

GRADE SEVEN AUTOMATIC PROGRESSION TO GRADE EIGHT:
EFFECTS ON LEARNER ACADEMIC PERFORMANCE AND THE
PROVISION OF QUALITY EDUCATION IN SELECTED SECONDARY
SCHOOLS IN MWENSE DISTRICT, ZAMBIA

by

Melvin Mwila

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Zimbabwe Open University in partial fulfilment of the requirements for the
award of the degree of master of education in educational management

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AUTHOR'S DECLARATION

I, **Melvin Mwila** do hereby solemnly declare that this dissertation represents my own work, except where otherwise acknowledged, and that it has never been previously submitted for a degree at the University of Zambia or any other university.

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APPROVAL

This dissertation of **Melvin Mwila** is hereby approved as fulfilling the requirements for the award of the degree of Master of Education in Educational Management by the University of Zambia in collaboration with Zimbabwe Open University.

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ABSTRACT

The main purpose of this study was to investigate the automatic grade seven progression to grade eight focusing on its effects on learner academic performance and the provision of quality education in selected secondary schools in Mwense district. Automatic progression to grade eight is a policy put in place to ensure that learners attain at least the basic education level. The policy advocates for no cut off points for grade seven learners instead it provides for automatic progression depending on the available secondary school places regardless of the learners ability. Nevertheless learner progression might be of quality if the learners' ability is good. To effectively learn, the learner must possess literacy, numeracy, values, attitudes and prior knowledge unlike automatic progression which ignores such important academic skills.

Through a qualitative-phenomenological design, data was obtained from the purposively sampled 1 DESO, 4 Head teachers, 8 teachers, 4 parents and 16 grade 8 and 9 learners. Data from all the respondents was collected through interviews. Schools were purposively sampled.

Thematic analysis was used in the study. The findings revealed that the performance of most progressed learners was below average, due to low ability levels. Most progressed learners were not able to read and write nor understand English which was the medium of instruction in secondary school. It also reviewed that most progressed learners lacked prior knowledge to help them build on the new content of secondary school.

From the findings it was noted that the morale and self-esteem of most automatically progressed learners was low due to low ability. As a result they were passive in most learning activities and their interest to learn was low.

It was also found that the enrolment in classes where automatic progressed learners were taken was high. This affected quality teaching as most teachers failed to give individual learner attention and failed to apply some of teaching methods which were not supported by high enrolment.

Teachers and parents views on the automatic progression were also established. The common views were that the policy promoted failing because most progressed learners with low ability learners who got worse in performance once they found more challenging work in secondary school. It was established that automatic learner progression slowed the pace at

which the syllabus was moved. It was established that the policy was not useful to low ability learners as it promoted failing especially to the illiterate learners and it also contributed to low standards of education.

In this study it was recommended that the MoGE should stop automatic grade seven progression to grade eight and re-introduce a reasonable cut off point for grade seven selection to grade eight to ensure that learners with at least with a certain level of ability and knowledge enter secondary school. It was also recommended that in order to effectively progress learners, the government should consider the ability, literacy and knowledge levels of the learner.

The conclusion was that automatic progression affected learner performance. Most progressed learners were found to be illiterate in English which contributed to poor academic performance. The policy contributed to the low learner morale and self-esteem. Most automatic progressed learners were found to be passive in class with less hope to progress to senior secondary school due failure to get concepts. It also contributed to high enrolment in the classes which hindered chance and time for teachers to give each individual learner attention and use of variety of teaching methods.

DEDICATION

This work is dedicated to my late mum Doreen Mwale Maluti Chileya *bamaayo bana Mwila* who died while I was pursuing my master's degree, who encouraged and supported me from her sick bed, my beloved children: Blessing, Mable, Lumbanya, Adonaijah and Chimwemwe, my caring wife Brenda who gave me the encouragement and support as I went through this programme. Not forgetting my father Mr Joy Chileya who has always been there for me since childhood and my young brother George Mubela who always supported me throughout my master programme. To these people I remain indebted.

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ACRONYMS AND ABBREVIATIONS

DEBS - District Education Board Secretary

DESO- District Education Standard Officer

ECZ- Examination Council of Zambia

G RZ –Government of Republic of Zambia

HoDs - Heads of Departments

MoGE - Ministry of General Education

P T C- Parents and Teachers Committee

UNESCO - United Nations Education, Scientific and Cultural Organisation

UNZA- The University of Zambia

CHAPTER ONE

INTRODUCTION

Overview

In this chapter the background of the study, statement of the problem, purpose of the study, objectives of the study, research questions, delimitation of the study, significance of the study, theoretical and the conceptual framework have been explained.

1.1. Background

To ensure that many learners attend secondary school education, the Zambian government has increased the number of junior secondary schools by building new ones and upgrading some of already existing primary schools to secondary level (Ministry of general education 2015). Furthermore, the Ministry of General Education (MoGE) has introduced the policy of automatic promotion to grade eight for grade seven pupils (MoGE, 2016). The policy advocates for no cut-off point for the pupil to qualify to grade eight. Thus, the examinations at this level are not meant to measure learning achievements but to have a record of learners who manage to get a bare grade seven certificates that allow them to proceed to secondary school level depending on the available school places. However, the Examination council of Zambia (2017) advocated for cut-off point which should be determined by various education stake holders based on available school spaces in a given region and year. This means that cut-off points vary from one province to the other.

The impact of automatic progression according to the report of MoGE (2015) on the status of education in Zambia is that the grade seven pass rate has improved; ranging between 78% and 100% in Northern, Muchinga and Luapula provinces, averaging 100%. For instance, all the learners who were in grade seven in 2015 in Northern, Muchinga and Luapula provinces proceeded to grade eight. As indicated in the 2015 MoGE education status report, it is clear that there is automatic grade seven progression to grade eight in the provinces of Zambia. It is also evidenced by the low cut-off point for grade seven in Luapula province as shown in table 1.1.

Table 1.1 Luapula province 2017 grade 7 selection cut-off points.

CATEGORY OF THE SCHOOL	TOTAL MARKS AS CUT-OFF POINT			
	BOYS	OUT OF	GIRLS	OUT OF
BOARDING SECONDARY	714	800	683	800
DAY SECONDARY	645	800	621	800
BASIC SCHOOL	479	800	462	800

Source: Mwense District Education Board Secretary 2017

The examinations results displayed in table 1.1 according to the National Action for Quality Education in Zambia (2016) have ceased to have any significance in the education system and are not in any way assessment tools as all candidates who sit for them progress to grade eight, irrespective of the marks one obtains. In real sense examinations should perform evaluative and diagnostic function to the candidate but this is not the case with Zambia's grade seven composite examinations. Learners are no longer selected to grade eight on the basis of desirable performance in composite examinations with the coming of automatic progression (MoGE, 2016). The importance of examinations and the role they play at the entry and the exit at a certain level of formal education has been neglected. Though there might be opinions to skip this type of examinations for continuity, it might not be a good idea because examinations are highly beneficial for learners as they help them to revise and go through the concepts which they are taught throughout the primary course. Examinations also help to judge whether the learners understood the concept during the learning process or not. (Leona 2017)

On the other hand Koppensteiner (2014) viewed automatic progression to be a way of increasing learner retention and reducing drop out in the education sector. This means that learners will be moved from one grade to the next higher grade at the end of the year regardless of the attainment of necessary skills which supports learning. However, the view of reducing learner retention was argued by Cameron (2015) who stated that advancing learners who have not sufficiently gained the academic skills and knowledge from one grade level to the next higher grade level might pose challenges in terms of quality and performance. This is because the learners are required to have learning skills to help them

tackle subjects in the secondary school which are more challenging as compared to those in primary school.

