-Learning same things over again promotes efficiency</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>-Despite those given advantages, literature that supported grade retention dwelt much on perceptions with little attention on effectiveness leaving the gap of how effective was grade retention basing on evidence in form of grade scores in subject areas.</li> </ul>
<b>Literature Against Grade Retention</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>-Retaining Learners in the same grade for another extra year was expensive on the part of Parents and the Government.</li> <li>-Grade retention delays learners from joining the industrial world</li> <li>-Children who had failed were already at high risk of dropping out of school. Retaining them increased the risks.</li> <li>-High levels of grade retention lead to increased class size and classroom management problem.</li> <li>-Learners who were taught the same skills in the same way without any support did not improve but instead lost self-esteem and eventually their performance became worse.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>-The literature review did not show how challenges such as class size and materials were handled in a new retained class.</li> <li>-Both literatures in support and against grade retention in government owned secondary schools in Zambia were very scarcely and there was basically no policy that strongly support or opposed grade retention.</li> </ul>

## **CHAPTER THREE:**

### **RESEARCH METHODOLOGY**

#### **3.0 Overview**

This chapter outlined the flow of the methodology used by the researcher. It described the research design, population, population sample, research instruments and how the researcher wished to administer them, data collection plan and also the data analysis plan. The chapter further described the research validity and reliability/trustworthiness and also the Research ethical considerations.

#### **3.1 Research design**

Research design was defined by Creswell (2009) as, “plans and the procedures for research that span the decisions from broad assumptions to detailed methods of data collection and analysis.” There are different designs a researcher can use in a study but the choice of the design is highly dependent on the nature of the study to be conducted. In this study the researcher used a mixed method research design which comprised of both qualitative and quantitative designs. Creswell (2009) further described mixed method research design as a design that developed in social and human sciences which employed the combination of quantitative and qualitative approaches.

Under qualitative procedure, Phenomenological research Design was used. Creswell (2009) described Phenomenological research design as a strategy of inquiry in which the researcher identifies the essence of human experiences about a phenomenon. In this regard, the researcher addressed objective 1, 2 and 4 using this design. For quantitative approach, the researcher used correlation design. Cohen, Manion and Morrison (2007) describe Correlation design as the quantitative design that seeks to establish the relationship between the given variables. In this study, before grade retention and after grade retention were the variables which were being correlated in order to establish how they impacted learner performance.

To collect and analyze the data for both qualitative and quantitative, the study adopted concurrent embedded strategy. Creswell (2009) observed that under concurrent embedded strategy, quantitative and qualitative data are collected simultaneously and nested into one study.

This method was chosen because it enabled the researcher to collect the two types of data simultaneously, during a single data collection phase (Creswell, 2009).

The justification for adopting the approaches mentioned was because the problem which was being addressed was quite complex and the use of either quantitative or qualitative only was inadequate to address its complexity. With the use of these approaches and designs, it was expected that it would help in understanding a research problem deeper and more complete unlike relying on one method (Creswell, 2009).

### **3.2 Population**

Mcmillan (1996:3) defined the term population as “a group of elements or cases, whether individuals, objects, or events, that conformed to specific criteria and to which we intended to generate the results of the research.” Group was also referred to as target population. The target group for the study comprised of learners who had retained a grade in Government Secondary Schools only at any of the grades from eight to twelve. Apart from such learners and schools, the researcher also targeted the Guidance Teachers for results analysis, Teachers of Mathematics, Science and English Languages and also the parents/ guardians of the retained learners.

The types of learners mentioned were chosen because they were the ones who were involved in the issue of grade retention and their feelings towards the research added more value. A teacher being the mentors of such learners their information was also helpful because it was based on their experience of their learners and how they performed when retained for another extra year. The guidance teachers were the custodian of results and their inclusion in the study enabled the researcher to easily have access to the results which in turn were used to analysis results. Parents being the main stakeholders, their input helped as well because the researcher was exposed to home background of retained learners. Consequently, he was exposed to the home background and was also able to establish how parents responded to the retention of their children.

### **3.3 Population sample**

Mcmillan (1996) defined Population sample as, “a group of elements, or a single element from which data are obtained.” Here, Macmillan was referring to individuals involved in research whereas by population he meant the institutions targeted by the Researcher. The population

sample comprised of (39) learners who had retained a grade. This was realized from at least ten (10) respondents from each of the three (3) sampled Government Secondary Schools and nine (9) from the fourth school. Seven (7) teachers including Guidance teachers were sampled from each School which made up the total of twenty-eight (28) teachers. Parents were thirty (30) which made the whole total population sample amounting to (97) respondents. The justification for choosing a small sample of the learners per School was that it was anticipated that many of them refuse to retain a grade and opt to go on transfer. Seven (7) teachers were picked with a view that six (6) taught the learners in the chosen subjects and a seventh one was a Guidance and Counseling Teacher. Thus, the belief was that twenty-eight of them were enough to give the clear picture of retained Learners in their schools. (30) Parents were enough to give the picture about how they perceived grade retention in government schools.

### **3.4 Sampling techniques**

Kasonde (2013) noted that sample technique is a research plan that explains how the Respondents for the study are to be selected from the population. The Researcher used purposive sampling procedure. To be specific, the researcher picked on critical case and Snowball sampling techniques both falling under Purposive Sampling procedure.

#### *3.4.1 Purposive sampling procedure*

Cohen, Manion and Morrison (2007:114) noted that as its name suggested, the sample in a research was chosen for a specific purpose. They further explained that purposive sampling was used in order to access knowledgeable people i.e. those who had in-depth knowledge about particular issues or by virtue of their professional or access. In this study, retained learners, their Parents/Guardians and selected Teachers were purposefully sampled because they were the ones who had the needed data necessary for the study.

#### *3.4.2 Critical case sampling*

Critical case sampling technique was adopted because the study was addressing learners who possessed similar characteristics which were critical to their learning endeavors and these were learners who had retained a grade only and also their Parents. Cohen, Manion and Morrison (2007:176) described critical case sampling as people who displayed the issue or set of

characteristics in their entirety or in a way that was highly significant for their behavior. This technique was chosen with a view that retained learners and their parents exhibited similar characteristics which grouped them in the same category which was critical in educational attainment.

### *3.4.3. Snowball sampling*

Cohen, Manion and Morrison (2007:116) indicated that in snowball sampling researchers identified a small number of individuals who have the characteristics of their interest. Those people are then used as informants to identify or put the researcher in touch with other respondents bearing the similar characteristics, hence the term snowball sampling. Furthermore, Cohen et al (2007) justified that the method was for sampling a population where access is difficult. In this study, Snowball sampling was used because it was anticipated that some of the respondents especially learners and parents would be hard to find and through the use of a few who were accessed, it was easy for the researcher to locate others because their friends helped in locating them.

## **3.5 Data collection techniques**

Ghosh (1992) defined data collection techniques as a systematic way of drawing information about objects of the target population who are presented by a sample. The researcher used both qualitative and quantitative methods to collect the required data using questionnaires, interview guide and score sheets.

### *3.5.1 Questionnaires survey.*

A questionnaire is one of the tools frequently used in research when collecting quantitative data. In this study, questionnaires were used to obtain quantitative data from the learners and teachers especially when addressing objective number three. Cohen et al (2007: 317) defined questionnaire as a widely used and useful instrument for collecting survey information, providing structured, often numerical data, being able to be administered without the preference of the Researcher. In this study, open ended questionnaires were used to collect data from both learners and teachers but bearing different questions.

### *3.5.1.1 Open ended questionnaire.*

Respondents (teachers and learners) were required to tick against their answers and provide reasons in the spaces provided. It was this type of a questionnaire which was referred to as open ended questionnaire. Cohen et al (2007: 317) stated that the open ended question was a very attractive device for a smaller scale research or for those sections of a questionnaire that invite an honest, personal comment from respondents in addition to ticking numbers and boxes. For this study, the questionnaire allowed the respondents to give their views which were later used by the researcher to analyze quantitative data and to a lesser extent qualitative data. For further information, make reference to Appendix A, questionnaire for the Teachers and Appendix B for the Learners.

### *3.5.2 Interview guide.*

An interview guide was used by the Researcher when collecting primary qualitative data direct from the mouth of the respondents. Cohen, Manion and Morrison (2007) indicated that Interview methods of gathering survey data are useful in that the presence of the interviewer helps to clarify queries from the respondents and stimulates the respondent to give full answers to on-the-spot supervisor rather than an anonymous researcher known through the introductory letter. The researcher used an Interview guide to obtain data from Parents on their perceptions about grade retention and how it affects the performance of their children. For further information, make reference to appendix C.

### *3.5.3 Mark schemes/ secondary data.*

Mark schemes helped the researcher to obtain the secondary data on how learners who had retained a grade performed. The scores were obtained using a score sheet and analyzed quantitatively. Each learner included in the sample had at least twelve (12) tests to be sampled. This was realized from Six (6) assessments from the previous year and another six (6) assessments from the current year but in the same grade. The justification for picking a larger number of assessments is that the Researcher put into consideration that there are many factors which can influence learner performance and few assessments would not give a reliable conclusion based on scores obtained before and after grade retention. The tests scores were then computed in a statistical package embedded in Excel to find the means for both variables which

were later picked to represent all the assessments and were presented as ‘before’ grade retention and ‘after’ grade retention respectively. For further information, refer to Appendix D.

### **3.6 Administration of tools and data collection.**

The first move in the administration of research tools was the distribution of questionnaires to the Teachers who were asked to answer the questions in four days’ time. After that, the Researcher went ahead to asking for permission from the relevant authority to administer the questionnaires to the learners. This activity was done in five (5) days’ time because of the number of schools which were involved. It was practically difficult to administer and collect the questionnaires from Learners in all the schools at once. The third step was collection of results using the score sheets from the Guidance and Counseling teachers. The activity took four (4) days to finish. Finally, the Researcher conducted interviews with the Parents/Guardians of the sampled Learners. This order helped the Researcher not to mix up the data because it would have been a serious challenge during the data analysis stage.

### **3.7 Data analysis**

Thomas and Nelson (2001) defined data analysis as a process of making sense out of the collected data. In this study, data was analyzed both qualitatively and quantitatively. Qualitative data was analyzed thematically with accompaniment of Bar charts and Pie charts. Creswell (2009) stated that when using thematic approach, the researcher need to collect qualitative data, analyze it for themes or perspective, and reports 4-5 themes. This means that as the researcher was analyzing the data, it was grouped into themes based on the respondents’ perceptions. Creswell further noted that themes are the ones that appeared as major findings in qualitative studies and are often used to create headings in the findings and they display multiple perspectives from individuals and need to be supported by diverse quotations and specific evidence. In that case, themes were formed basing on the views of the Parents, learners and Teachers pertaining to grade retention in government owned secondary schools. To show percentage variations, Bar and Pie charts were used. Bar and Pie charts were useful in presenting categorical and discrete data such as, highest and lowest (Cohen et al 2007). The bar charts showed the percentage variations in terms of responses.

Quantitative data which was obtained through the use of questionnaires and mark schemes was analyzed quantitatively using Statistical Package of Social Sciences (SPSS) and Statistical Package embedded in Excel. The values of scores for 'before' and 'after' grade retention were computed in SPSS to produce Statistical description and Correlation. The first column represented the 'before' values and the second column represented the 'after' values. When the variables were entered into SPSS, various statistical descriptions were produced. This was followed by Correlation Coefficient and the Significance test results.

To give a visual of whether there was correlation or not, Excel was used to plot scatter plots which showed the line of regression. Cohen Manion and Morrison (2007) stated that Scatter plot was useful for showing the relationship between two variables or several sets of two or more variables on the same chart. They enabled researchers to assess graphically the degree of relationship of the characteristics being measured. These methods were chosen because they helped the researcher to clarify issues more straight forward than extended prose statements (Cohen et al, 2007).

### **3.8 Validity of Instruments**

According to Mugenda and Mugenda (1999) validity is viewed as accuracy and the meaningfulness of inferences which are based on research results. It is seen as a degree to which results obtained from one analysis of data represent the phenomena under study. Cohen, Manion and Morrison (2007) further noted that if the test scores did not represent the intended purpose then the test was meaningless. In this study, validity was achieved by the use of a number of research instruments such as questionnaires, Interview guides and Score sheet which were used to obtain results which were used in results analysis to find correlation. Validity was established through pre-testing the instruments where instruments were tried to assess whether the results were accurate and relevant to the study.

### **Reliability/ Trustworthiness**

Cohen et al (2007) described reliability as the move intended to get similar data from similar respondents over time. Cohen et al further clarified that even if validity and reliability could be used in qualitative and quantitative, the meanings differed. They reported that in quantitative reliability was essentially a synonym for dependability, consistency and replicable over time,

over instruments and over groups of respondents. It was concerned with precision and accuracy while qualitatively preferred to replace 'reliability' with terms such as 'credibility', 'neutrality', 'conformability', 'dependability', 'consistency', 'applicability', 'trustworthiness', etc.

In this study reliability was achieved by cross-checking of the research instruments in order to ensure that mistakes were corrected well in advance. Also different data sources were triangulated by examining evidences from the sources and using it to build a coherent justification for themes (Cohen et al). The other way the Researcher ensured reliability of the instrument was by member checking in order to determine the accuracy of the findings (Creswell, 2014). Themes generated from qualitative data were subjected to expert review for checking whether the themes were recognizable.

### **3.9 Ethical consideration**

Cavan (1977) defined ethical consideration as a matter of principled sensitivity to the rights of others, and that while truth is good, respect for human dignity is better. In other ways, ethical considerations are simply dos and don'ts in research. Cohen et al (2007) stated that whatever the specific nature of their work, social researchers must take into account the effects of the research on participants and act in such a way as to preserve their dignity as human beings. Such was ethical behaviour. In respect to this study, research ethics were considered. Among them were those that were outlined by Robson (1993) and Morrel and Carroll (2010) and they were as follows:

1. Introductory letter from University ethics committee was obtained.
2. Permission from relevant authority to conduct research in schools was obtained.
3. Respondents were not involved in the study without their knowledge or consent.
4. There was no withholding of information about the true nature of the research.
5. No hidden camera or recordings were used in obtaining data.
6. Clear instructions to the respondents were given.
7. No bribe was given to compel respondents to answer questions.
8. The Researcher did not expose the participants to physical or mental stress.
9. The privacy of the respondents was not invaded.
10. There was no cooking of data when reporting the findings.

### **3.10 Summary of chapter three**

Chapter three looked at the research methodology and has discussed the methods used, how the population was arrived at, the sampling techniques, and data collection techniques, administration of tools and how the collected data was analyzed. Further, the chapter also indicated how reliable and trustworthiness the study was and finally pointed at the ethics which were considered in the research. The chapter which followed was chapter four which presented the research findings.