It is in this line of thought that Bernard (1999) stated that examinations have been used as a screening device to decide who can continue to the next high grade level and as a tool to help improve educational quality for individuals and systems. This was also supported by Orodho (2002) who noted that examinations tell children how they are succeeding or failing. Examination is very important and failing it might affect learner's progress to reach higher grades. Therefore, a learner's academic progress is to some extent determined by what is obtained in the national examinations.

On the other hand Motala (2000) stated that quality education should be of outcomes that encompass knowledge, skills and attitudes, and are linked to national goals for education and positive participation in society. To attain quality education learners should acquire skills and knowledge which could help them progress to the secondary school, unlike automatic progression which might affect those learners with less skills.

Automatic progression of grade seven to grade eight practiced in Luapula and other provinces of Zambia might negatively affect quality education and learner performance in secondary school. This might be as a result of secondary school having more challenging learning content which automatically promoted learners might lack. This is likely to cause a problem which the researcher explains in the statement of the problem in the next section.

1.2.Statement of the Problem

Learner progression is best done when learners acquire specific sequence of knowledge and skills that they are expected to use as they progress through their education. Dewi (2015) stated that there are two main characteristics of effective learner progression. The first one intends to address the specific learning needs and abilities of students at a particular stage of their intellectual, emotional, social, and physical development, and the second one reflects clearly the sequences, that is the learning expectations for each grade level build upon previous expectations while preparing students for more challenging concepts and more sophisticated coursework at the next level. The basic idea is to make sure that learners acquire knowledge and skills that are neither too advanced nor too simple for further learning.

This is the reason why the curriculum is designed in a spiral concentric mode. From the psychological point of view, learning should involve the development of the mind of the learner while imparting knowledge. Howard (2012) also stated that learning content should proceed from simple to the complex to make sure that the subject matter learnt in a previous class will be helpful to the subject matter to be learnt in the next higher class. To measure this achievement, there is need for examinations, especially to progress learners from primary to secondary school.

Nevertheless, the Ministry of General Education policy is that there is no cut-off point for grade seven pupils' qualification to grade eight. The policy provides for automatic qualification to grade eight as long as there are enough places (MoGE 2016). This means that learners are automatically moved from grade seven to grade eight without considering the ability, knowledge and skills one possesses but the curriculum is designed in a spiral concentric approach. With automatic progression, it is likely that some learners will move from grade seven to grade eight with less basic knowledge and skills to help them build on the new content that they are likely find in the junior secondary school, as a result, they are likely to face some problems in learning. Therefore' this study was designed to investigate the effects of automatic grade seven progressions to grade eight on learner academic performance and the provision of quality education.

1.3. Purpose

The purpose of this study was to investigate the effects of automatic progression of grade seven learners to grade eight on learner academic performance and provision of quality education.

1.4.Objectives

The objectives of this study were to;

1. investigate the performance of the learners who are automatically progressed to grade 8 in junior secondary school.
2. establish the extent to which automatically progressed learner's morale and self-esteem towards learning is sustained.
3. examine the enrolment levels in junior secondary classes where the automatically progressed leaners are taken.

4. establish teachers and parents views on automatic grade seven progressions to grade eight.

1.5. Research Questions

The main questions this study answered were:

1. How was the performance of automatically moved grade seven learners to grade eight?
2. To what extent did automatic progression of grade seven learners to grade eight affect the morale and self-esteem of the learner?
3. How was the enrolment of the classes where learners are automatically moved?
4. What were the teachers and parents views on the automatic grade seven progression to grade eight?

1.6. Theoretical Conceptualization

This study was informed by the constructivist theory of learning which states that learning is a process where individuals construct new ideas or concepts based on prior knowledge and or experience. Learner generates their own mental models, which are used to make sense of the experiences. Learning is therefore simply the process of adjusting mental modes to accommodate new experience. The theory is also in line with psychology which explains how people might acquire knowledge and learn (Wertsch 1997). Therefore this theory has direct application to education.

Formalization of the theory of constructivism is generally attributed to Jean Piaget, Vygotsky, Dewey and many more who articulated mechanisms by which knowledge is internalized by learners. He suggested that through processes of accommodation and assimilation, individuals construct new knowledge from their experiences. When individuals assimilate, they incorporate the new experience into an already existing framework without changing that framework. This may occur when individuals' experiences are aligned with their internal representations of the world (Wertsch 1997)

The theory is used to focus on preparing people to solve problems. To be successful, the learner needs a significant base of knowledge upon which to interpret and create new ideas and not through automatic progression. Therefore, effective learner progression according to

the constructivist theory cannot be a success if a learner lacks skills to build on the new knowledge in a higher class. Learners need to have knowledge which matches the level of education in order to use it as a prior knowledge to build on the new concept. The use of automatic progression from grade seven to grade eight without considering the ability, skills and experience seems to contradict this theory.