## CHAPTER FOUR

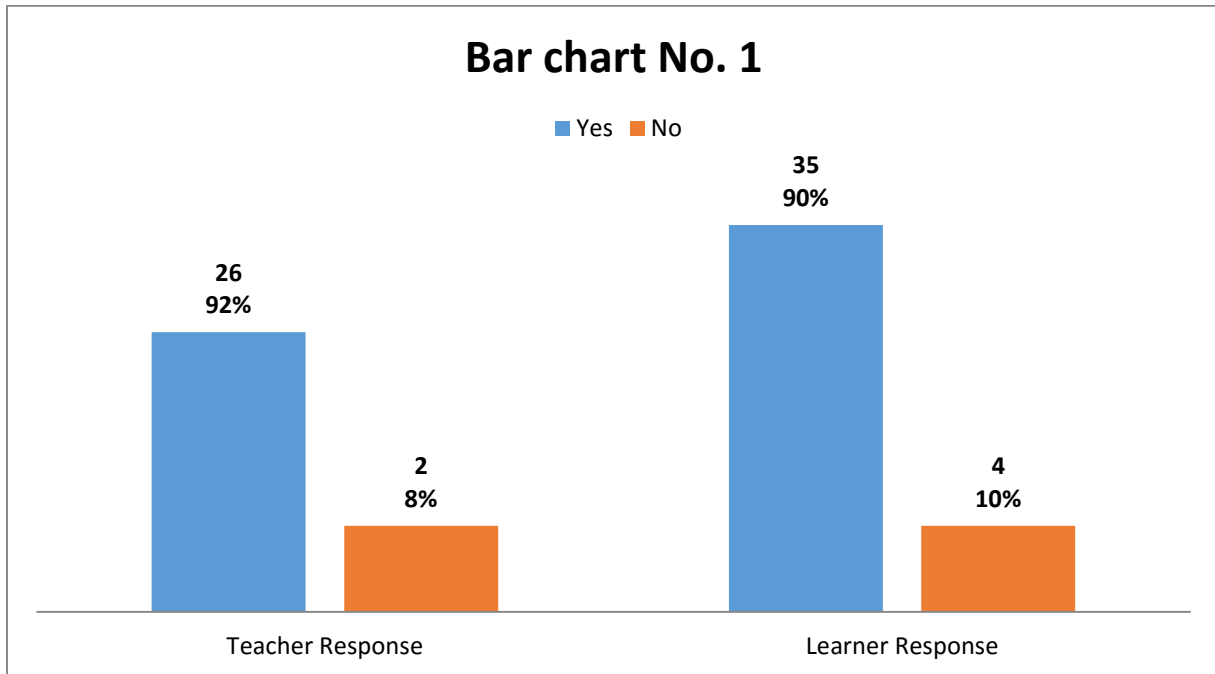
### PRESENTATION OF RESEARCH FINDINGS

#### 4.0 Introduction

The previous chapter gave justification of the research methodology which was employed in the study. However, this chapter presents the findings of this study. The findings are presented according to the objectives. The findings from teachers are presented alongside those from Learners and Parents. Though the actual words said by the respondents have been quoted exactly in the description, other words have been paraphrased.

#### 4.1 Measures to enhance grade retention in government secondary schools

The research objective intended to identify the measures the government secondary schools had put in place in order to enhance grade retention. To achieve this objective, the research question was: *What measures did the government schools put in place so as to enhance grade retention?* To discuss this objective, the responses were subjected to the bar chart below and later on four themes emerged.



The findings showed that both teachers and learners admitted that their schools had set up measures to help the retained learners to improve. Out of 28 teachers, 26 of them making 92% responded in affirmative. Only 2 making 8% felt that their schools did not set up measures. Almost the similar scenario was observed from the learners. 35 (90%) out of 39 agreed that their schools had devised measures to enhance grade retention. 5 (10%) of them did not accept. When the total respondent of both teachers and learners was combined, it went up to 67 and those who felt the schools had set measures to enhance grade retention were altogether 62 giving 93% whereas, those who reported that they did not see any measures put in place were 5 giving 7%. The general finding was that government owned schools of Mpulungu district had put in place measures to enhance grade retention. In justifying the measures put in place, the following four themes emerged.

#### *4.1.1 Learners to pass at least 40% and above in any five subjects.*

Both teachers and learners confirmed that one of the measures the schools had put in place to enhance grade retention was to set a number of subjects which needed to be passed and the agreed subjects were any five and at least 40% pass and above. 38 (97%) out of 39 learners answered in affirmative while 1 (3%) said nothing. 26 (93%) of all the teachers sampled agreed that the above measure was set by their schools while 2 (7%) said that there was no measure put at their schools. This meant that all those learners who failed to pass in five subjects or more were not allowed to proceed to the next grade. Teacher 1 narrated that *it was agreed with Parents during Parent Teacher Committee (PTC) that learners who failed to score 40% and above in five subjects were to be retained in the current grade for another extra year.*

#### *4.1.2 Homework policy*

The other theme which emerged was homework policy. Out of 67 respondents (both learners and teachers) 63 (94%) cited home-work policy as one of the measures their schools had put in place to help retained learners improve. Learner 10 noted that *home works were to be given every day to keep learners busy with studies in order to keep retained learners busy outside classroom environment.* On the other hand, Teachers also mentioned homework policy and stated that it was agreed that home works were given to the Learners so that they remained committed with academic work.

#### 4.1.3 Remedial work and Holiday assign

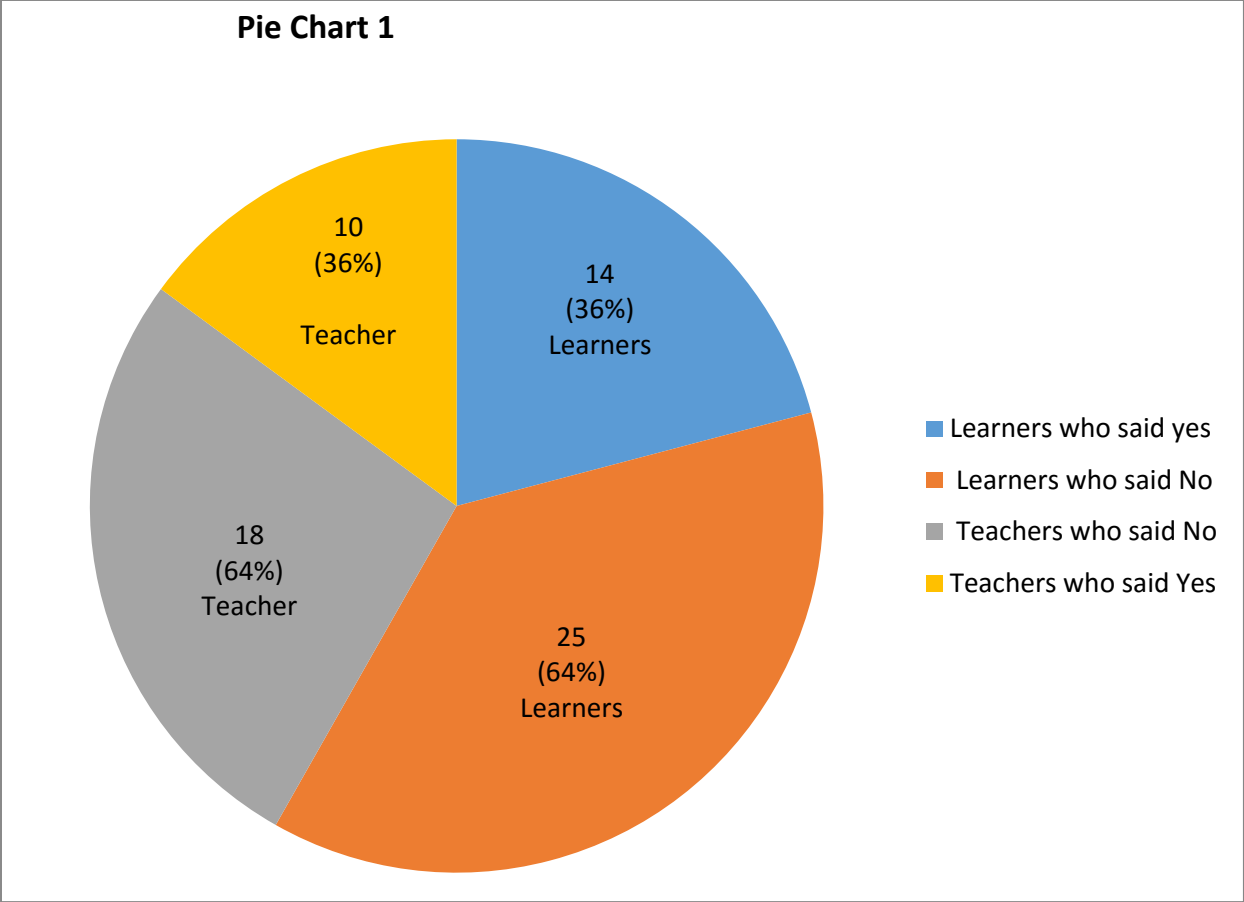
This was another theme which emerged. All the learners, 39 (100%) indicated remedial work as a measure taken by their schools. One among those who gave remedial work and holiday assignment as measures narrated, *“It was agreed that remedial work and holiday assignments will help the retained learners remain in contact with their school work. Those who stay near libraries will be forced to go and research while those who have no access to libraries will ask their friends and any other person deemed helpful. By so doing, we expect good performance.* Equally, the measure came out so strongly among the teachers. Common statement was, *learners are given remedial work during and after schooldays.* This was realised from 27 (96%) respondents out of 28. 2 (4%) did not comment.

#### 4.1.4 Quizzes in various subject areas.

Administration of quizzes in various subject areas was the fourth theme under objective number one. 26 (93%) out of 28 mentioned the above theme while the other two remained mute. Teacher 6 at school 2 for example noted, *quizzes were suggested so that various examination questions from the previous examination papers were compiled and answers given to retained learners in form of Quizzes.* Out of 39 learners, 30 (77%) mentioned the above theme as a measure to enhance grade retention.

#### **4.2 Whether the measures set by the schools were followed or not.**

This was objective number two and sought to address the concern whether the measures mentioned in objective one were followed or not the researcher asked the teachers and learners to state whether the measures set were followed or not. To address this part, the research question was: *Does your school follow the measures set in order to enhance grade retention or not?* In answering this question, responses were presented in a pie chart number 1 and later own two themes emerged and are presented on the next page.



The findings concerning whether or not the schools followed the proposed measures to enhance grade retention indicated that 14 (36%) out of 39 learners agreed that their teachers followed the measures set. 25 (64%) of them reported that their teachers did not follow the proposed measures. When teachers were asked the similar question, 10 (36%) out of 28 respondents agreed while 18 (64%) of them refused. This meant that both teachers and learners who said that the measures were not followed were 24 out of 67 which gave 36% and 43 (64%) of them did not agree that the measures set were followed.

*4.2.1 The administration was biased in implementation of measures.*

8 (57%) out of 14 learner who said the measures were not followed stated that *some learners especially those who came from well to do families and had parents who were known to the administration and friends to some teachers were allowed to proceed even if they failed to pass in five subjects.*

#### 4.2.2 Lack of commitment on the part of teachers

Out of 25 of those, 24 (96%) gave the above them as an excuse. For example, one of the teachers had this to say: *There was no commitment among teachers and there was also no enough time to address the measures especially that even the administration did not put stringent measures to compel Teachers to observe the measures set.*

In summary, it has been established that biasness from administration and lack of commitment by teachers hindered the implementation of measures that were put in place.

#### **4.2.0 Relationship between grade retention and academic performance in Mathematics, Science and English Language.**

This research objective was to ascertain the correlation in learner performance between scores for before and after grade retention in Mathematics, Natural Science and English Language. To achieve this objective, the research question was: *What relationship existed between grade retention and academic performance in Mathematics, Natural science and English Language?* In addressing this question, scores of learners in mathematics, science and English were collected per school and presented in the table. For instance, mathematics school 1, mathematics school 2, mathematics school 3 and mathematics school 4. Similar representation was made for English and science. Using SPSS, the scores for 'Before' and 'After' grade retention were entered on the excel spread sheet. The researcher thereafter went to data analysis which brought in options and picked on descriptive analysis where more options were again presented. The areas of interest were selected and clicked **ok** which finally brought a table with the statistical descriptions. After that, correlation coefficient and significance were also calculated using SPSS. In addressing the causal factors of the results, themes emerged per subject and were discussed.

#### 4.2.1 Mathematics School 1

**Table 1**

LEARNER	SCORES BEFORE RETAINING GRADE (OUT OF 100)	SCORES AFTER RETAINING GRADE (OUT OF 100)
1	32	60
2	27	67
3	16	43
4	9	13
5	18	02
6	40	41
7	44	48
8	40	70
9	26	40
10	12	40

The data above was entered in SPSS as independent (Before) and dependent (After) variables.

**Table 2: Descriptive statistics school 1**

	N	Range	Minimum	Maximum	Mean	Std. Deviation
BEFORE	10	35.0	9.0	44.0	26.400	12.4740
AFTER	10	68.0	2.0	70.0	42.400	21.6497
Valid N (list wise)	10					

*N*- Represented number of values (total number of Learners)

*Range*-The deference between the highest and the lowest values

*Maximum*- The highest value

*Mean*- The average

*Standard deviation*- Measures of the spread of values

To determine whether there was positive, negative or no correlation between the variable, Pearson correlation function within SPSS was used and the results were as shown below:

**Table 3: Correlation coefficient for mathematics school 1.**

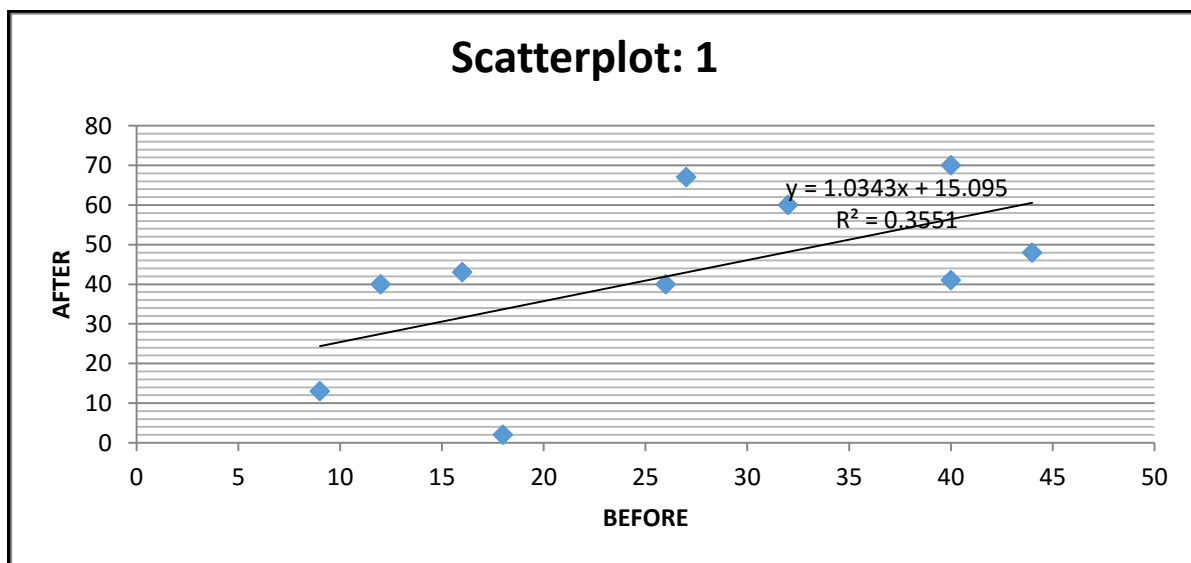
		BEFORE	AFTER
BEFORE	Pearson Correlation	1	.596
	Sig. (2-tailed)		.069
	N	10	10
AFTER	Pearson Correlation	.596	1
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.069	
	N	10	10

*Pearson correlation*- showed the Correlation coefficient using Pearson statistical analysis.

*Sig. (2-tailed)*- Significance testing (to show whether the difference between the values was significant in justifying correlation).