1.7. Conceptual Framework

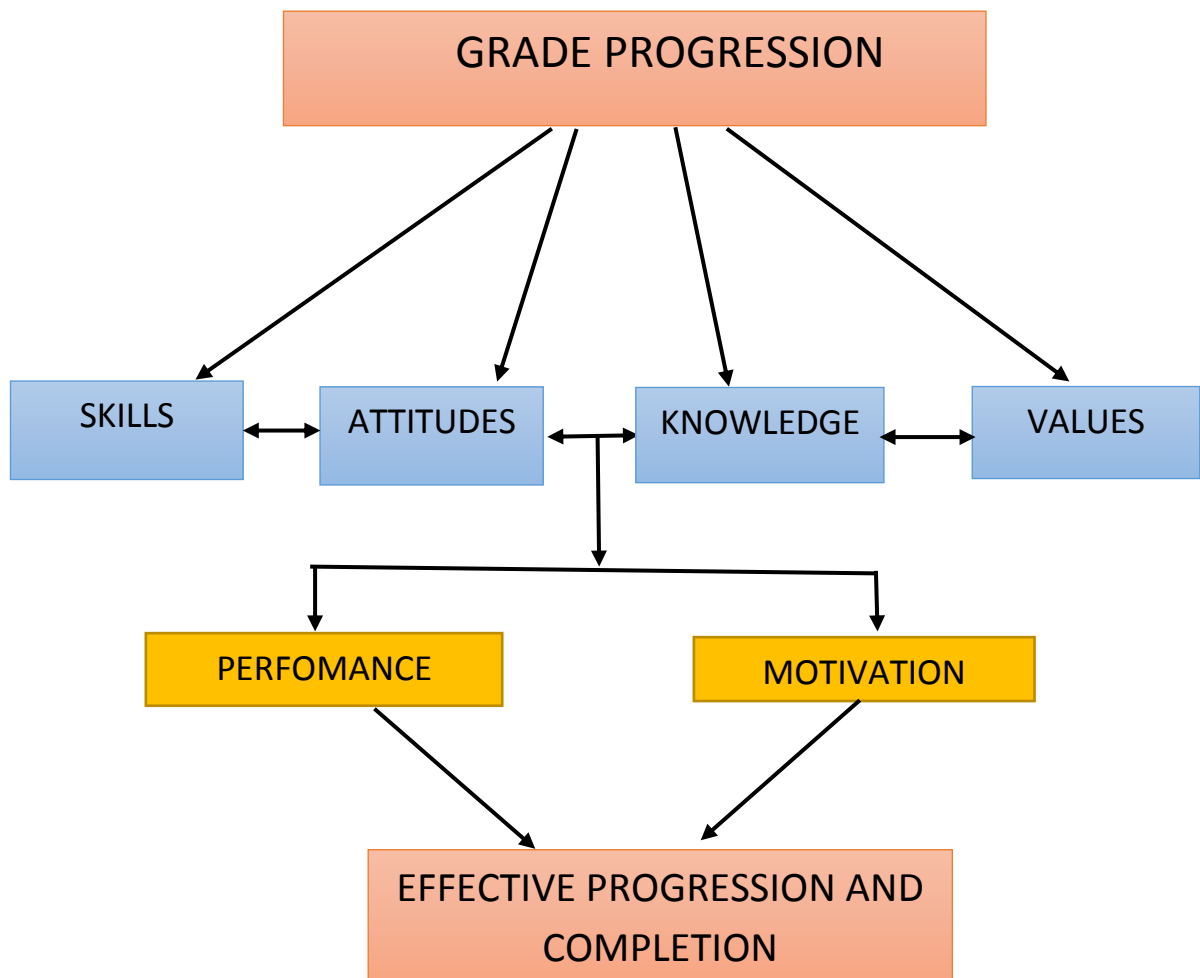


Figure 1.1: Conceptual Framework

As in figure 1.1, learner progression is likely to be effective if a learner has necessary skills needed to learn and not by automatic promotion. A learner who is moving from primary to secondary school must have desirable level of knowledge to help him/her to build on the new concepts which one is likely to face in secondary school. Attitudes and values are correspondingly important in the process of learning because they help in adapting to the challenges learners are likely to face. When attitudes, values and knowledge are present in a

learner the performance is also likely to be good and that is likely increase the learner's motivation in school. That is what should be considered when moving learners from primary to secondary school. This will help a learner to build on the new concepts because the curriculum is designed in a spiral concentric way where same topics are taught throughout their school career, with each encounter increasing in complexity and reinforcing previous learning.

1.8. Significance

It was anticipated that the findings of this study would be useful to the District Education Board Secretary's office in Mwense, head teachers and the community in understanding the issues surrounding automatic progression. The findings of this study might also be useful to the government especially the Ministry of General Education to make informed decisions about automatic learner progression. The study is also intending to help the government and teachers understand the effects of automatic grade seven progressions to grade eight on academic performance and quality education provision.

The findings also intended to establish the parents and teachers views about automatic progression of learners. This is because teachers were immediate supervisors and facilitators of learning involving the progressed learners. Parents were also the guardians, sponsors and care givers of the learners and had first-hand information concerning performance of their learners.

The head teachers who were the immediate supervisors in the schools were useful to the findings of the study to know the extent to which automatic grade seven progression affected quality education and academic performance of learners. This might have helped in making informed decisions concerning in future.

The study also helped the researcher to have more knowledge concerning learner performance and automatic grade seven progression to grade eight. Further the study helped the researcher to familiarise himself with challenges that automatically progressed learners faced in junior secondary school.

The study might have also added data to the available information about automatic progression and it might be used for reference in related future researches

1.9. Delimitation

The study was carried out in Mwense which is a rural district in Luapula province of Zambia; it targeted day secondary schools in the same rural district. The choice of Mwense district did not however, make any districts less important in terms of investigating the effects of automatic learner progression on academic performance and quality education provision.

1.10 Operational Definition of Terms

Automatic grade 7 Progression to grade 8: This is a policy of letting all learners who sit for examination at grade seven go to grade eight without considering much the results they obtain.

Quality Education: This is education which ensures relevant learning, and emphasizes the range of skills required for lifelong well-being and societal cohesion.

Curriculum: This is the plan or blueprint for what is going to be taught learned experienced in the education system of a particular course, school or nation over a period of time. This includes course design or syllabus, including goals and standards for proficiency.

Summary

In this chapter, the background information about the policy of automatic grade progression in Zambia, the statement of the problem, purpose of the study, objectives of the study, research questions, significance of the study, and delimitations, theoretical and conceptual framework and operational definition of terms have been presented. In the next chapter the literature review is presented.

CHAPTER TWO

LITERATURE REVIEW

Overview

In this chapter, the researcher presents the review of related literature. The chapter is presented under the following sub-headings: concept and background of automatic grade progression, general literature on automatic learner progression, studies on the automatic learner progression, the research gap to be filled and summary. The literature on retention is also reviewed in order to understand the dynamics surrounding grade progression and promotion.

2.1. The Concept and Background of Automatic Grade Progression

The practice of allowing learners to progress from one class to the next irrespective of their academic performance is also referred to as automatic promotion. Writers such as Koppensteiner (2014) and Taye, (2003) have written for and against automatic promotion and its credibility as a viable alternative to grade retention, in the search for efficiency and better learning outcomes. Empirical and non-empirical studies conducted in both developed and developing countries by Koppensteiner (2014) in Brazil and Byamugisha (2010) in Uganda to estimate the impact of automatic promotion policy and that of grade retention policy on students' learning achievements showed mixed and inconclusive results and indicated that automatic promotion negatively affects the overall quality of education since it eliminates competition, de-motivates students and teacher, hence lowering teaching and learning outcomes of the learners which eventually affects their self-esteem and increases the probability of dropping out and failing

2.2 Global View on Learner Automatic Promotion Policy

Automatic grade promotion in school is the promotion of learners to the next grade after a current school year, regardless of whether they didn't learn the necessary materials or they were often absent (Wikipedia). It is the advancing of a learner who has not sufficiently gained the academic skills and knowledge of one grade level to the higher grade level or unwarranted elevation of a learner into another higher grade (Nugent 2013). The practice is also referred to as social promotion where a learner keeps the pace the age mate in a grade level with or without learning taking place. The practice was to help boost the self-esteem of the

learners by moving to the next class with the age mates. Practice of automatic promotion can be traced back to 1930 (Steiner 1986).