The major interest was to find out whether there was correlation or not. Pearson correlation indicated that there was positive correlation of 0.596 (0.6) between the variables at this school. For visual interpretation, Excel function was used to come up with a scatter plot whose results were as presented on the next page:

**Mathematics school 1**



The scatter plot indicated that there was a positive correlation with the line of regression being  $y = 1.0343x + 15.095$  where  $y$  represents the scores after retaining the grade and  $x$  the scores before retaining the grade. The value of  $R^2$  (0.3551) was the square of the correlation coefficient. It was also found that the correlation coefficient was 0.5959026766.

#### 4.2.2 Mathematics School 2

To find correlation coefficient between the scores for ‘before’ and ‘after’ grade retention for Learners at school 2, the similar procedure like the one used at school 1 was followed.

### Mathematics

**Table 4**

LEARNERS	BEFORE	AFTER
1	12	20
2	25	60
3	16	60
4	52	60
5	34	70
6	36	50
7	50	40
8	26	20
9	38	60
10	45	50

**Table 5: Descriptive Statistics School 2**

	N	Range	Minimum	Maximum	Mean	Std. Deviation
BEFORE	10	40.0	12.0	52.0	33.400	13.6235
AFTER	10	50.0	20.0	70.0	49.000	17.2884
Valid N (list wise)	10					

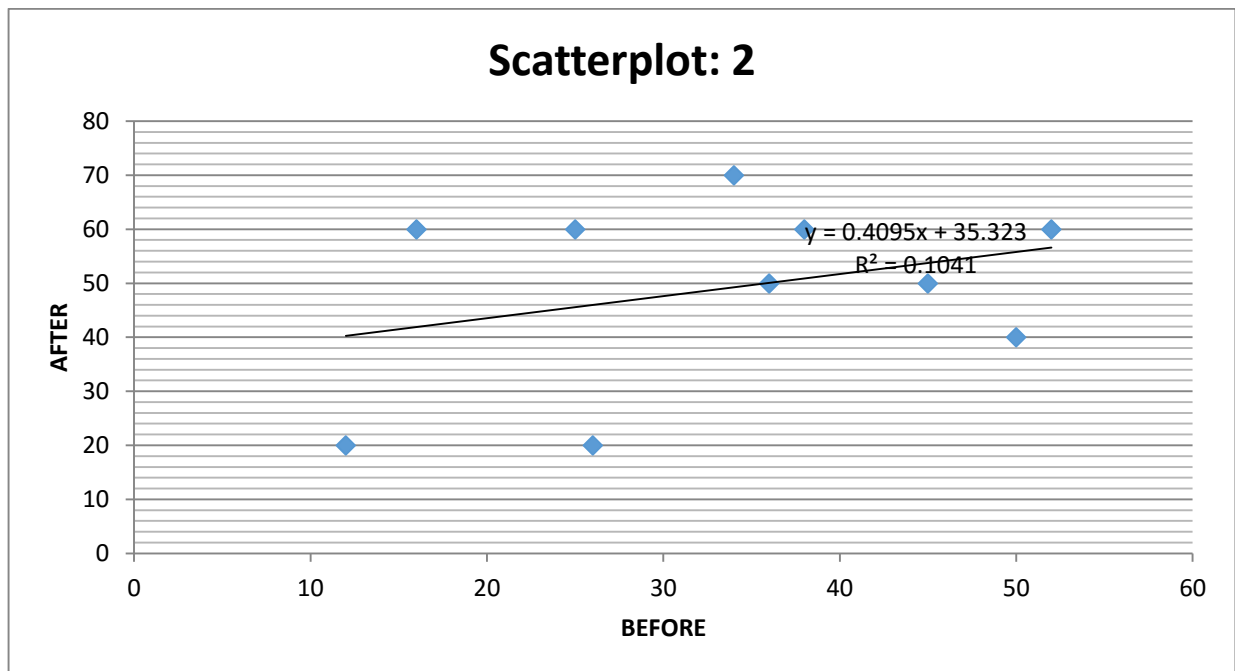
**Table 6: Correlation Coefficient school 2**

		BEFORE	AFTER
BEFORE	Pearson Correlation	1	.323
	Sig. (2-tailed)		.363
	N	10	10
AFTER	Pearson Correlation	.323	1
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.363	
	N	10	10

Pearson correlation showed that there was positive correlation of 0.323 between the two variables in Mathematics at school 2.

When the data was subjected to statistical analysis using the statistical package embedded in Microsoft Excel to produce the scatter plot, the results were as shown below:

**Mathematics school 2**



The scatter graph indicated that there was a positive correlation with the line of regression being  $y = 0.4095x + 35.323$  where  $y$  represents the scores after retaining the grade and  $x$  the scores before retaining the grade. The value of  $R^2$  (0.041) was the square of the correlation coefficient. It was also found that the correlation coefficient was 0.322678271.

#### 4.2.3 Mathematics school 3

**Table 7**

LEARNERS	BEFORE	AFTER
1	35	60
2	20	17
3	18	35
4	35	27
5	25	17
6	35	62
7	34	52
8	30	72
9	45	40

**Table 8: Descriptive Statistics School 3**

	N	Range	Minimum	Maximum	Mean	Std. Deviation
BEFORE	9	27.0	18.0	45.0	30.778	8.5114
AFTER	9	55.0	17.0	72.0	42.444	20.1563
Valid N (list wise)	9					

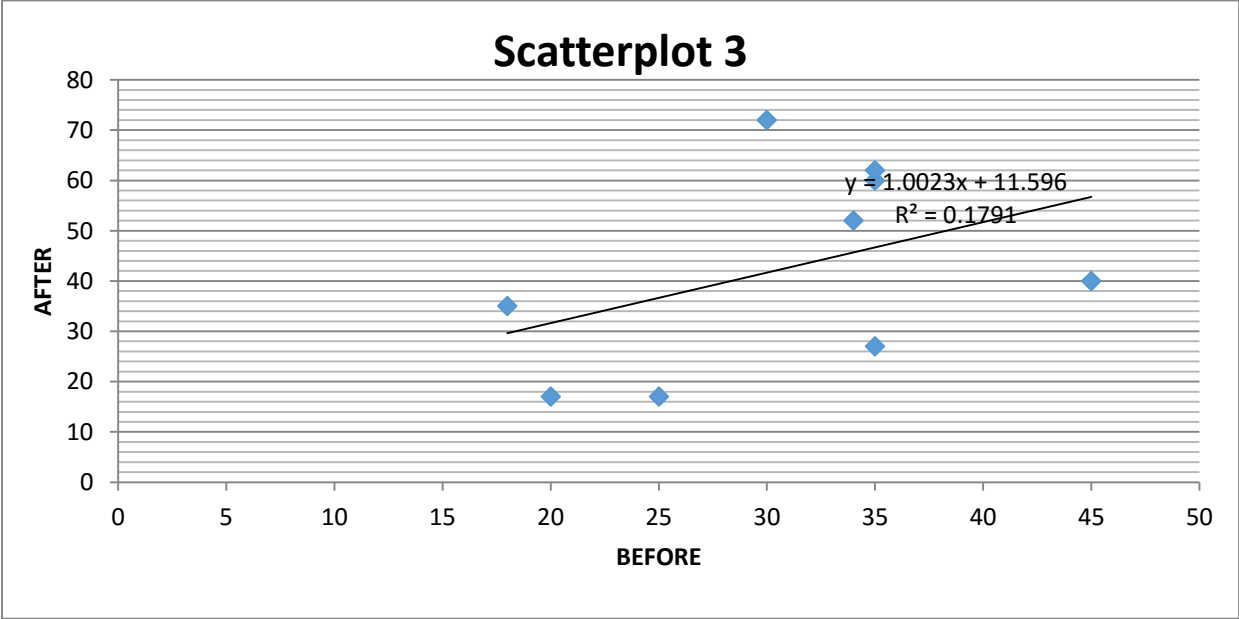
**Table 9: Correlations Coefficient school 3**

	BEFORE	AFTER
Pearson Correlation	1	.423
BEFORE Sig. (2-tailed)		.256
N	9	9
Pearson Correlation	.423	1
AFTER Sig. (2-tailed)	.256	
N	9	9

Pearson correlation indicated that there was positive correlation between the variables in Mathematics at school 3.

The data in the table was subjected to statistical analysis using the statistical package embedded in Microsoft Excel to produce the scatter graph below.

**Mathematics School 3**



The scatter graph also indicated that there was a positive correlation with the line of regression being  $y = 1.0023x + 11.596$  where  $y$  represents the scores after retaining the grade and  $x$  represented the scores before retaining the grade. The value of  $R^2$  (0.1791) was the square of the correlation coefficient. It was also found that the correlation coefficient was 0.423242241.

#### 4.2.4 Mathematics school 4

**Table 10**

LEARNERS	BEFORE	AFTER
1	40	39
2	42	50
3	37	29
4	47	50
5	50	48
6	36	30
7	32	64
8	43	56
9	27	18
10	26	20

**Table 11: Descriptive Statistics School 4**

	N	Range	Minimum	Maximum	Mean	Std. Deviation
BEFORE	10	24.0	26.0	50.0	38.000	8.0000
AFTER	10	46.0	18.0	64.0	40.400	15.6361
Valid N (list wise)	10					

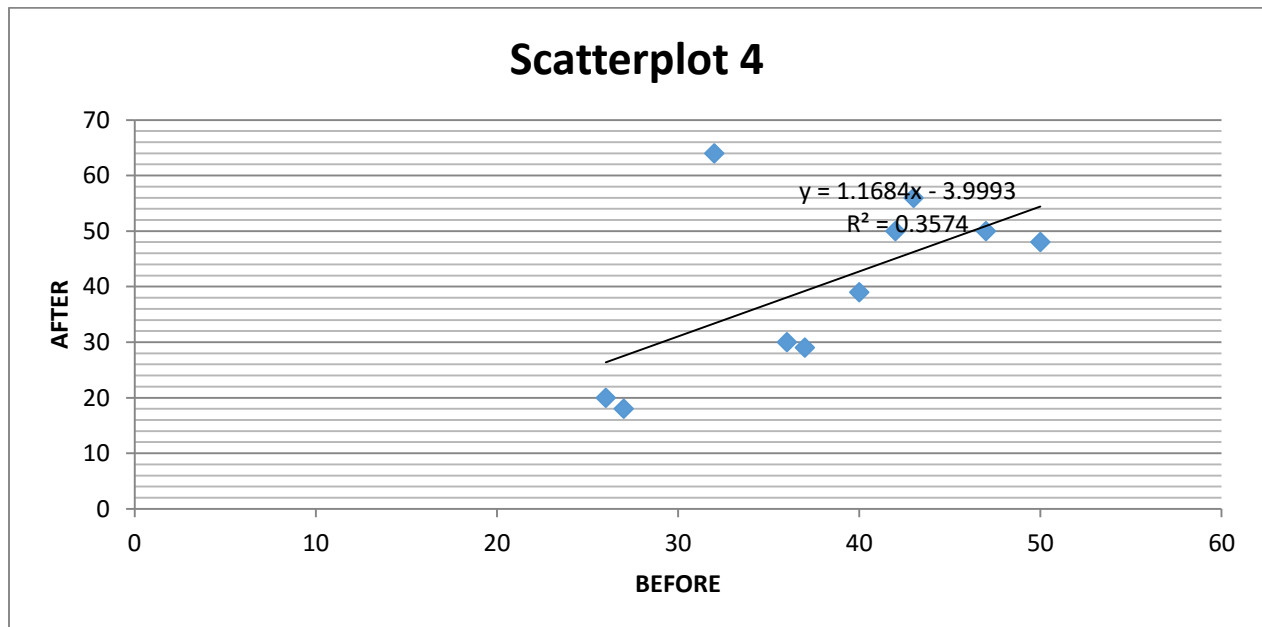
**Table 12: Correlation Coefficient School 4**

		BEFORE	AFTER
BEFORE	Pearson Correlation	1	.598
	Sig. (2-tailed)		.068
	N	10	10
AFTER	Pearson Correlation	.598	1
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.068	
	N	10	10

Mathematics school 4 also recorded a positive correlation of **0.598** between the variables being tested.

The statistical package embedded in Microsoft Excel produced the following scatter plot:

**Mathematics School 4**



The regression line on the scatter plot indicated that there was a positive correlation with the line of best-fit being  $y = 1.1684x + 3.9993$  where y represents the scores after retaining the grade and

x represented the scores before retaining the grade. The value of  $R^2$  (0.3574) was the square of the correlation coefficient. It was also found that the correlation coefficient was 0.597795999.

The general findings in mathematics indicated that in all the 4 schools sampled grade retention worked well in improving learner academic performance. There was no school among all which recorded (-1) or that showed that there was no correlation between independent and dependent variables.

To ascertain the factors that helped the school record a positive correlation, the researcher asked the Teachers and Learners to comment. The responses were presented below

#### *4.2.4.1 The mastery of the same concepts.*

Both teachers and learners attributed positive relationship between ‘before’ and ‘after’ grade retention to learning the same concepts again. Out of 39 teachers, 36 (92%) gave the same response. For example, one teacher said that *learners doing the same things again and again enabled them to master the concepts*. On the other hand, 33 (85%) of the learners also indicated the same response. One learner said *they were learning the concepts for the second time and thus found it easy to master them*.

#### *4.2.4.2 Improved study skills.*

The other theme that emerged from improved performance in Mathematics was that Learners developed good study habits. Learner 4 at school 2 stated that *grade retention helped her in studying hard to avoid embarrassments associated with repeating a grade for the second time*. Also Teachers confirmed that retained Learners became more committed. *Grade retention made retained Learners study hard than ever due to fear of failure*.

### **4.2.5 Natural Science.**

The same approach which was used to establish the correlation for mathematics was also used under natural Science. Just like in mathematics, the scores were also presented in the table. Scores for ‘before’ grade retention represented the independent variable while the scores for ‘after’ grade retention represented the dependent variable. The next step was entering them in SPSS software where descriptive statistics gave the figures shown in table 14 and eventually

correlation coefficient and significance in table 15. For visual interpretation, Excel was also used per school to plot a scatter graph which showed the spread of scores, equations and the line of regression. The pattern started from school 1,2,3 up to school 4.

#### 4.2.6 Science School 1

**Table 13**

LEARNER	BEFORE	AFTER
1	35	88
2	24	74
3	25	76
4	29	50
5	49	50
6	48	40
7	44	49
8	40	78
9	22	54
10	35	53

**Table 14: Descriptive Statistics Science School 1**

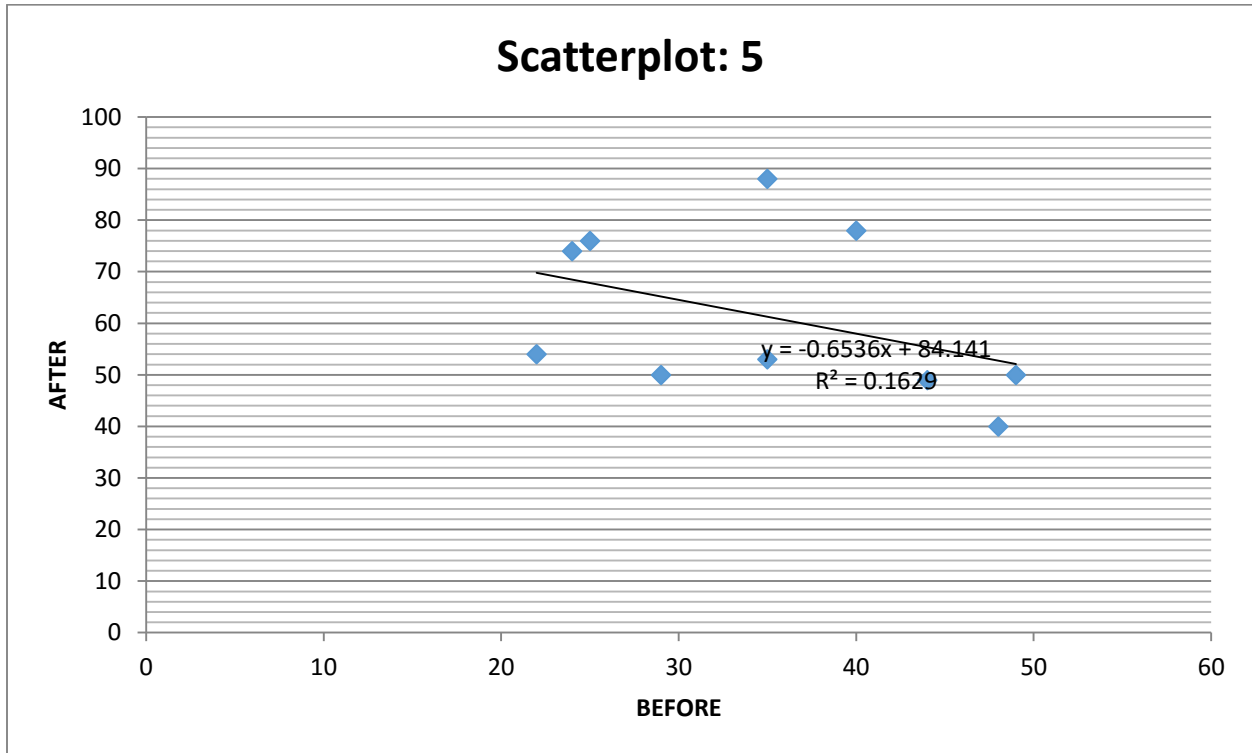
	N	Range	Minimum	Maximum	Mean	Std. Deviation
BEFORE	10	27.0	22.0	49.0	35.100	9.9828
AFTER	10	48.0	40.0	88.0	61.200	16.1644
Valid N (list wise)	10					

**Table: 15 Correlation Coefficient Natural Science School 1**

	BEFORE	AFTER
Pearson Correlation	1	-.404
BEFORE Sig. (2-tailed)		.247
N	10	10
Pearson Correlation	-.404	1
AFTER Sig. (2-tailed)	.247	
N	10	10

Pearson correlation indicated that Science school at school 1 recorded a negative correlation (-4) the explanation lies in the Standard Deviation. Further, Excel was used to plot the scatter plot shown below.

### Natural Science School 1



The line of best-fit was  $y = -0.6536x + 84.141$  where  $y$  represents the scores after retaining the grade and  $x$  represented the scores before retaining the grade. The value of  $R^2$  (0.1629) was the square of the correlation coefficient. It was also found that the correlation coefficient was -0.403638029 which meant that the performance of the learners remained medium as evidenced by the scatter plot above. In as much as the regression line points downwards, it does not necessarily mean that there was no improvement because the regression line is within the range of pass mark of 50%.

#### 4.2.7 Natural Science School 2

**Table 16**

LEARNERS	BEFORE	AFTER
1	35	30
2	54	40
3	30	50
4	51	52
5	50	47
6	40	39
7	53	43
8	34	44
9	25	60

**Table 17: Natural Science Descriptive Statistics School 2**

	N	Range	Minimum	Maximum	Mean	Std. Deviation
BEFORE	9	29.0	25.0	54.0	41.333	10.9316
AFTER	9	30.0	30.0	60.0	45.000	8.6168
Valid N (list wise)	9					

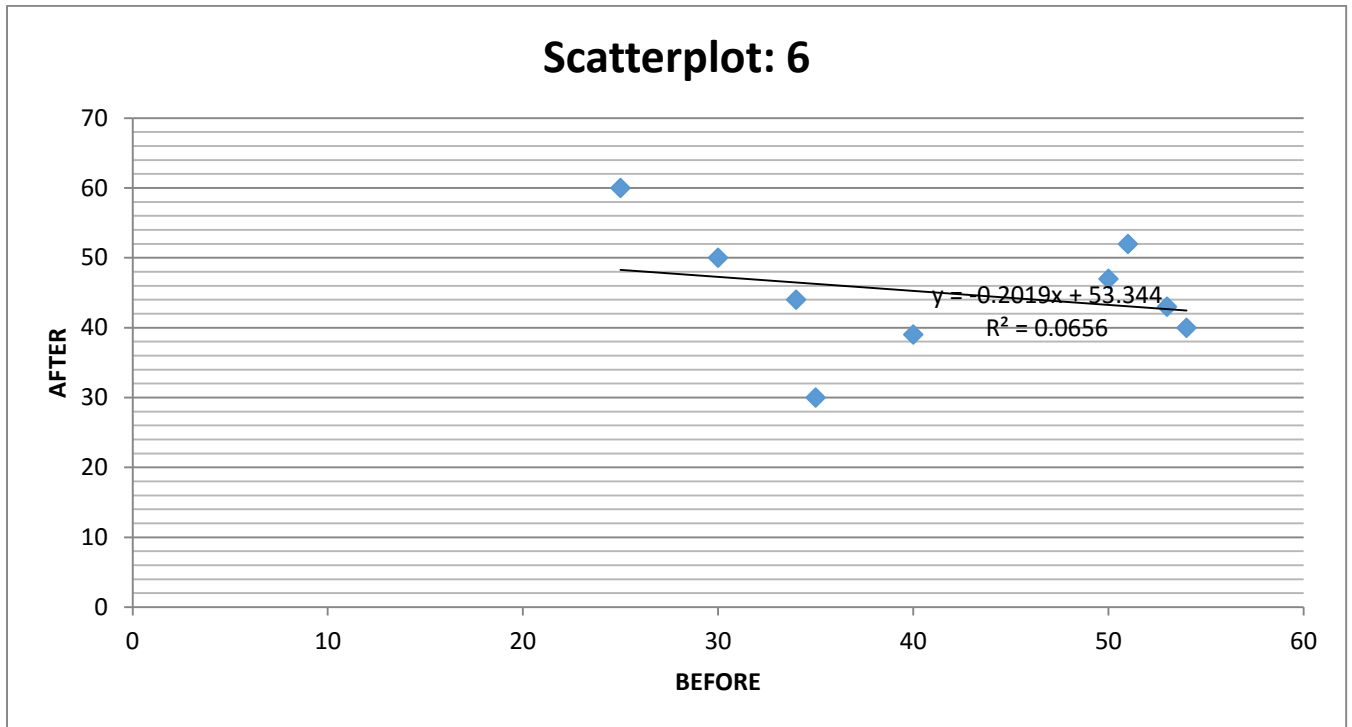
**Table 18: Natural Science School 2 Correlation Coefficient**

	BEFORE	AFTER
Pearson Correlation	1	-.256
BEFORE Sig. (2-tailed)		.506
N	9	9
Pearson Correlation	-.256	1
AFTER Sig. (2-tailed)	.506	
N	9	9

Pearson correlation indicated that there was a negative correlation coefficient of **(-2.56)** between the variables 'before' and 'After'

The data in the table was subjected to statistical analysis using the statistical package embedded in Microsoft Excel to produce the scatter graph below.

### Natural Science School 2



The scatter plot also indicated that there was a negative correlation with the line of best-fit being  $y = -0.2019x + 53.344$  where  $y$  represents the scores after retaining the grade and  $x$  represented the scores before retaining the grade. The value of  $R^2$  (0.0656) was the square of the correlation coefficient. It was also found that the correlation coefficient was -0.256115074 which meant that the performance of the learners did not improve though the negative was weak as supported by the Sig. (0.506) implying that even if learners failed, there were many of them who passed after grade retention.

#### 4.2.8 Natural Science School 3

**Table 19**

LEARNERS	BEFORE	AFTER
1	22	35
2	15	27
3	35	19
4	13	85
5	13	42
6	47	49
7	18	16
8	47	56
9	27	52
10	21	42

**Table 20: Descriptive Statistics for Natural Science School 3**

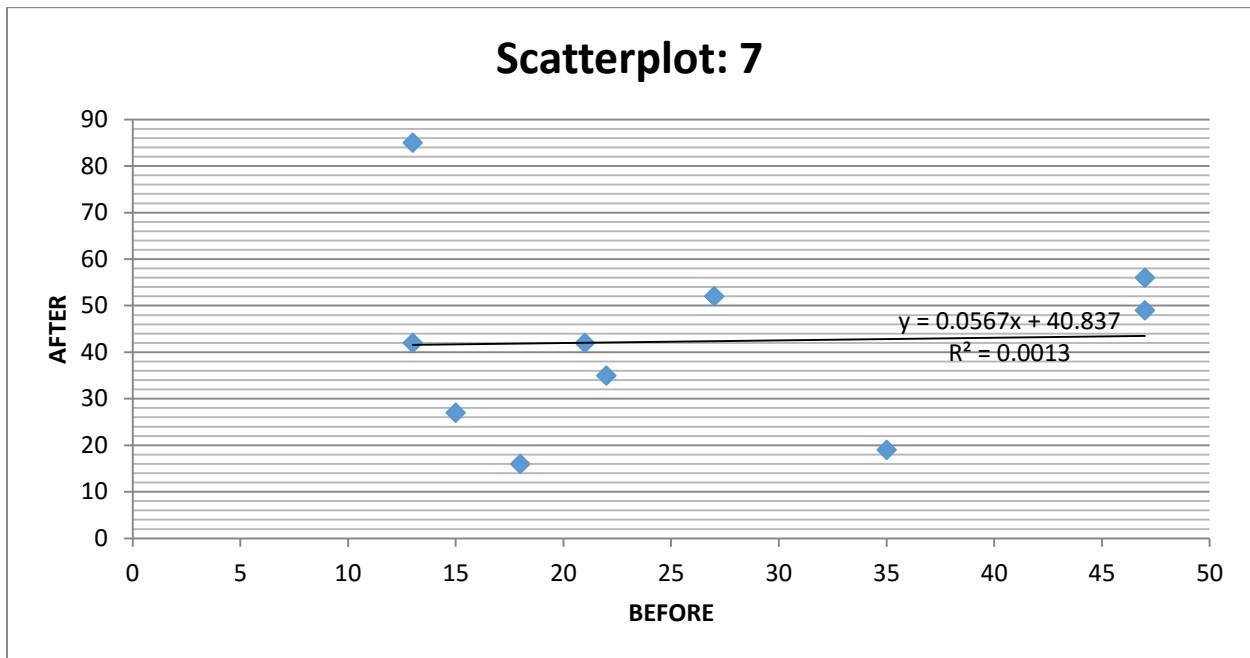
	N	Range	Minimum	Maximum	Mean	Std. Deviation
BEFORE	10	34.0	13.0	47.0	25.800	13.0282
AFTER	10	69.0	16.0	85.0	42.300	20.1993
Valid N (list wise)	10					

**Table 21: Correlation Coefficient for Natural Science School 3**

	BEFORE	AFTER
Pearson Correlation	1	.037
BEFORE Sig. (2-tailed)		.920
N	10	10
Pearson Correlation	.037	1
AFTER Sig. (2-tailed)	.920	
N	10	10

When Pearson correlation was used to determine correlation coefficient between the variable the results indicated that it was **0.037** correlation coefficient meaning there was no relationship between grade retention and academic performance in Science at school 3.

The data in the table was subjected to statistical analysis using the statistical package embedded in Microsoft Excel to produce the scatter graph below.



The scatter graph indicated that there was a no correlation with the line of best-fit being  $y = 0.0567x + 40.837$  where y represents the scores after retaining the grade and x represented the scores before retaining the grade. The value of  $R^2$  (0.0013) was the square of the correlation coefficient. It was also found that the correlation coefficient was 0.036564178 which meant that the performance of the learners neither improved nor reduced from the previous year.

#### 4.2.9 Natural Science School 4

**Table 22**

LEARNERS	BEFORE	AFTER
1	23	20
2	43	40
3	52	61
4	46	37
5	25	30
6	43	20
7	45	40
8	35	60
9	43	75
10	39	68

**Table 23: Descriptive Statistics for Science School 4**

	N	Range	Minimum	Maximum	Mean	Std. Deviation
BEFORE	10	29.0	23.0	52.0	39.400	9.2400
AFTER	10	55.0	20.0	75.0	45.100	19.7172
Valid N (list wise)	10					

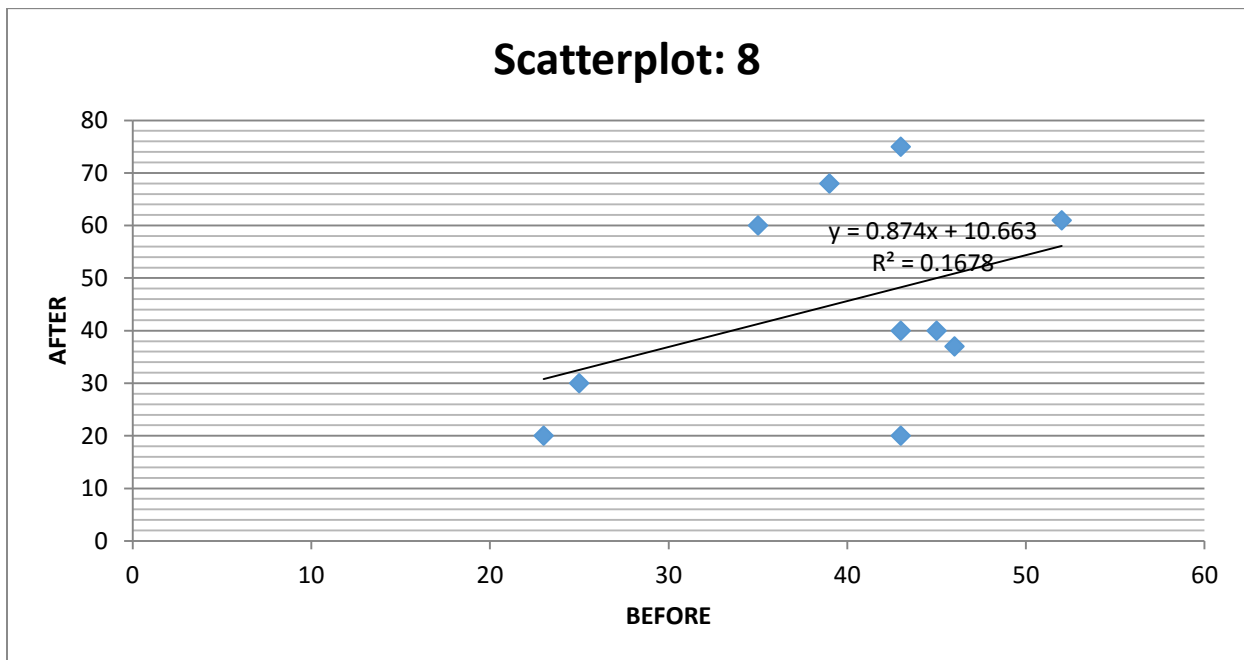
**Table 24: Correlation Coefficient for Science School 4**

		BEFORE	AFTER
BEFORE	Pearson Correlation	1	.410
	Sig. (2-tailed)		.240
	N	10	10
AFTER	Pearson Correlation	.410	1
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.240	
	N	10	10

School 4 recorded a slight relationship between the variables. This was established through the use of Pearson correlation which showed **0.410** positive correlations. Both correlations (before and after) were statistically significant.

When the same values in the table were subjected to statistical analysis using the statistical package embedded in Microsoft Excel, it produced the scatter graph below.