The policy was meant to help reduce grade repetition and dropout rate which was considered as the major wastage factors on human and physical resources. Most countries do not have enough resources and repletion of slow learners in the systems was creating congested classroom and other facilities, the teachers were also straining to handle the learners because of the large numbers. Although its opponents believe it affects quality of education by making most learners to be recipients as a result of low self-esteem created due to little mastery of then content (Nugent 2013).

Athan (2014) further reviewed that the policy did not address the most important issues that were thought to be a challenge like the self-esteem. It was also believed that it created a lot of time wasting as teachers were forced to repeat most of the things to create understanding of the new concepts as they built on each other, yet the syllabus did not provide a teacher with time to review the topic learnt in the lower grades for the slow learners in order to understand the next level concepts. This created a lot of wastage on the learners which translated into the human capital development. Teachers frequently tailored their teaching to the learners that struggled the most.

On the other hand the policy was viewed to eliminate competition and motivation for both the learners and the teachers. Low motivation on the side of the learners came as a result of continuous poor performance because they knew they did not take charge of their studies , they knew that with or without mastery of the concept, movement to the next grade is automatic (Jean 2015).

The other held global view on automatic promotion is that some learners who struggled were overwhelmed and decided to give up which indicated the correlation on the automatic grade promotion and increased high school dropout rates, as a results of learners being confused in school which continued to seem to be discouraging (Athan 2014).

On the other view Jacob (2009) also stated that introduction of the automatic grade promotion policy was to help governments to save on cost and even the households; this was because even though education was free in some countries, parents were still required to buy uniforms and other school requisites. Automatic promotion also eliminated repetition and increased

survival and completion rates by reducing dropout rates by lowering the number of years of low achievers in school (Elizabeth 2008).

2.3 General Literature on Automatic Learner Progression.

Generally, learners who are automatically progressed to the next grade arrive with little understanding of the basic rules of their first and second language grammar, mathematics other subject area. They have neither little background knowledge nor those concepts fundamental to the mastery of the subjects they are doing (Tinto1993). This leads to academic challenges when the demands for subject content are too challenging. The learners should, therefore, be academically ready to enter secondary school level. This can only be made possible by subjecting them to examinations so that they are empowered with a sense of the world they lived in, recognize and appreciate educational culture and function effectively and thoughtfully in their respective lives (Battersby 1999).

Further, automatic progression had negative effects on children's learning achievement, attendance, personal adjustment in school and attitude towards school as they advance to the next grade. On average, automatically progressed learners were found to be worse off than their counterparts in both personal adjustment and academic outcomes (Ndaruhutse2008). In the same line Halverstadt (2009) stated that automatic grade promotion, when compared with retention of similar children, is an ineffective and possibly harmful intervention. It affected children with low achievement in academic progression.

In addition, when the learners are automatically promoted to the next level, overcrowding could not be avoided. Promoting every learner to secondary school comes with burden of overcrowding, high pupil teacher ratio and reduced attention to pupils needs (Roselle 2010). The overcrowded classes reduce the quality of learning due to high pupil teacher ratios. This is also supported by Chimombo (2005) who stated that automatic learner progression led to crowding in classrooms, leading to high student-classroom ratios and high student-teacher ratios thus lowering the overall quality of education. This implies that when every learner is taken to the next high grade without considering the capability, quality of learning will be lowered.

Moreover, despite the enrolment rates having been increased throughout Zambia, in particular Luapula province, the overall quality of education raises concerns. While the system has been able to raise educational attainment at primary and junior secondary levels,

this success has not given rise to a similar increase in upper-secondary and tertiary level attainment. Nor has it been translated into significant improvements in literacy levels among children and adults (UNESCO 2016). Therefore, this study intended to investigate the academic performance of automatically progressed learners and validate if the concerns of UNESCO over quality education was as a result of automatic progression of learners from primary to secondary

Nonetheless, the strongest argument in favour of grade repetition over automatic progression is that it acts as a deterrent against poor school performance. By inflicting a high penalty to underperformers who are automatically moved, it is possible that struggling learners are likely to experience problems in achieving the desired learning (Jacob 2005). This might lead to loss of morale and eventually drop out or withdrawal. The writer stated that underperforming learners who are automatically progressed to higher grade are likely to face problems. Tinto (1993) also stated that automatically progressed learners can withdrawal from school. Withdrawal can arise either from voluntary withdrawal or from forced withdrawal. Forced withdrawal usually arises from insufficient levels of academic performance or from the breaking of established rules concerning proper social and academic behaviour.

The practice of allowing students to progress from one class to the next irrespective of their academic performance, negatively affects the overall quality of education since it eliminates competition, and de-motivates students and teachers hence lowering teaching and learning outcomes (Koppensteiner2014). It has been noted that automatic progression affect quality and eliminates competition among learners, however this study intended to investigate the academic performance of automatically progressed learners and validated Koppensteiner's view.

2.4. Studies on the Automatic Learner Progression

In general terms automatic learner progression is moving learners from one lower grade level to the upper one without considering the performance in composite examinations. This has effects on the general impact of education on society. Battistin and Schizzerotto (2012) investigated the effect of grade automatic progression on student achievement among upper secondary schools in Italy and concluded that the reform had a negative effect on motivation and engagement of the most struggling students, thus exacerbating existing inequalities. This study concentrated on the progression of upper secondary learners and found negative effect

on motivation and inequalities among low performing studies. This study instead concentrated on automatic progression from primary to secondary school and its effect on academic performance.

Further Taye (2013) investigated the impact of automatic promotion on learning outcomes in Ethiopia and reviewed that 90.4% of the teachers interviewed said grade retention was better than automatic promotion to help underachieving students perform better in latter. Teachers who were spoken to regarding retention had favourable views and saw it as an essential tool to assist weaker children by giving them a chance to improve their knowledge and be more prepared for the higher levels of schooling. In this study only retention was found to help learners to perform better in latter grades, ignoring how automatic progression affected learners performance which this study intended to investigate.

Similarly, Gomes-Neto and Hanushek (2014) in their study of consequences of grade retention found that repetition enhanced learner achievement in Brazil's rural northeast. While retained learners were below average in performance before repetition, they moved to above average after repetition. This study paid much attention consequences of retaining learners without looking at academic performance and quality education delivery which this study focused on.

Chileya (2016) conducted a research in Mwense district on factors affecting poor academic performance of pupils in junior secondary leaving examinations and found that failing to read and write second language (English) contributed to poor performance. Learners were asked to state how they managed to pass the examinations at grade seven when they did not know how to read and responded that they were all selected to go the secondary school no one failed. This study however investigated if automatic grade progression contributed to the poor academic performance of learners in junior secondary leaving examination.

Arogo (2017) also conducted a study in Kenya on the implementation of student automatic promotion policy in high school on human capital development and found that learner automatic grade promotion in high school influenced the courses chosen at college level which in turn influenced human capital development. Arogo's study concentrated on the human capital development and courses taken by the students without looking at the academic performance of the progressed learners and quality education which this study intended to investigate.

2.5. The Research Gap to be Filled

The issues surrounding the centre of this study, automatic grade promotion and progression are many. Literature in the international and local sphere was quite lacking on automatic learner promotion from primary to secondary (grade seven to grade eight) which this study centred on. Here international literature was drawn on because literature regarding the issues of grade seven progression to grade eight was lacking in Zambia. No research seemed to have been conducted in Zambia and in Mwense district on the grade eight automatic progression to grade eight, meaning this study might have been be one of the first.

Various literature have been reviewed internationally and locally of which most of them show automatic progression and learner retention, leaving out the issue of academic performance and quality education aspect. Literature also lacked information on grade progression from primary to secondary school which this study will look at. This helped fill a gap of knowledge in terms of grade automatic progression and its effects on performance.

Local studies related to this study indicated that the poor performance of junior secondary school learners was necessitated by failing to read and write in official language. Chileya (2016) found that failing to read and write second language (English) contributes to poor performance in junior secondary leaving examinations. Learners were asked to state how they managed to pass the examinations at grade seven when they did not know how to read and responded that they were all selected (meaning that they were automatic moved) to go to the secondary. However this study investigated its effects on learner academic performance.

Summary

In this chapter literature that is related to the research questions was lightened. The dynamics surrounding the centre of this study, grade promotion and progression are many. Literature in the international domain is quite lacking on grade promotion from primary to secondary. It is for this reason that information on retention was also considered as a way to understand grade promotion and progression. Here international literature was drawn on as literature regarding automatic progression is lacking in Zambia.

The theoretical perspective was narrowed to look at how this fitted into the education process in Zambia and Mwense in particular where the study was conducted, and thereafter moved into the area of schooling, seeking to understand the effects related to grade seven promotion

and progression to grade eight. In the next chapter, attention is turned to the methodological issues relating to this study.

CHAPTER THREE

METHODOLOGY

Overview

This chapter covers the following parts; research paradigms, research design, study site, study population, sample size, sampling, procedure, data collection instruments, and data collection procedure, data analysis and ethical considerations.

3.1 Research Paradigm

This research study utilized the qualitative approach in order to gain detailed, contextual information and obtain a better focus and insight into the effects of automatic grade seven progression to grade eight. This approach was explained by Creswell (2004) that qualitative study is an inquiry process of understanding a social or human problem, based on building a complex, holistic picture, formed with words, reporting detailed views of informants, and conducted in a natural setting. Qualitative approach was further defined by Denzin and Lincoln (1994) that it is multi-method in focus, involving an interpretive, naturalistic approach to its subject matter. This means that qualitative researchers study things in their natural settings, attempting to make sense of or interpret phenomena in terms of the meanings people bring to them. Qualitative research involves the studied use and collection of a variety of empirical materials, personal experience, introspective, life story interview, observational, historical, interactional, and visual texts-that describe routine and problematic moments and meaning in individuals' lives.

The suitability of the qualitative paradigm to this study was that in trying to investigate the effects of grade seven automatic progression data was collected basing on the personal experience of DESO, head teachers, teachers, learners and the parents on various issues regarding automatic progression.

3.2 Research Design

In order to fully investigate the effects of automatic grade seven progression to grade eight on pupil performance and quality, a phenomenological design was used. Giorgi (2012) stated that; phenomenology can be defined as the direct investigation and description of phenomena as consciously experienced by people living those experiences. Phenomenological research

is typically conducted through the use of in-depth interviews of small samples of participants. By studying the perspectives of multiple participants who are the District education standard officer, head teachers, teachers, learners, and parents, the researcher sort to find out what participants have experienced concerning automatic grade seven progression to grade eight from the perspective that they have an experience of the phenomena, (automatic grade promotion) from different experiences.

In order to investigate the effects of automatic progression of grade seven to grade eight, the people who had experienced the phenomena, (automatic progression) pupils, teachers , head teachers and parents were involved to describe the phenomena in various aspect of it.

3.4 Target Population

Mugenda and Mugenda (1999) defined a target population as the members of a real set of people, events or objects, the researcher wishes to generalize the results of the research. Prathapan (2014) also added that; a research population is also known as a well-defined collection of individuals or objects known to have similar characteristics. All individuals or objects within a certain population usually have a common, binding characteristic or trait. The target population for this study comprised all secondary school head teachers, all secondary school teachers and all junior secondary school learners, all the parents to junior secondary school learners in Mwense district. This target population was chosen because all had similar characteristics of being in the same district with similar experiences.

3.5 Description of the Sample and Sampling Technique

3.5.1 Schools

Mwense district had nine government secondary schools. The nine secondary schools were both in semi-urban and rural areas. Four of them were day secondary schools, two of them were boarding secondary schools while the other three were junior secondary schools. This homogeneous purposive sampling was used to achieve a homogeneous sample that shared the same (or very similar) characteristics or traits. Four schools were sampled two day secondary and two junior secondary schools because those were the schools where automatically moved learners were taken.

3.5.2 Head Teachers

All Head teachers of the four schools were be purposively sampled. Homogeneous purposive sample was used to sample the head teachers. This is because they were the people responsible for administration of the schools hence they were the right people who were responsible for admission of learners and analysis of performance of the learners.

3.5.3 Teachers

Teachers were directly involved in the teaching and assessing of learners. They interacted with learners in various school activities inside and outside the classrooms. This means that they were likely to have a wide knowledge concerning the academic performance of the learners and their morale in school. Teachers might have had various views concerning learner progression. Purposive sampling was used. This is the sampling technique that is used when the researcher needs to have knowledge from individuals that have particular expertise. The Head of department from each school provided the researcher with two teachers a male and a female teacher from each school. The teachers were those teaching junior secondary school classes where the study was directly focused. Two teachers were sampled from each sampled school. This made a total of 8 teachers, 4 heads of departments, one (1) from each school and eight 8 class teachers two from each school four (4) males and four (4) females.

3.5.4 Learners

Learners were the ones who were at the centre of the automatic progression issue. It was for that reason that the researcher sampled a bigger number from them. For that investigation, the researcher targeted grade eight and nine learners. This helped the researcher in investigating more about the effects because they were the ones who experienced the issues that the researcher wished to understand such as academic performance, morale and enrolment. Using the data from the careers and guidance office where the learner's results were kept after admission, extreme or deviant case purposive sampling was used to choose the learners that scored low marks at grade seven examination. Those were the learners who were automatically moved. Four (4) learners from each school two (2) male and two (2) female. Among the sixteen (16) sampled learners four (4) males and four (4) females were grade nine (9) learners and the other four (4) females and four (4) males were grade eight (8) learners.

Therefore, this study sampled sixteen (16) learners in total, eight (8) females and eight (8) males.

3.5.5 Parents

Parents were connected to the learners in the sense that they provided them with support needed for education in terms of school fees and other items. They were also guardians to the learners. Not only that, parents also received feedback from schools in terms of learner performance through termly reports. They also had knowledge on the abilities of the learners because they knew how they performed, hence their participation in the study was of great importance. Using snow bow sampling, parents were sampled and targeted to get the information related to automatic grade progression through their experience and their views.