**Scatter plot 8: Natural Science**



The scatter plot indicated that there was correlation with the line of best-fit being  $y = 0.874x + 10.663$  where  $y$  represents the scores after retaining the grade and  $x$  represented the scores before retaining the grade. The value of  $R^2$  (0.1678) was the square of the correlation coefficient. It was also found that the correlation coefficient was 0.409591791 which meant that the performance of the learners improved after retaining a grade.

The general findings in Science indicated that two out of four schools (school 1 and 2) indicated negative correlation. School 3 showed **no** correlation and the fourth one showed positive correlation. The overall picture indicated that most of the Learners who retained a grade did not benefit from grade retention in Science.

When the Researcher asked the schools to state why there was poor relationship between grade retention and academic performance in science, the findings were presented below:

#### *4.3.4.5 Learners' attitude towards learning*

Teachers attributed the failure of retained learners in science to learners' attitude towards learning. Among those who saw attitude as a factor reported that *retained learners had negative attitude towards school such that most of them opted to report late for lessons and usually miss lessons*. According to teachers, negative attitude therefore, led to the failure of the learners in Science especially at school 1,2 and 3.

#### *4.3.4.6 Grade retention made Learners poorer.*

Most of the Teachers of science noted that grade retention did not help Learners to improve. Teacher 7 from school 2 noted that *Learners at their schools became poorer after grade retention because no proper care was given to them*.

#### *4.3.4.7 Learning environment.*

Learners complained that the learning environment was not favorable in Science. *We feel uncomfortable learning with those who were once our juniors. They laugh at us when we fail to answer questions in class. Teachers also do not help and just threaten us that we will fail again and repeat if we are not careful.*

The schools which obtained a positive correlation in science (school 4) gave the reasons similar to those obtained under mathematics for improved performance.

### **4.4.0 English Language.**

English was the third and last subject to be considered. Just like in mathematics and Science, scores were also entered in the table and subjected to SPSS for the production of descriptive statistics, other related features and also correlation coefficient. Using Excel, the scatter graph was also produced per school. The flow of the presentation also ranged from school 1 to school 4. More details are covered in the presentation of the findings below.

#### 4.2.10 English Language School 1

Table 25

LEARNER	BEFORE	AFTER
1	64	38
2	56	49
3	63	74
4	51	38
5	57	56
6	57	45
7	49	46
8	62	50
9	61	60
10	53	50

Table 26: Descriptive Statistics for English

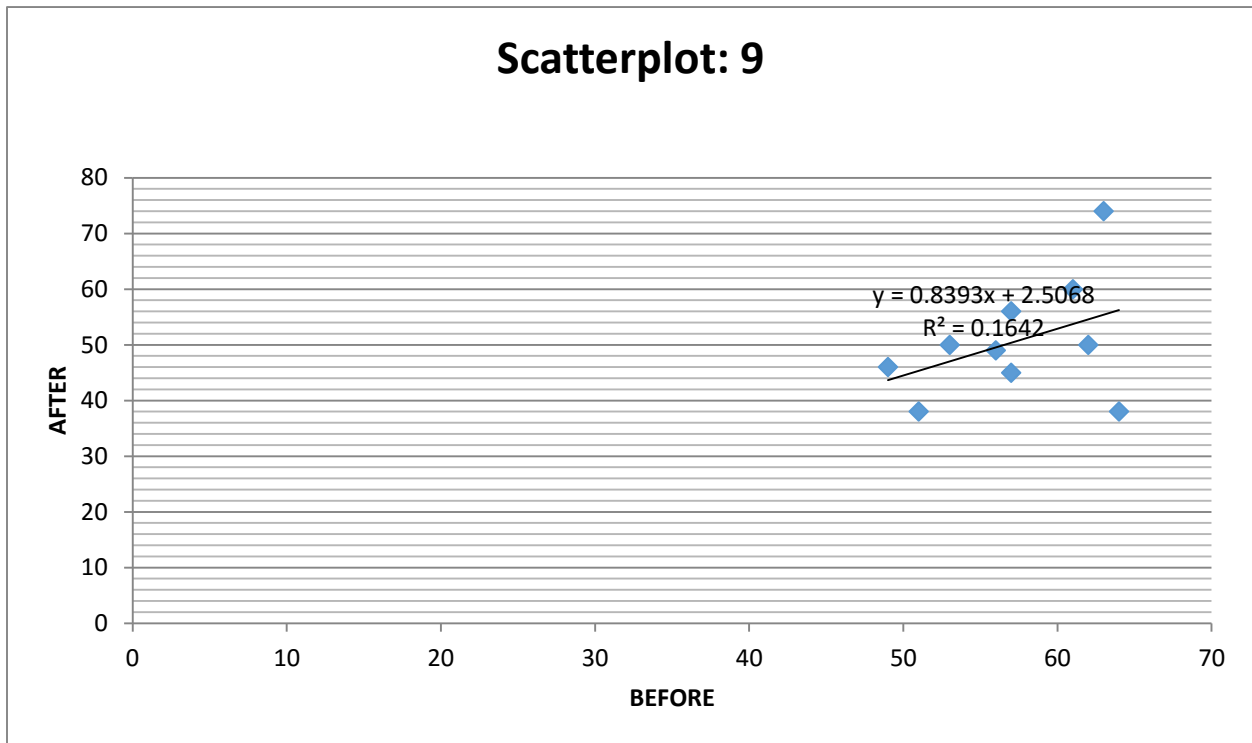
	N	Range	Minimum	Maximum	Mean	Std. Deviation
BEFORE	10	15.0	49.0	64.0	57.300	5.1865
AFTER	10	36.0	38.0	74.0	50.600	10.7414
Valid N (list wise)	10					

Table 27: Correlation for English School 1

	BEFORE	AFTER
Pearson Correlation	1	.405
BEFORE Sig. (2-tailed)		.245
N	10	10
Pearson Correlation	.405	1
AFTER Sig. (2-tailed)	.245	
N	10	10

Pearson correlation indicated that there was a positive relationship **0.405** between the variables being tested. The level of its significance was **0.245**.

When subjected to statistical analysis using the statistical package embedded in Microsoft Excel to produce the scatter graph the results were as presented below.



The line of regression indicated that there was a positive correlation between the scores before and after grade retention.

The scatter graph indicated that there was positive correlation with the line of best-fit being  $y = 0.8393x + 2.5068$  where  $y$  represents the scores after retaining the grade and  $x$  represented the scores before retaining the grade. The value of  $R^2$  (0.1642) was the square of the correlation coefficient. It was also found that the correlation coefficient was 0.405269545 which meant that the performance of the Learners improved in English Language after retaining a grade but the significance was not very strong.

#### 4.2.11 English Language School 2

Table 28

LEARNERS	BEFORE	AFTER
1	48	31
2	50	48
3	41	50
4	70	54
5	53	6
6	43	40
7	48	45
8	56	65
9	45	43

Table 29: Descriptive Statistics for English School 2

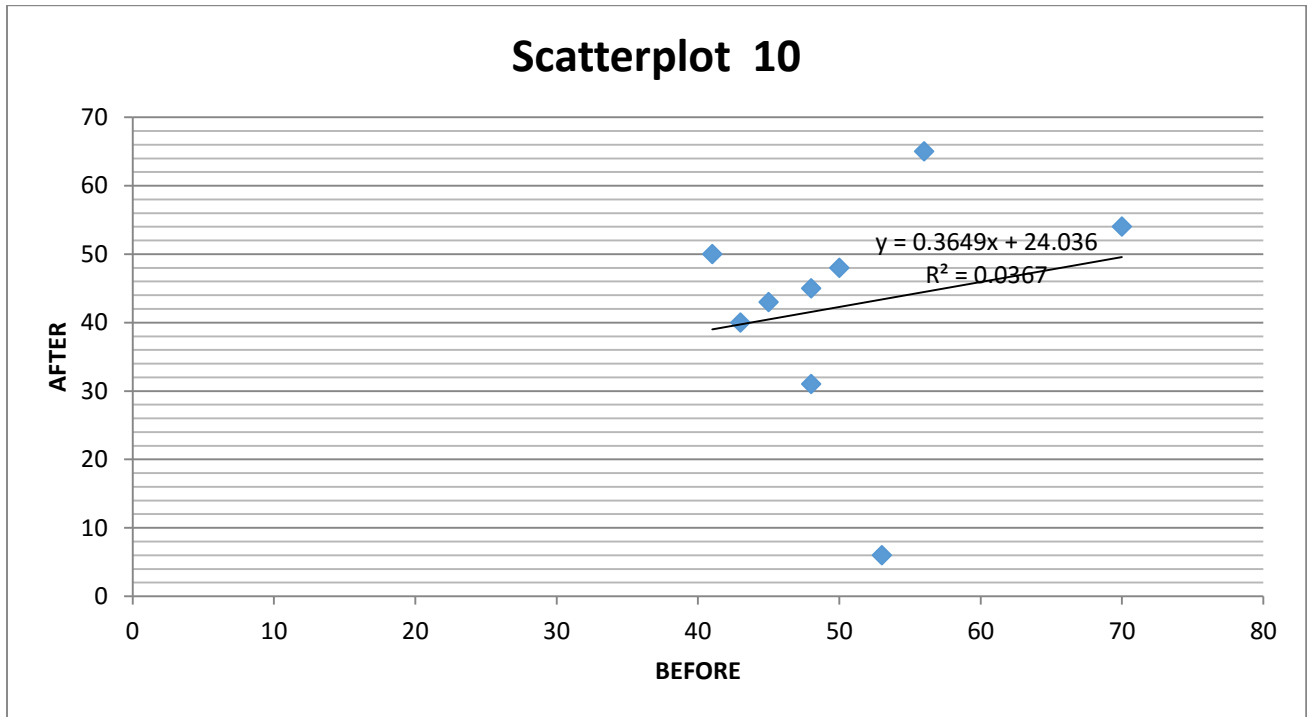
	N	Range	Minimum	Maximum	Mean	Std. Deviation
BEFORE	9	29.0	41.0	70.0	50.444	8.7050
AFTER	9	59.0	6.0	65.0	42.444	16.5915
Valid N (list wise)	9					

Table: 30 Correlation Coefficient for English School 2

	BEFORE	AFTER
Pearson Correlation	1	.191
BEFORE Sig. (2-tailed)		.622
N	9	9
Pearson Correlation	.191	1
AFTER Sig. (2-tailed)	.622	
N	9	9

Pearson correlation indicated that school 2 recorded a positive correlation of **0.191** which was actually a weak one. However, its level of significance was very high (**0.622**) which meant that the improvement was a great achievement.

When the data was fed in Excel to produce a scatter plot the results were as shown below.



The line of regression indicated that there was a positive correlation between the scores before and after grade retention.

The scatter graph indicated that there was positive correlation with the line of best-fit being  $y = 0.3649x + 24.036$  where y represents the scores after retaining the grade and x represented the scores before retaining the grade. The value of  $R^2$  (0.0367) was the square of the correlation coefficient. It was also found that the correlation coefficient was 0.191461851 indicating a very weak positive correlation.

#### 4.2.12 English Language School 3

Table 31

LEARNERS	BEFORE	AFTER
1	13	18
2	30	13
3	22	35
4	47	86
5	37	71
6	72	47
7	29	41
8	35	82
9	78	57
10	18	47

Table 32: Descriptive Statistics for English School 3

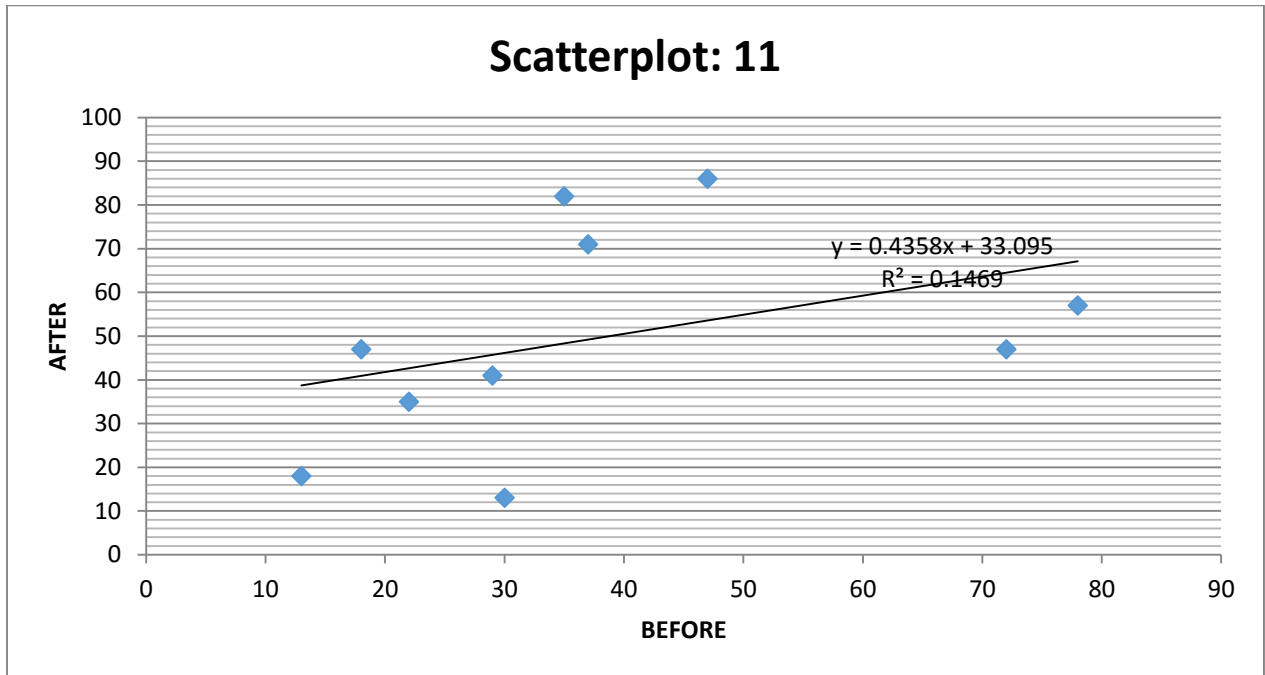
	N	Range	Minimum	Maximum	Mean	Std. Deviation
BEFORE	10	65.0	13.0	78.0	38.100	21.7891
AFTER	10	73.0	13.0	86.0	49.700	24.7792
Valid N (list wise)	10					

Table 33: Correlation for English School 3

		BEFORE	AFTER
BEFORE	Pearson Correlation	1	.383
	Sig. (2-tailed)		.274
	N	10	10
AFTER	Pearson Correlation	.383	1
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.274	
	N	10	10

Correlation coefficient at school three was found to be **0.383** which meant that there was positive correlation whose significance was **0.274**. This meant that despite the school recording positive correlation there were still a lot of learners who failed in assessments given after grade retention.