3.6. Sample Size

The sample size of eight (8) teachers were sampled two (2) from each school. All four (4) head teachers from the four secondary schools were sampled. Sixteen (16) learners were sampled, four (4) from each of the four sampled secondary schools were targeted. Four parents were also identified and sampled through snow bow (1) District education standard officer. The sample targeted the four junior secondary schools which seemed suitable for the study because those were schools that received the progressed learners with lower marks because they were categorised as day secondary schools. The study had a total of thirty three (33) participants.

3.7. Data Collection Methods

This study used interviews to collect data. Choo (2015) stated that different data collection instruments are used in qualitative research. The most common are interviews, focus group discussions, observational methods and document analysis. Ranney, et al (2015) also noted that interviews are useful to explore experiences, views, opinions, or beliefs on specific matters.

3.7.1 Interview Schedules

Five interview guides were designed (see appendix) which were used to conduct interviews by the researcher to collect information from the District Standards Officer, school head teachers, teachers, learners and parents. The researcher anticipated interviews to be effective in investigating the effects of automatic grade progression because they allowed the

researcher to probe the respondents to explain more on the issue according to each respondent experience. The interviews also seemed to be suitable for the parents who did not know how to read and write in English. To some learners who had difficulties in writing, interviews seemed to be an effective way of getting data. In cases where the respondents were not able to understand English, the researcher used local language. This might have led to the respondents such as learners and parents express issues more clearly and comfortably in the language they were more familiar with.

For the learners, the researcher also used interviews. Though time consuming, interviews seemed to be effective to collect data from learners. This is because it allowed them to express their views and experiences about learner automatic progression without feeling shy as it might be the case in group interview. This seemed to have prevented influential learners to dominate the interview, hence gave the researcher advantage of getting views from every learner.

3.7.2 Semi-Structured Interview Guide for the District Education Standard Officer.

The semi-structured interview guide for the District Education Standards Officer were used to collect data about their views on the automatic grade seven progression to grade eight concerning the reported academic performance of the moved learners from the schools where the learners are taken. The researcher through interviews investigated the other effects that might were caused by automatic grade progression.

3.7.3 Semi- Structured Interview Guide for Head Teachers

This semi- structured interview guide were used to collect information from the Head teachers about their experiences as administrators in schools where automatically progressed learners are. They were responsible for administering of all school activities and from time to time they endorsed in report books for learners, hence they had knowledge on the academic performance of the learners who were researched. They were also be in a better position to explain the general enrolment of classes where these learners were taken. Other challenges faced in teaching automatically moved learners were also investigated through interviews with head teachers.

3.7.4 Interview Guide for Teachers

Semi-structured interviews were used to collect information from the teachers on the effects of automatic grade progression on the general learner performance, ability and morale in the

classroom. The information on classroom enrolment, individual learner attention and understanding of concepts were also investigated in this interview. Information on challenges faced in teaching automatically moved learners was also collected. Lastly teacher's views on the issue of automatic grade seven progression were noted, because they interacted with the learners so they were in a better position to give views on the automatic progression because they experience it.

3.7.5 Interview Guide for Learners

Interviews were used to collect information about the background of the learners in terms of their ability and results obtained at grade seven. The discussion also obtained information about the learner performance, motivation enrolment in junior secondary school. Views on how learners were affected by automatic grade progression was also collected through discussion. The discussions was conducted in a flexible manner to allow learners to freely express their experience without fear, shy or intimidated. Though time consuming, with a large sample, interviews seemed to have been effective to collect data from the learners. This is because it allowed learners express their views and experiences about learner automatic progression without feeling shy as it might have been the case in group interview.

3.7.6 Interview Guide for Parents

Semi-structured interviews were used to collect information about the Parent's views on the automatic grade seven progression to grade eight concerning performance and the ability of their children. The other information the researcher collected from the parents included performance and commitment of their children towards learning of their children and the outcome they expect from their children in school.

3.8. Trustworthiness

The aim of trustworthiness in this qualitative inquiry was to support the argument that the inquiry's findings were worth paying attention to and trusted. Trustworthiness in this study was ensured through dependability and credibility to enhance the truth of the research study's findings. This went down to answer the question of how true and accurate are the findings.

3.8.1 Dependability

To ensure dependability, the researcher used inquiry audit which will required an outside person to review and examine the research process and the data analysis in order to ensure that the findings were consistent and could be repeated.

3.8.2 Credibility

The researcher used triangulation to help in credibility. Triangulation was accomplished by asking the same research questions to different study participants. The researcher design questions (see appendix) in different forms but aiming to collect the same data. The researcher then generalised the responses which were given by parents, teachers, head teachers, learners and education standard officer who were responding to the same question. The researcher collected data from different sources and by using different ways, but to answer the same research questions.

3.9 Data Analysis

To analyse data in this study thematic analysis was used. Clarke and Braun (2013) explained that thematic analysis is a process of identifying and analysing themes within qualitative data. The goal of thematic analysis is to identify themes, i.e. patterns in the data that are important or interesting, and use these themes to address the research or say something about an issue. This is much more than simply summarising the data; a good thematic analysis interprets and makes sense of it. To ensure this a reality, thematic data analysis was used. This analysis was done in six processes which are explained below:

- a) Familiarisation with the data: This was the first phase which involved reading and re-reading the data, to become immersed and intimately familiar with its content.
- b) Coding: This phase involved generating succinct labels (codes) that identified important features of the data that were relevant to answering the research question. This also involved coding the entire dataset, then collating of all the codes and all relevant data extracts, together was done for later stages of analysis.
- c) Searching for themes: At this stage the researcher examined the codes and collated data to identify significant broader patterns of meaning (potential themes). This involved collating data relevant to each candidate theme. The researcher then worked with the data and reviewed the viability of each candidate theme.
- d) Reviewing themes: In this phase the researcher checked the candidate themes against the dataset, to determine that a convincing story of the data, and one that answers the research question. In this phase, themes were typically refined and be combined, or discarded.
- e) Defining and naming themes: This phase involved developing a detailed analysis of each theme, working out the scope and focus of each theme, determining the story of each. It also involved deciding on an informative name for each theme.

- f) Writing up: This was the final phase. Here the researcher involved merging together the analytic narrative and data extracts, and contextualising the analysis in relation to existing literature.

The researcher made analytical conclusions from the data presented as codes and then themes. Once data was reassembled through coding, the researcher was then be able to extract excerpts from the data and viewed them in relation to and in the concert with each other. The researcher then focused on interpreting what was going on within and across varied experiences, beliefs, and began to identify thematic patterns across the data.

3.10. Ethical Considerations

The researcher maintained and recognized all the responsibilities needed to conduct educational research. This was done by adhering to appropriate ethical conduct during the all process of the study. Ensuring ethical concerns is an important part of any educational research. Resnik (2015) stated that there are several reasons why it is important to adhere to ethical norms in research. First, norms promote the aims of research, such as knowledge, truth, and avoidance of error. For example, prohibitions against fabricating, falsifying, or misrepresenting research data promote the truth and minimize error.

In this study the researcher adhered to ethical standards which promoted the values that were essential to collaborative work, such as trust, accountability, mutual respect, and fairness. Many ethical norms in research, such as guidelines for authorship, copyright and patenting policies, and confidentiality were observed to protect participant's interests while encouraging collaboration.

Ethical consideration was also very important in this study. Therefore, this research paid attention to ethical considerations that meant to protect the views and responses which were collected from the DESO, head teachers, teachers, learners and parents who took part in the research. In conducting interviews to the research participants and in conducting data analysis, ethical issues were strictly considered and followed. This promoted researcher and participant relationship.

3.10.1 Researcher and Participant Relationship

Building a relationship is very cardinal in qualitative research which intends to get data through interviews. This is because the researcher needs interaction which is based on mutual

understanding with the participants in order to get data from the willing participant through interviews. Researcher and participant relationship was enhanced through the assurance and adherence to principles of honesty, integrity, confidentiality, legality and respect for colleagues.

3.10.2 Honesty

The researcher collected data from participants who were District education officer, head teachers, teachers, parents and learners. Therefore, the researcher paid attention to protect those who were involved in the research in ensuring that their views were not misrepresented or fabricated. To ensure honesty, the researcher made sure that all the data results, methods, procedures were not fabricated, misinterpreted or falsely reported or publicized. This was built on truth and exact presentation of the research findings to the public.

3.10.3 Integrity

The researcher met participants of different backgrounds who held various values and beliefs. To ensure integrity the researcher upheld honest and also gave particular attention to adherence to rules, regulations, guidelines, and followed commonly accepted professional codes or norms. This meant that time accuracy, agreements for meeting, sincerity and consistency was upheld. Further, the researcher kept his promises and agreements which were made by school authorities and the parents. The researcher also acted with sincerity, and strive for consistency of thought and action.

3.10.4 Confidentiality

During data collection, the researcher met new participants and respondents. The researcher reviewed his full identity to them. Then, the researcher assured the participants that privacy of research was guaranteed and upheld. Further the researcher assured the participants that they were not referred to by name to ensure total confidentiality. This was to protect confidential communications, personnel records and many more information that was deemed confidential. This made participants feel very free to express themselves.

3.10.5 Legality

The study was conducted in different schools with different rules and regulations. Schools also operated under education policies which guided the conducting of certain activities in schools and at the district education office. There were also various human rights that

protected people regardless of age and status. In that area the researcher knew and obeyed relevant laws, institutional and governmental policies at all level of the research process. This enhanced legality of the study process and it eventually protected both the researcher and participants from any possible cause of prosecutions. The participants were made aware of all the legal issues needed in research to ensure safe interaction and relationship.

3.10.6 Respect for Participants

During data collection process the researcher met and interacted with a lot of people, older, same age and younger. Among them people with different positions in the ministry of general education, such as the DESO, head teachers, H o Ds, and teachers and parents of different status. The researcher upheld respect to all the research participants and the authorities in the institutions where the research was conducted. The researcher also assured all participants and ensured respect and fair treatment. This seemed to have enhanced the relationship between the researcher and participants.

3.10.7 Informed Consent

To ensure that the participants were aware and assured of the ethical considerations, the researcher ensured informed consent which was obtained after the participant had been presented with pertinent information regarding the research and all ethical assurance. This was done in good time to review the consent document and have all questions answered. The consent was then obtained prior to study procedures. Participant privacy during the discussion was respected and the environment was free of undue influence and coercion from the research team.

Summary

Qualitative approach was adopted for this study and the phenomenological design was used. Data was collected through interviews. Purposive sampling was used. Thematic data analysis was used. Trustworthiness was considered under the principles honesty, integrity, respect, confidentiality and legality. The next chapter presents the research finds and results.

CHAPTER FOUR

RESULTS

Overview

In this chapter the researcher presents the findings of this study whose purpose was to investigate the effects of automatic grade seven progression to grade eight on learner academic performance and provision of quality education in selected secondary schools of Mwense district in Zambia. In line with this purpose, this study sought to achieve the following objectives: investigate the performance of the learners who are automatically progressed to grade 8 in junior secondary school; establish the extent to which automatically progressed learner's morale and self-esteem towards learning is sustained; examine the enrolment levels in junior secondary classes where the automatically progressed learners are taken; and to establish teachers and parents views on automatic grade seven progressions to grade eight. Description of the sample has also been described as demographic of respondents.

4.1 Demographics of the Respondents

In this section the demographics of the respondents who took part in this study are presented. There were four secondary schools from which data was gathered and five categories of respondents namely head teachers, subject teachers, learners and parents. The other respondent was the District Education Standard Officer. These were sampled because they were perceived to be key informants needed for the research. All the groups that took part were interviewed on one to one basis. Learners and teachers were identified as people at the centre of the experience of the issue of automatic learner progression, hence the big number was sampled as compared to the standard officers and head teachers. The parents were sampled through snow bow. Table 4.1 shows the demographics of respondents

Table 4.1. Frequency and percentage distribution of the respondents

Type of Respondents	<i>f</i>	%
Learners	16	49
Teachers	8	24
Head teacher	4	12
Parents	4	12
Education Standard Officer	1	3
Total	33	100

Table. 4.1. Shows the frequency and percentage distribution of respondents. It shows that learners were 16 representing 49 %, teachers were 8 representing 24 %, head teachers were 4 representing 12 %, and parents were 4 representing 12 % as well. There was only one Education standard officer representing 3 %.

The gender distribution of teachers and learners was the same and it was good to get data from both parties on how they experienced the issue which was being investigated. The difference in gender for the head teachers was that all schools sampled had only male head teachers. For the parents it was a snow bow hence the gender imbalance because the researcher followed the identification from fellow parents.

This section also shows the varying professional qualification of respondents of this research which include Education standard officer, head teachers and teachers. Table 4.2 shows the frequency and percentage distribution of the Education standard officer, Head teachers and teachers according to professional qualifications.

Table 4.2 Frequency and percentage distribution of respondents according to professional qualifications.

Respondent's	Doctorate		Master's		Bachelors		Diploma	
	<i>f</i>	%	<i>f</i>	%	<i>f</i>	%	<i>f</i>	%
Standard officer	0	0	0	0	1	8	0	0
Head teachers	0	0	0	0	3	23	1	8
Teachers	0	0	0	0	2	15	6	46
Total	0	0	0	0	6	46	7	54

Table 4.2, shows that there were 6 (46 %) teachers with diplomas, 2 (15 %) teachers had bachelor's degree, 1 (8 %) and no teacher had a masters and PhD respectively. Likewise 3 (23 %) head teachers had bachelor's degrees, while 1 (8%) head teacher had a diploma. None of the head teachers had a masters and PhD respectively. 1 (8%) standard education officer had bachelor's degree.