Excel showed the similar scenario and its line of regression and its equations described the correlation as shown below



#### 4.2.13 English Language School 4

Table 34

LEARNERS	BEFORE	AFTER
1	45	50
2	67	50
3	56	48
4	61	60
5	56	70
6	44	80
7	43	40
8	71	50
9	32	45
10	63	51

**Table 35: Descriptive Statistics for English School 4**

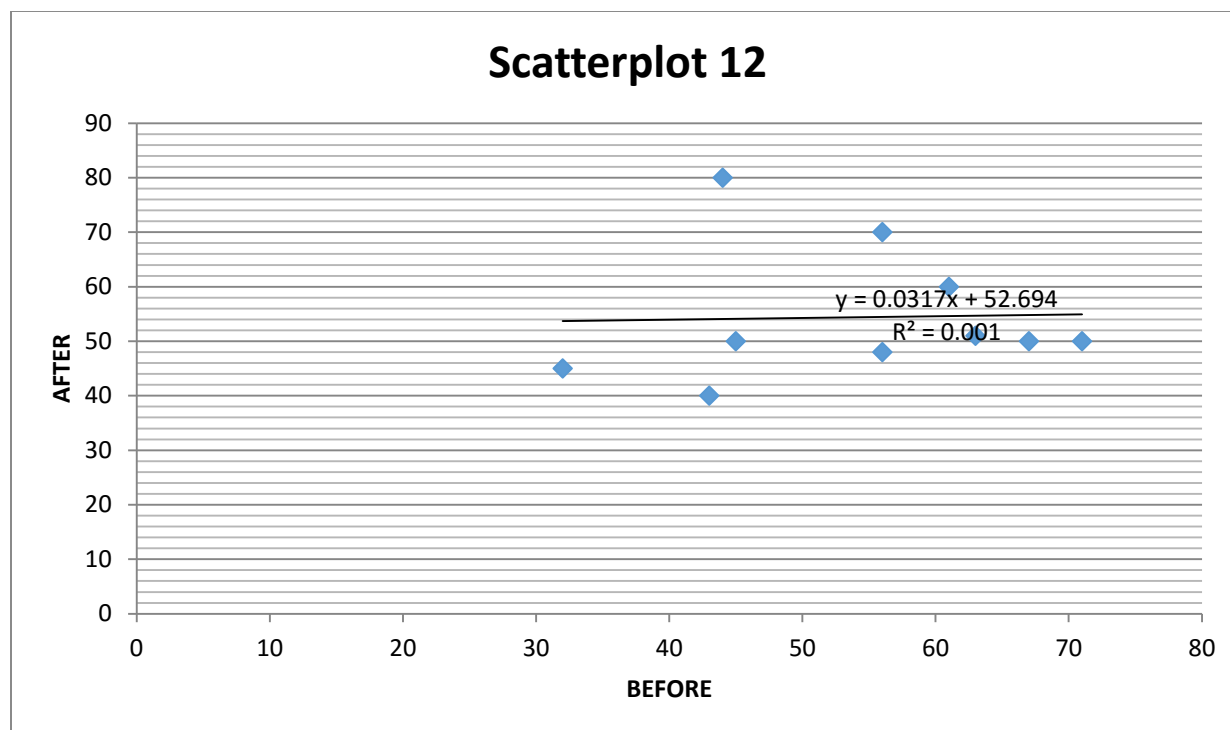
	N	Range	Minimum	Maximum	Mean	Std. Deviation
BEFORE	10	39.0	32.0	71.0	53.800	12.3900
AFTER	10	40.0	40.0	80.0	54.400	12.1856
Valid N (list wise)	10					

**Table 36: Correlations Coefficient for English School 4**

		BEFORE	AFTER
BEFORE	Pearson Correlation	1	.032
	Sig. (2-tailed)		.930
	N	10	10
AFTER	Pearson Correlation	.032	1
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.930	
	N	10	10

Pearson correlation indicated that at school 4 there was no correlation between the variable. The figures found were **0.032**. However, the significance test showed **0.930** which meant that most of the Learners were not failures. Standard deviation also proved it by showing the spread between the schools for both variables implying fair improvement with three Learners with huge improvement and leaving the rest of the learners at between 40% and 50%.

Visual evidence was expressed in a way of a scatter plot whose results were as shown below.



The general findings for grade retained Learners in English Language indicated that school 1 had positive correlation of 0.406, school 2 had 0.191. School 3 also recorded a positive correlation of 0.383 while school 4 showed no correlation. The overall picture indicated that there was a positive degree of association between the variables of **0.253**.

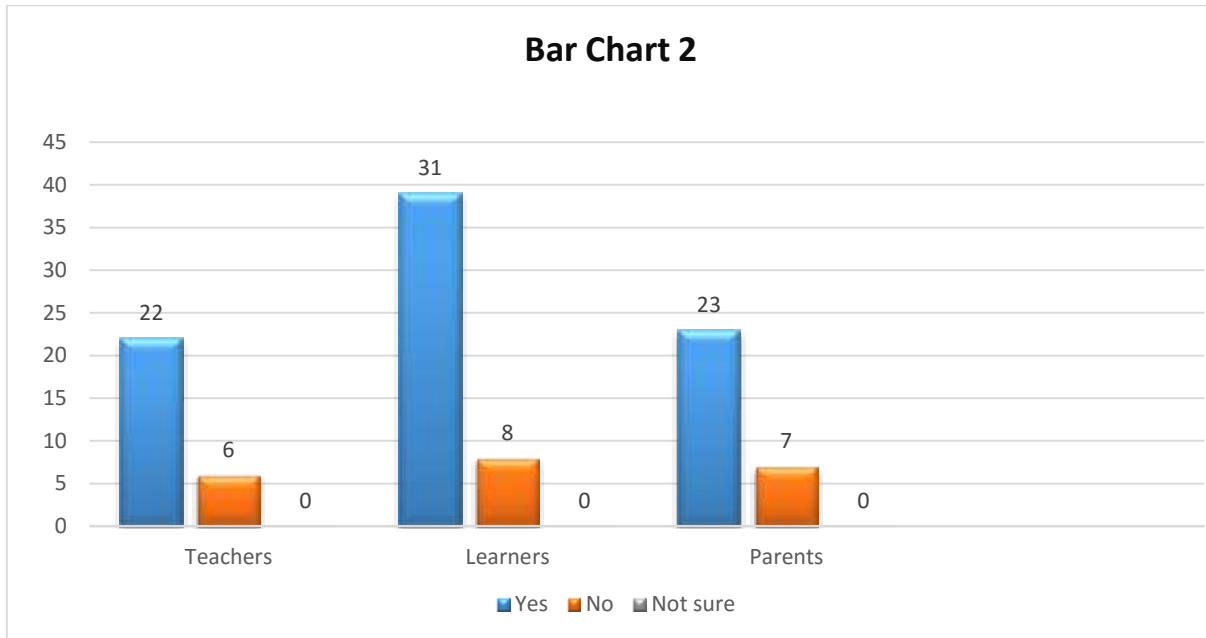
The reasons for positive association in English Language were similar to those given by teachers and learners under Mathematics and Science at school 4 only. The only different justification was that *teachers intensified on coaching the retained learners especially in reading and comprehension skills*. At this point, objective 3 was fully addressed and found that there was positive correlation between the variable apart from Natural Science at school 1, 2 and 3. The rest showed that there was positive relationship. That is to say, the majority of the learners who retained a grade had their performance improved in the subjects sampled.

#### **4.3.0 Views of Teachers, Learners and Parents about grade retention in government Schools of Zambia**

The research objective under this theme was to establish the perceptions of teachers, learners and Parents about grade retention in government owned secondary schools. To achieve this objective, the following research question was asked: *what are the teachers', learners' and parents'*

*perceptions about grade retention in government secondary schools?* In discussing the question, responses were obtained and presented in a bar chart below. Also many themes emerged and were discussed below.

**Bar chart 2: Views of Teachers, Parents and Learners about Grade Retention**



Out of the total of 28 Teacher respondents 22 (79%) perceived grade retention as the best way to improve learner academic performance. 6 (21%) did not accept that it was a good alternative and none of them was not sure of what to answer. Out of 39 learners, 31 (79%) accepted that grade retention was the best way to improve results. 8 (21%) of them opposed the view. Parents were also asked to state their views and 23 (77%) out of 30 respondents saw grade retention a good alternative while 7 (23%) disliked grade retention.

The general finding indicated that out of 97 total respondents, 76 (78%) of the respondents had a positive view about grade retention while 21 (22%) saw it as a bad measure in improving results. Therefore, considering the percentage of **Yes** responses, the Researcher established that grade retention was welcome in all the schools sampled. The reasons given were discussed thematically and are presented below:

### **4.5.1 Teachers' Perceptions**

Researcher wanted to get the views from teachers about how they viewed grade retention in their schools. In answering the similar question, three themes as outlined below emerged.

#### *4.5.1.1 It improves performance*

Out of 28 teachers who were sampled, 22 (79%) noted that grade retention improved performance among retained learners. For example, teacher 5 from School 1 noted that *grade retention had been in implementation for a long period of time as a local policy and proved to be working so well in improving Learner academic performance in various subjects.* 31 (79%) equally stated the above them. Learner 4 from school 3 said: *Grade retention has improved my results as compared to the previous year*

#### *4.5.1.2 It promoted positive approach towards assessments.*

The other justification teachers gave in favor of grade retention was that learners took the assessments seriously and in return improved their commitment to learning and studying. *The assessments given to the learners are handled seriously and this promotes commitment among learners. They fear that once they fail the assessments then they will not proceed to the next grade.* This was realised from 28 (82%) out of 22 teachers who supported grade retention under this theme.

#### *4.5.1.3 Reduced class absenteeism.*

13 (59%) out of 22 teachers also noted that because of grade retention learners rarely missed lessons due to fear of losing out. One Teacher noted that *learners avoid missing lessons because they know that once they miss they risk failing the promotion tests.* Teacher 6 at school 2 also attributed good class attendance and Learner discipline to grade retention.

#### **4.5.1.4 Teachers with opposing views**

Some few Teachers gave their views contrary to their friends and their views led to emergence of other themes which are discussed below.

#### *4.5.1.4.1 Enlarged class size.*

6 (21%) out of 28 teachers opposed grade retention and argued that it was a bad practice because it increased the population of learners in the retained grade. Among them, prominent point was that *It was not realistic to accommodate every learner who had failed to proceed to the next grade in the same class because there will be congestion making it more difficult to teach.*

#### *4.5.1.4.2 Leads to the expiry of the examination number.*

Out of 5 sampled guidance teachers, 4 (80%) guidance observed that continued grade retention would make the examination number of the candidate expire and only be allowed to seat for examination under GCE especially if a learner repeats a grade for three or more times. *Continuous grade retention especially more than twice would cause the expiry of the candidate's examination number which would result into the learners writing the examination under GCE.*

### **4.5.2.0 Learners' perception**

Learners also gave their reasons in support and against grade retention. The reasons were presented starting with those who supported and ended with those who were against grade retention.

#### *4.5.2.1 Helped in improving academic performance*

Learners admitted that their performance improved after grade retention. One learner said, *"I never used to pass these subjects before I retained a grade but this time around I am doing well and English is my favorite subject."*

#### *4.5.2.2. It was not about finishing only but finishing with good results.*

20 (51%) out of 39 learners observed that grade retention was a good move because it was not meant to embarrass them but to help them complete with good results. Learner 9 from School 4 reacted that his Parents advised him to retain a grade. *My parents advised me to retain a grade and said that they did not just want me to complete school with poor results but good results.*

#### **4.5.2.3 Learners with opposing views.**

Another small group of learners noted that grade retention was not good. The reasons they gave were also presented below:

##### *4.5.2.3.1 It is hard to accept*

6 (75%) out of 8 learners expressed their feelings that grade retention was very hard to accept because they felt it was meant to waste their time. One learner from school 4 stated that *she felt hate to see her friends proceeding to the next grade yet she was meant to remain in the same grade.*

##### *4.5.2.3.2 It was expensive*

The majority of the learners who opposed grade retention, 7 (87%) out of 8 of them noted that grade retention was expensive for their Parents to keep paying for their children who were not progressing. Learner 2 from school 3 for example noted that *grade retention was bad to those of them who were coming from poor and big families because money was not enough.*

##### *4.5.2.3.3 Teachers were not helpful*

From the total of 8 learners who hated grade retention, 5 (62%) blamed their teachers that they were not helpful such that they felt they did not improve even after retaining a grade. *Teachers do not help us instead they always cite us as examples to threaten others of grade retention if they fail. We feel uncomfortable.*

#### **4.5.3.0 Parents' perception**

Apart from the teachers and the learners, parents were also asked to give their perception. Despite the overwhelming responses in affirmative, there were still few of them who saw grade retention to be bad. The first part presented the reasons which were given by those who viewed grade retention helpful then lastly the opposing views.

##### *4.5.3.1 Improved academic performance.*

Just like some Learners and Teachers noted, 23 (77%) out of 30 parents confirmed that they liked grade retention because the performance of their children had improved after grade

retention. Parent 4 said, *“When comparing the current performance from the previous year there was improvement which meant that grade retention was working well.”* The other Parent stated, *“Let them retain a grade if they are not performing well because all we want as Parents are good results.”*

#### **4.5.3.2 Parents with opposing views**

The small group of Parents who opposed grade retention also gave good reasons and are were discussed thematically below:

##### *4.5.3.2.1 Cost of grade retention*

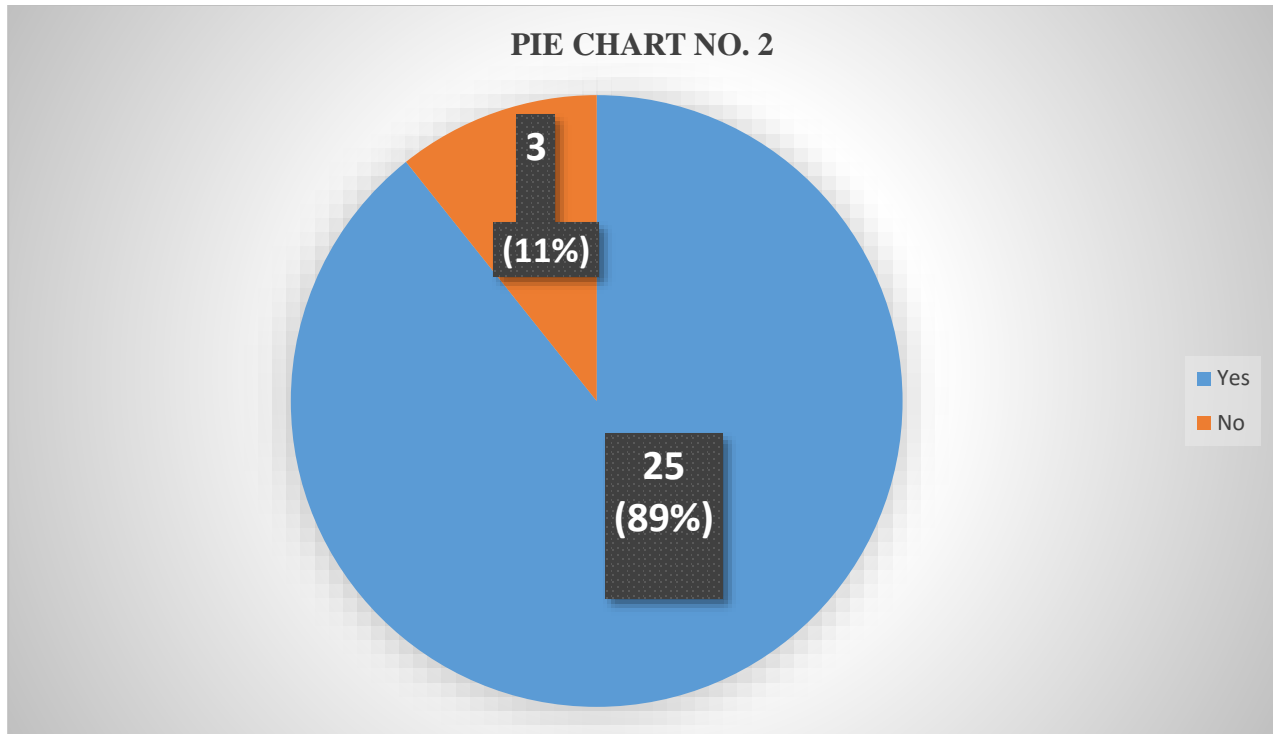
Just like some of their children, 7 (23%) out of 30 Parents observed that grade retention was not easy to bear because of cost associated to it. One Parent said, *“Let teachers help the children how to pass not repeating them because we don’t have money to keep on paying for a child two-three times in the same grade.”*

##### *4.5.3.2.2 School dropout*

Another reason which was given by 3 (42%) out of 7 Parents who opposed grade retention was that they did not have it easy to convince their children to accept retaining a grade. Instead, their children opted to drop out of school. *One of the Parents argued that grade retention led to school drop out of his child.*

#### **4.6.0 Data collection of retained Learners by the MoGE through DEBS**

Still under perception, the researcher asked the teachers to state whether the MoGE through DEBS collected data concerning grade retention. To address this part, the following question was asked: *Does the MoGE through DEBS of collect data for retained learners?* In answering this question, the responses were presented in a pie chart number 3 below and later on one theme emerge.



The findings indicated that the Ministry of General Education did not collect statistics of learners who retain a grade per year. The justification was supported by overwhelming responses of 89% against 11% as it was shown in the Pie chart above.

#### *4.6.1 The MoGE did not attach any interest with regard to grade retention*

25 (89%) out of 28 respondents stated that the MoGE through DEBS offices did not attach any interest in collecting data regarding grade retention. The most common response which came out clearly from these teachers was that *there is no data that is collected by the MoGE with regard to retained learners*. The other 3 (11%) indicated that they were not sure. *We are not sure of what happens in terms of statistical collections of the retained learners*.

#### **4.7.0 Special class for retained Learners.**

To exhaust objective number four, the research objective under this theme was to establish how retained learners were grouped during lesson delivery. To address the concern, teachers were asked the following question: *Is there a special class specifically for the retained learners at your school?* The responses indicated that all of them 28 (100%) said that there was no any special class which was set aside for the retained learners. To that effect, three themes emerged:

#### 4.7.1 To promote hard work amongst the learners

25 (89%) out of 28 teachers explained that they did not need to create a class for retained Learners because they wanted to promote hard work among those who retained a grade and those who did not. One teacher explained that *retained learners work hard when combined with those who were once their juniors in order to avoid embarrassments related to failure again.*

#### 4.7.2 Separation would promote stigmatization.

The other common reason which came out strongly from all the respondents (100%) was that separating retained learners from others would bring about stigmatization. Teacher 5 of school 4 argued that *it would be stigmatization of its highest order to group grade retained Learners in one class adding that their friends would regard them as the worst Learners ever.*

#### 4.7.3 Shortage of man power and room.

Other teachers 27 (96%) out of 28 noted that creation of another class would need more teachers and room. *We don't have enough Teachers and infrastructure if we are to create more classes.* However, the general picture showed that the respondents had a positive perception of towards grade retention in government owned secondary schools. At this point, objective number four was addressed.

This chapter looked at the presentation of the research findings. The table that follows shows the summary of the findings:

Objectives	Findings
Objective 1	measures to enhance grade retention -40% and above passing mark for all the learners -Homework policy Remedial work and holiday assignment -Quizzes in various subject areas
Objective 2	Whether the measures were followed or not -School administration was biased in implementing the measures -Teachers lacked commitment
Objective 3	Relationship between grade retention and academic performance in mathematics, science and English language. -The general findings in mathematics showed that in all the 4 schools grade retention worked well. -In science, school 1 indicated medium correlation, school 2 negative correlation, school 3 no correlation and school 4 showed positive correlations. -The general picture showed that there was poor association between grade retention and academic performance of retained learners in natural science.
Objective 4	Views of teachers, learners and parents with regard to grade retention. <i>Views in favor</i> -It improves performance -Promotes positive approach towards assessments -Reduces class absenteeism among learners <i>Opposing views</i> -Leads to school drop out -It is expensive -Enlarged class gives challenges when teaching

## CHAPTER FIVE

### DISCUSSION OF THE RESEARCH FINDINGS

#### **5.0 Introduction.**

This chapter discusses the research findings which are presented in chapter four. The discussion is guided by the objectives of the study stated in chapter one of this report. The objectives were as follows: To identify the measures put in place by the government owned secondary schools in order to enhance grade retention, to ascertain the relationship between grade retention and academic performance of retained learners in Mathematics, Natural Science and English Language, and also to establish the views of teachers, learners and Parents towards grade retention in government owned secondary schools. The qualitative data was thermostatically discussed while quantitative data was discussed using correlation.

#### **5.1 Measures to enhance grade retention in Government owned secondary Schools.**

Under this theme, the study wanted to find out whether there were measures put in place by government owned Secondary Schools in order to enhance grade retention or not. From the data collected from both teachers and learners, there was overwhelming evidence in affirmation to the objective above. It was established that all the four schools had put up measures to help the retained Learners improve in academic performance in Mathematics, Natural Science and English Language in four schools sampled in Mpulungu District. The common cited examples of measures the schools had put in place included denying learners chance to proceed to the next grade if they failed to pass in at least any of the five subjects, homework policy, remedial work and giving of holiday assignments. Some of these suggestions were in line with what Jere (2006) and Cannon and Limpscomb (2008) suggested in order avoiding failure. Their argument stressed that Teachers have a range of knowledge on how to help slow learners perform better through early interventions such as the ones mentioned.

The justification for introducing the measures outlined above was that if a learner failed to pass in the number of subjects stated which usually included Mathematics, Science and English Language then that learner would only improve if he or she was asked to re-do a grade for another extra year. Then, bring in homework policy, holiday assignments, remedial works

quizzes and other measures. Probably as Jere (2006) and Cannon and Limpscomb (2008) suggested, it would be better to intensify on the employment of these measures before the child fails so as to prevent failure unlike putting in more efforts after grade retention.

Despite both teachers and learners having admitted that the sampled government schools had put measures to enhance grade retention, when the study further sought to establish whether the set measures were followed or not, the picture which was obtained showed that the measures were not followed due to lack of commitment among teachers and the administration. Both teachers and learners reported that the measures were not followed due to negative approach of teachers towards grade retained learners. They also said that there was no enough time to attend to retained learners. This finding was similar to Cannon and Limpscomb (2008) who found that grade retention lacked commitment in California.

Furthermore, the study found that grade retention was not fairly done especially that some learners who failed in the agreed subjects were allowed to proceed simply because of the social relationship that existed between their Parents and the school while others were told to seek for transfers and go wherever they wished to if they did not want to retain a grade. This finding was consistent with Xia and Kirby (2009) and Malambo (2012) who observed that retained learners were mainly those who were disadvantaged in socio-economic background, which were measured by proxy variables such as living in poverty, lower, lower potential educational attainment and also lower measures of intellectual.

## **5.2 Correlation between the variables ‘Before’ and ‘After’ grade retention.**

The study wished to establish the relationship that existed between grade retention and academic performance using Pearson correlation function. This was motivated by the common belief that when Learners do not perform well in a certain grade, one of the alternatives to improve their results is to retain them for another extra year. Basically, contemporary studies both locally and internationally suggest that promoting learners to the next grade before they master the requisite knowledge and skills sets them for failure down the road (Cannon and Limpscomb, 2008). Three subjects: Mathematics, Natural Science and English Language were sampled and four government Secondary Schools of Mpulungu district were also sampled. The general picture in Mathematics and English Language showed that there was positive correlation between the

variables of 'Before' and 'After' grade retention while in Natural Science there was only one School that recorded positive correlation. The other three indicated that there was a poor relationship between the variables. The factors that led to both positive and negative correlation were discussed below per subject sampled.

### 5.2.1 Mathematics

All the schools sampled in Mathematics indicated positive correlation. Meaning there was a positive relationship between the variables. Cohen, Manion and Morrison (2007) noted that without negative coefficient then all correlations are positive and the description would be that there was a degree of association between the two variables of 'before' and 'after' grade retention in all the schools in mathematic. Cohen et al (2007) indicated that correlations are statistically significant beyond one percent. The findings in mathematics were contrary to what Rothstein (1998), Hacsí (2002) and Cannon and Limpscomb (2008) observed. These Researchers reported that grade retention did nothing to address failing students' low achievement problem or help them to catch up with their peers.

The scenario in Mathematics was actually in the positive correlation not as it was established by these Writers in other different countries. Among the common reasons cited by the respondents for positive correlation included the fact that learners who retained a grade were exposed to the same material that they already learnt in the previous year. Miyako and Garcia (2014) also observed the similar finding. Other Respondents attributed the improvement to intensified awareness through guidance and counselling. Ndhlovu (2015) had the similar observation and noted that counselling is needed to enable learners appreciate academic related information.

### 5.2.2 Natural Science

The development in Natural Sciences was slightly different from that of Mathematics. The findings were characterized with all the three levels of correlation coefficient: Positive, Negative and No correlations. The average correlation coefficient in Science for all the four School was (-**0.213**). Cohen et al (2007) described negative correlation as the one that showed a (-) sign and implied that the graph of learner performance was going down. Despite school 4 having recorded a positive correlation, the general picture in Natural Sciences indicated that there was no improvement in scores. Instead, the majority of the learners failed more. Grade retention in

Natural Science agreed with Rothstein (1998), Hacsı (2002) and Limpscomb (2008) who observed that grade retention did nothing to address failure and argued that automatic promotion coupled with early intervention was the best alternative to improve learner performance.

With regard to the cause of the poor performance in Natural Science at schools 1 and 3 the study established that retained Learners had negative attitude towards school after grade retention such that most of them resorted to coming late for lessons and eventually miss lessons. Most of the teachers reported that retained learners became perpetually poor after grade retention in Science while others attributed the failure to learners' bad attitude towards the subject. Their arguments were a true reflection of what happened in the scores of the learners. This was in line with Walberg's Theory of Educational Productivity (1981) which stressed that learners' background has a direct effect on the academic performance.

On the other hand, learners attributed their failure to bad learning environment that they were feeling uncomfortable learning with those who were once their juniors and they were usually laughed at when they failed to answer questions in class. This view was similar to Cannon's and Limpscomb's (2008) who reported that Learners with behavior issues related to the classroom environment typically did not benefit from staying in the same class for another year.

### 5.2.3 English Language

Under this sub-theme, the study wanted to find out whether there was positive, negative or no correlation between the variables of 'Before' and 'After' grade retention in English Language. The findings were different from those of Natural science in that there was no school that experienced negative correlation but at least there was a zero correlation from school 4. The average correlation coefficient was **0.252** implying that there was a weak positive correlation. Cohen et al (2007) explained that correlation ranging from 0.35 to 0.45 shows only very slight relationship between variables although they may be statistically significant. This implied that even if the correlation coefficient was weak the significant test showed that there was improvement in performance in English Language and the improvement was significant. This finding was consistent with Phiri (2016) who found that grade retention improved performance of Learners in Grant-Aided Schools.

The study further established the factors which led to positive correlation in English Language in the sampled schools. Among the common responses, both teachers and learners reported that Retained Learners were forced to work extra hard for fear of being laughed at by their friends. This finding was in line with what Banhart (2009) reported when he stated that the threat of grade retention promoted hard work among the learners. Also among the contributing factors to positive correlation was serious coaching of retained learners by teachers. The other reason was that when retaining a grade, work became familiar to the Learners. These measures were in collaboration with Jimersone (2001) views who noted that an extra year helped struggling learners to develop a positive mind and eventually manage to catch up.

### **5.3. The Perception of Teachers, Learners and Parents about Grade retention.**

Under this objective the Researcher was interested in knowing how Teachers, Learners and Parents perceived grade retention in government owned schools. The data collected from Teachers, Learners and Parents, showed enough evidence that grade retention was perceived positively by those groups of respondents. The general finding concerning grade retention in Government owned Secondary Schools was actually in conformity with what Phiri (2016) established in Grant-Aided Secondary Schools when he reported that grade retention was liked by Learners and Teachers in Grant-Aided Secondary Schools of Central Province.

#### *5.3.1 Teachers' Perception.*

The study further sought to know why Teachers thought grade retention was good in enhancing learner academic performance. Common among the reasons given were that Grade retention had been in use for quite some time as a local policy and its fruits had helped to realize better results for the Learners. This finding was in line with what Mudenda (2017) who reported that grade retention had been there and no one who had passed through the education system in Zambia would deny the fact that in 1970s and 1980s it was difficult to pass an exam unless one had to retain a grade especially at grades seven and nine. Same Respondents reported that due to grade retention learners took all the given assessments serious as their assessments greatly had an impact on their progress to the next grade. While others attributed good class attendance and Learner discipline to grade retention. Learners did not miss lessons due to fear of missing out. Also the study established that respect towards Teachers by the learners was improved. These

findings were similar to what Banhart (2009) noted when he reported that the threat of grade retention promoted hard work among the learners.

Despite the good reasons given by the Teachers justifying why they liked grade retention, the Researcher asked them to comment on the position taken by the Ministry of General Education through DEBS office concerning grade retention. The study noted with sadness that such a good move as it was perceived by the Teachers did not receive any attention. Teachers responded that the offices of the PEO and DEBS were aware of the practice but did not attach much interest to collect data pertaining to the same. The finding was similar to what prevailed in California where George (1993) and Cannon and Limpscomb (2008) found that grade retention lacked government intervention. They further narrated that grade retention had been going on for quite a long time but the state did not collect information either directly or from school districts.

Few Teachers whose perceptions were out-numbered by those who supported grade retention gave their justifications as to why they felt that grade retention was not a good alternative towards improving results. They observed that retained learners did not improve even after retaining a grade. Instead, their academic performance dropped more. However, their views were in line with Cannon and Limpscomb (2008) who observed that grade retention does not help learners improve but early intervention can work well. Furthermore, Teachers reported that learners who retained a grade ended up enlarging the class size making it hard to reach to all the learners arguing that it was difficult to teach big classes. Similar findings were noted by Brophy (2006) and David (2008) who argued that the school system could not hold back every learner who failed since too many would pile in the lower grade and cause classroom management problems. This finding was in line with Walberg's theory (1981) when he argued that classroom social group is a factor in the learning of a child.

Additionally, the Guidance Teachers raised the concern of examination and said that in as much as grade retention was good, if a learner was retained more than twice then the examination number expires and that is actually what Walberg in his theory of educational productive (1981) meant when he argued that age and stage influence the achievement of the learners. Despite the overwhelming views that supported grade retention, the minority views were still relevant and needed special attention for they were also better concerns.

### *5.3.2 Learners' perception*

Under this sub-theme the interest of the Researcher was to establish the perception of the learners about grade retention. It was discovered that learners had initial and later perceptions about grade retention which were opposed to each other. Thus, learner perception was discussed into two parts as follows:

#### *5.3.2.1 Learners' initial perception about grade retention.*

Under the initial perception, the Researcher asked learners to state how they felt when they had to retain a grade. The evidence showed that the majority of them were not willing. One of the reasons they gave was that it was difficult to accept because it was time wasting. Walberg (1981) in his theory also noted that time for learning under his theme instructional learning mattered most. Also, this view was in line with Cannon and Limpscomb (2008) who reported that grade retention delayed entrance of learners into labour market.

The study also found that some learners hated grade retention because they didn't know the importance. The follow-up question was asking them to mention who convinced them to finally retain a grade. In response, they mentioned their Parents and guidance Teachers. Looking at what was prevailing during the initial stage of grade retention, it was observed that the schools did not invest much time to orient the Learners about grade retention that was why they did not like the move which they later on praised. The missing link at this stage was what Ndhlovu (2015) advocated for in order to promote fair educational environment and that is guidance and counseling.

#### *5.3.2.2 Learners' later perception about grade retention.*

To ascertain the later perception, the Researcher asked learners to state the person who made them change the perception and also give reasons. The majority of them reported that they were advised by Teachers and Parents. They admitted that they were convinced after learning that school was about getting good results not just proceeding and waste time and resource re-writing under GCE in future. Furthermore, Learners stated that they finally accepted to repeat and they were happy that majority of them had improved in Mathematics, Science and English Language

and appreciated their Teachers and Parents. This result was typical of what Ndhlovu (2015) advocated under guidance and counseling.

On the contrary, the study established that there were still some few learners who felt that grade retention was bad even at the later stage. The majority of them viewed it from the cost associated to grade retention and maintained that it was not a good practice to those learners who were coming from big and low class families because it meant spending twice in a year for one Learner only. This would make it difficult for their Parents to pay. Their justification was actually backed by Jacob and Lars (2004) who reported that retaining learners for another extra year was expensive.

### *5.3.3 Parents' perception about grade retention*

The study under this theme wanted to get the perception of grade retention from the Parents. The general picture from the Parents also indicated that they had a positive perception of grade retention. Those who recommended it confirmed that they observed a positive attitude in their children towards school. Their views were backed by Mudenda (2017) who also observed that voluntary repetition that enabled learners to pass examination or learn content that was not learnt well the year before was viewed by learners and their families as rational decision that led to desired out-comes.

To get the views of a small section of Parents who had a negative perception about grade retention. The Researcher asked them to give reasons. They cited two common ones which were cost related to grade retention and failure to convince their children to retain a grade which resulted into school drop-out due to fear of accepting the so called embarrassments attached to grade retention. Their views were related to David (2008) and Manacorda (2012) who noted that grade retention increased the risks of dropping out of school. In his study in USA, David found that students who dropped out of school were five times more likely to have been retained than those who graduated. On the other hand, Barnhart (2009) argued that grade retention possessed substantial monetary cost on learners over a life-cycle.

#### 5.4 Summary

In summary, Objective number one which sought to identify the measures the government secondary schools had put in place in order to enhance grade retention was met, objective two also which made a follow up on the set objectives to ascertain whether they were followed or not was also addressed. The third objective looked at correlation of the scores for ‘before’ and ‘after’ grade retention and has also been discussed fully and finally the fourth objective which addressed perceptions. Basing on the objectives of the study, it can be said that some aspects of the theoretical framework and the literature review were in support of most of the findings. However, it should be noted that the literature reviewed tended to be more theoretical in terms of relating retention to performance than carrying out tests to show the relationship.

## **CHAPTER SIX**

### **CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS**

#### **6.0 Introduction**

Chapter six gave the Conclusion and Recommendations of the study basing on the findings and discussion of the study. The study was carried out to establish the measures the government Secondary Schools had put in place to enhance grade retention. Also to ascertain the academic performance of learners who had retained a grade in Mathematics, Science and English Language in government owned Secondary Schools and finally to get perceptions of Teachers, earners and Parents about grade retention in Government owned Secondary School of Mpulungu District of Northern Province of Zambia. The conclusions were made in line with the objectives and also the theoretical framework. Recommendations were done in general and also future recommendations which suggested further areas of study which emanated from the gap identified during the study.

#### **6.1 Conclusion**

Grade retention is basically a measure which some government owned secondary schools introduced to improve the academic performance of learners in schools. However, it is important to note that different schools put up measures meant to enhance grade retention differently. From the findings of the study presented in chapter four several conclusions were arrived at basing on the research objectives and research questions.

The first objective sought to know the measures the government owned schools had put in place to enhance grade retention and whether those measures were followed. The Researcher found that schools had set measures such as prohibiting learners who failed in agreed number of subjects from proceeding to the next grade. Also measures such as homework policy where home works were frequently given to the Learners in order to keep them busy. Apart from that, assignments such as holiday assignments were given and also remedial works plus quizzes. However, it was later discovered that despite setting measures, Respondents stated that the schools did not strictly obey the measures set. This led to the conclusion that measures were set

but not followed. Failure to follow the measures set was attributed to poor supervisory practices and lack of commitment on the part of administrators.

With reference to the first objective, it was also found that there were no classes specifically set for retained Learners which meant that teaching was done as usual and most likely there was no change in instructional methods because the classes were a combination of grade retained and regular Learners.

The second objective sought to establish whether or not there was positive, negative or no correlation between the variables. Basing on the findings, the overall picture showed that there was positive correlation except for Natural Science where only one school (school 4) obtained a positive correlation. This gave a picture that the other three schools needed to consult the strategies school 4 used in producing a positive correlation in Natural Science. The findings showed that grade retention worked well in government schools.

The third objective was seeking for the perceptions of Teachers, Learners and Parents towards grade retention. The findings indicated that the majority of the respondents had a positive perception. Therefore, it was safely concluded that Teachers, Learners and Parents perception over grade retention in Mpulungu District was positive. Implying that it was a welcome move in improving Learner academic performance in Government owned Secondary Schools

The study has therefore made a contribution to the available literature especially in areas where it is scarce. For example, the actual performance of learners who have retained a grade in the sampled subject areas especially that there was no study reviewed that showed the relationship in terms of performance using correlation.

## **6.2 Recommendations**

Basing on the study and its findings, the following recommendations were made and were divided into three sections:

### **6.2.1 Recommendations towards practice**

The schools that uphold grade retention need to strictly and fairly observe the measures set in order to have a balanced state of affair and a true picture of how effective grade retention is.

There is need to employ deliberate measures meant for retained learners unlike treating them just like everyone. This would mean coming up with strategies which would make them catch up and avoid another fail.

### **6.2.2 Recommendations towards policy**

The government through the Ministry of General Education should regulate grade retention and make it a fully-fledged policy backed by law.

The government through the Educational Standard Officers should collect data concerning grade retention and assess its effectiveness.

The Examination Council of Zambia should extend the life span of the examination numbers of Learners who retain grades with a view to improve performance unlike letting them expire in a period of three years.

To reduce high failure rate and wastage of resources in the country, the Government should not allow underperforming learners to proceed and seat for the examinations.

### **6.2.3 Recommendations towards further research**

1. Further study should be done to cover Social Sciences related subjects in order to have a comparative data in this area of study.
2. A comparative study on grade retention between Government and Grant-Aided Secondary Schools should be done to establish effectiveness.

3. A study should be done to establish how learners who refuse to retain a grade perform at grade nine and twelve final examinations.
4. An experimental study to ascertain the effectiveness of measures to enhance grade retention.

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**APPENDICES**

**APPENDIX A**

**QUESTIONNAIRE FOR TEACHERS**

**The University of Zambia in Collaboration with Zimbabwe Open University: Post Graduate Studies**

I am a Student at the above named Institution carrying out a study on how Learners who have retained a Grade for another extra year perform in Mathematics, Science and English Language in Mpulungu District. The information which will be obtained from the study is purely for academic purpose and would help to determine how grade retention can influence Learner academic performance in Government owned Secondary Schools. Therefore, your identity will not be disclosed to anyone else in reporting the findings of the study.

I will be grateful if you answer all the questions in this questionnaire.

**Instructions**

1. Do not write your name on the questionnaire
2. Please you are kindly requested to answer all the questions given
3. Put a tick  next to the answer of your choice or write your answers in the spaces provided

**Personal Details**

- i. Name of Province.....
- ii. Name of district.....
- iii. Name of the School.....
- iv. Position:
  - a) Head Teacher
  - b) Deputy Head Teacher
  - c) Head of Department
  - d) Subject Teacher
  - e) Guidance Teacher
- v. Sex: Male  Female
- vi. Marital Status:
  - a) Single
  - b) Married
  - c) Divorced
  - d) Separation
  - e) Widowed

- vii. Age:
- a) Below 20 years
  - b) Between 20-30 years
  - c) Between 31-40 years
  - d) Between 41-50 years
  - e) Between 51-60 years
  - f) Above 60 years

**Questions**

1. Are there measures set by your school in order to enhance grade retention?

Yes  No  Not Sure  If your answer is yes, list the measures

.....

.....

.....

.....

2. Do you think the measures mention in question 1 are being followed?

Yes  No  If your answer is **No**, give reasons

.....

.....

.....

3. Do you have Learners who refuse to retain a grade?

Yes  No  If your answer is **yes**, what do you do to such Learners?

.....

.....

.....

4. Are there special reasons why some Learners should be allowed to proceed to the next grade even if their performance is poor?

Yes  No  If **yes**, give the reasons

.....

.....

.....

.....

5. Do you have Parents who resist having their children retain a grade?

Yes  No  . If your answer is **yes**, what do you do to their children?

.....  
.....  
.....  
.....

6. Is there a special class specifically for Learners who have retained a grade?

Yes  No  Give reasons for your answer?

.....  
.....  
.....  
.....

7. If retained Learners are mixed with those who have not retained a grade how is the relationship?

.....  
.....  
.....  
.....

8. Do you think the relationship in the new class helps them to improve or not?

Yes  No  Justify your answer

.....  
.....  
.....  
.....

9. When comparing the previous with the current scores in your subject do you think there is improvement?

Yes  No  Give reasons for your answer?

.....  
.....  
.....  
.....

10. Does the Ministry of General Education collect the data of retained Children at your school?

Yes  No  If your answer is no, what is your view?

.....  
.....  
.....

11. Do you think retaining Learners whose academic performance is poor is the best way to help them improve in their scores?

Yes  No  Give reasons for your answer

.....  
.....  
.....  
.....

12. What advice can you give to your School Administration concerning grade retention at your School?

.....  
.....  
.....  
.....  
.....  
.....  
.....  
.....

**THANK YOU FOR ANSWERING THE QUESTIONS**

**APPENDIX B**

**QUESTIONNAIRE FOR THE LEARNERS**

**The University of Zambia in Collaboration with Zimbabwe Open University: Post Graduate Studies**

This questionnaire seeks to collect information as part of the study by the University of Zambia in collaboration with Zimbabwe Open University in a study on the academic performance of Learners who have retained a grade in Mathematics, Science and English Language. The information that would be obtained from the study would contribute to the determination of how helpful grade retention would be in Government owned Secondary Schools. The results of the study are purely academic. Therefore, your identity will not be disclosed to anyone else.

**INSTRUCTIONS**

- i. Do not write your name on the questionnaire
- ii. Please you are requested to answer all the questions in this questionnaire
- iii. Put a tick  next to the answer of your choice and write your answers in the spaces provided

**PERSONAL DETAILS**

Sex: Male  Female

Age: a) Between 11-15years old

b) Between 16-19years old

c) Between 20-22years old

d) Above 23years old

**QUESTIONS**

1. When did you start schooling?.....

2. What is your current grade?.....

3. What grade have you Retained?.....

5. Who advised you to retain a grade?.....

6. Were you willing to retain a grade or not?

Yes  No. Justify your answer

.....  
.....  
.....  
.....

7. Are there new measures put by the school to help you not to fail again?

Yes  No  If your answer is **yes**, mention the measures

.....  
.....  
.....  
.....

8. Do you think Teachers follow the measures mentioned in question 7?

Yes  No  If your answer is **No** why do you think they don't?

.....  
.....  
.....  
.....

7. Do you relate well with your friends in class especially that you are a repeater?

Yes  No  . Justify your answer

.....  
.....  
.....  
.....  
.....

8. Do you think repeating a grade has helped you to improve in Mathematics, Science and English Language?

Ye  No.  Support your answer

.....  
.....  
.....

9. Do you think your Teachers have prepared good measures to ensure you do not retain a grade for the second time?

Yes  No  . If your answer is **yes**, state the measures you know?

.....  
.....  
.....

10. What do you think would have happened to your performance if you didn't retain a grade?

.....  
.....  
.....

11. Do you know of any friend of yours who refused to retain a grade?

Yes  No  . If your answer is **yes**, what did the school do?

.....  
.....  
.....

Do you think retaining a grade is the best way to improve academic performance of Learners?

Yes  No  . Give reasons for your answer.

.....  
.....  
.....

12. What advice can you give to your friends who have refused to retain a grade?

.....  
.....

**Thank you so very much**

## APPENDIX C

### INTERVIEW GUIDE FOR PARENTS

#### **The University of Zambia in Collaboration with Zimbabwe Open University: Post Graduate Studies**

1. How do you source money for your School going children?
2. What are some of your expectations from your Child?
3. How did you feel when you head that your child needed to retained a grade?
4. Were you told the reasons why your child needed to retain a grade?
5. Are there challenges you think your child is facing at home which could have made him or her to retain a grade?
6. Do you receive report cards for your child from school?
7. Is there improvement in terms of grade scores in Mathematics, Science and English Language?
8. Do you think repeating a grade has helped your child improve?
9. Do you think it was fair for Teachers to recommend that your child needed to retain a grade? Give reasons.
10. What advise can you give to other Parents concerning repeating a grade of their children?
11. What recommendation can you give to the School administration?

**Appendix: D**

**SCORE SHEET**

SHOULD COMPRISE OF FOUR TEST SCORES: TWO FROM THE PREVIOUS GRADE  
AND ANOTHER TWO FROM THE CURRENT GRADE

NAME OF THE SCHOOL.....

LEARNER NO.....

TESTS	MATHEMATICS		SCIENCE		ENGLISH LANGUAGE	
	BEFORE	AFTER	BEFORE	AFTER	BEFORE	AFTER
TEST 1						
TEST 2						
TEST 3						
TEST 4						

**APPENDIX E:**

**INTRODUCTORY LETTER FROM UNZA-ZOU**

17th March 2017

MANGANI LANENY  
UNIVERSITY OF ZAMBIA IN  
COLLABORATION WITH ZIMBABWE  
OPEN UNIVERSITY

Dear Sir/Madam

**RE: CONFIRMATION OF STUDY**

Reference is made to the above subject.

This serves as a confirmation that the above mentioned person of NRC No: 160663/77/1 and computer number 715806120 is a bonafide student of the University of Zambia in collaboration with Zimbabwe Open University (UNZA-ZOU).

The student is pursuing a Master of Education in Educational Management and that he will be carrying out a research on THE ACADEMIC PERFORMANCE OF LEARNERS WHO HAVE RETAINED A GRADE IN MATHEMATICS, SCIENCE & ENGLISH IN SVT SCHOOLS OF MPULUNGU DISTRICT.

Any assistance rendered to him will be greatly appreciated.

Yours faithfully



Dr. D. Ndhlovu  
ASSISTANT DIRECTOR (PG)  
INSTITUTE OF DISTANCE EDUCATION

## APPENDIX F

### PERMISSION FROM DEBS

*All correspondence to be addressed to*  
District Education Board Secretary  
Telephone: 455052  
Fax: 455052  
Email: debsmpulunguyahoo.com



*In reply please quote TS/18055*

REPUBLIC OF ZAMBIA

## MINISTRY OF GENERAL EDUCATION

MPULUNGU DISTRICT EDUCATION BOARD  
P.O. BOX 134  
MPULUNGU

28<sup>th</sup> September, 2017

Mr. Mangani Laneny

**u.f.s:** The Headteacher  
Mpulungu Boarding Secondary School  
**MPULUNGU**

Dear Mr. Managani

**RE: PERMISSION TO CARRY-OUT A STUDY – YOURSELF**

Reference is made to the above subject matter.

I write to inform you that your request to carry out a study with the title Academic Performance of Learners who have retained a grade in Mathematics, Science and English language in Mpulungu District has been granted.

I therefore wish you all the best and good luck.

Yours faithfully,

P. Musumali (Mr.)  
**DISTRICT EDUCATION BOARD SECRETARY**  
**MPULUNGU**

labb...