4.2 Findings of Research Question One

Research question one sought to investigate the performance of the automatically progressed learners to grade eight in the selected secondary schools of Mwense district in Luapula province. The question was very important for the study because it sought to bring out the experience of how learners perform after they are automatically moved from primary to secondary school. This was based on first objective which aimed to establish the performance of the automatic progressed learners in four selected secondary schools in Mwense district. This objective was based on the learners', teachers', head teachers' and the DESO's views.

In this section research question one was discussed. The question was stated as follows: *How was the performance of automatically moved grade seven learners to grade eight?* All the respondents who were interviewed indicated that the performance of the progressed learners was low. The following were the main reasons attributed to low performance.

4.2.1 Learners Ability

In answering to the question that required stating how progressed learners performed in schools where they were taken, the DESO indicted that the performance was low citing the reasons of low literacy levels among progressed learners as indicted in some assessment analysis reports from the schools.. In explaining how learners performed the DESO said that;

Some progressed learners are not able to read and write in English in some schools though not every progressed learner. Some are able to read depending on the background. This has contributed to low performance in their respective schools.

When asked further to describe the performance of the learners in those schools which received automatically progressed learners and those that did not receive progressed ones, the response was that there was a difference in performance. In trying to answer to the same question above, the DESO said that;

The performance in schools which did not receive automatically progressed learners was generally better than those schools with the automatically progressed learners.

When asked further to explain what caused such performance differences, one of the indications was that the progressed learners, who in most cases did not perform well due low literacy levels, affected the general performance of those schools in terms of percentages and averages. The DESO said that;

School analysis reports indicate that some learner's literacy levels are very low and that has affected the performance of most of them. This is the reason why there is a difference in performance among the boarding secondary schools which do not receive progressed learners and the day secondary schools that receive progressed learners.

In trying to answer the same question on how the progressed learners performed in their schools as they routinely endorsed in learner assessment report books and checked exercises books were asked to state the general performance of the progressed learners. The common responses from all four head teachers indicated that most progressed learners performance was low. All head teachers (100%) indicated that the performance was below average by

most progressed learners. When asked further to explained what caused such performance, the responses indicated that most progressed learners did not know how to read and write in English language. Here is what head teachers said;

Head teacher one said that;

Some of the progressed learners are not able to read and write in English language, so it's a challenge for them to even understand the concepts which are taught in English language.

Head teacher two gave a similar view and said that;

Most progressed learners are struggling to read and write in English. This is a challenge to the learners themselves in terms of performance and to the teachers who teach them.

Like head teacher two, Head teacher three also said that;

Low literacy levels among progressed learners has contributed to low performance. They can't read and write well in English.

Similarly head teacher four said that;

The big challenge is that most progressed learners are unable to read and write. This is one of the main reasons why the performance is not good.

The similar question was asked to teachers who daily interacted with the learners in class and administered the tests and exercises to state how the progressed learners performed in class. Many teachers who were interviewed described the performance of the progressed learners as below average. However, it was also found that most of the automatically progressed learners did not perform well in both class activities and the assessment tests which were administered to them due to inability to read and write in English. In response this is what teachers said:

Teacher one said that;

Teaching the progressed learners is a challenge, this is because those learners' abilities are not considered before bringing them to the secondary school. Most of them lack basic skills to help them learn. Most of them are unable to read and write in English, while here we don't teach how to read

we just follow the syllabi. This is the reason why most of them perform below average.

In a similar view with teacher one, teacher two also said that;

There some learners who got at least high marks and their ability and performance is different from the progressed ones. Those are able to write and read at least simple English unlike most progressed learners who cannot read and write even simple English.

With a similar view though in different words teacher three also said that;

It is so challenging teaching learners with low literacy levels. Those who can't understand what you are saying. With no option sometimes I resort to explain in local language just to help the learners get the meaning.

Similarly teacher four also said that;

It's so frustrating teaching learners who cannot read nor understand English. This affects the performance and the pace at which I move when teaching, due to repeating the concepts in just trying to help them get some concepts at the end of the day.

The learners were also asked to explain how they performed in both class exercises and class tests in relation to their literacy levels. Most of them indicated that, they performed poorly citing the reasons of failing to read and write in English, failing to get what teachers teach due to failure to fully understand English. For instance in responding to a similar question 13 out of 16 learners indicated that they were not able to read and write fully in English. Given is what some learners said on their performance in relation to their literacy levels;

To the requirements of the questions, learner one said that;

I am finding difficulties in learning since I cannot fully read and understand English. I fail to get what teachers teach. I also feel guilty and shy because am being blamed by my parents that am just spoiling money because my performance which has always been low.

Learner two just like learner one also said that;

Sometimes I even get worried with my low performance because I cannot understand most of English words, so I thought of repeating a grade so that I start tuitions.

Answering to the same question, learner three also gave a similar expression and said that;

I perform poorly because I don't understand most of the things that teachers teach. It's really been a challenge, I can't write and read more English words and I always get low marks.

Learner four also gave a similar expression when said that;

The big challenge I have is lack of understanding and writing in English that's why I fail in most subjects. In local language I perform well because I understand it and I know to read.

Learner five also gave the impression of low performance and said that;

I cannot lie to say I perform well, because I find difficulties in writing and reading in English. For example in the last end of term test I only passed in icibemba (local language) and social studies. The rest I failed.

4.2.2 Prior Knowledge on Learning Content

Answering further to the same questions on how learner performance was, DESO, head teachers, teachers and learners were interviewed and indicated that most progressed learners had low prior knowledge on the learning content they found in secondary school.

Responding to the question the DESO indicated that some learners performed well and some performed poorly due to the background and the learning skills possessed by the learner. The standard officer said that;

The learning skills and prior knowledge of the learner are not considered when progressing the learners to grade eight hence differences in performance depending on each learner's background, ability and prior knowledge. Mostly the performance of automatically progressed learners is not good

Head teachers expressed common response regarding prior knowledge of most progressed learners. For instance three of the head teachers had said;

Head teacher one said that;

Most automatic progressed learners have little prior knowledge of what they learn, then they also don't understanding English. This makes it difficult for them to get the concepts. It has even affected their performance.

In a similar view with head teacher one, head teacher two said that;

It's a challenge for most progressed learners when it comes to performance. Most of them have low ability levels, coupled with little knowledge which results in low academic performance.

Answering to the same questions teachers interviewed indicated that automatically progressed learners were even failing to complete class exercises indicating that they failed to get instruction and knew very little on what was required of them. For instance 4 of the 8 teachers said;

Teacher one said that;

Most of progressed lack knowledge on most of the content and this affects their performance. For instance some learners cannot even add numbers properly, so it's a challenge when a more complicated concepts is introduced to them.

Similarly, teacher two also gave a statement on learner performance and said that;

The knowledge of the most progressed learners is low. This has contributed to low performance because. Most of them fail to explain things that they were taught at primary school. This becomes a challenge when introducing concepts. This has affected the performance of progressed learners negatively.

Responding to the same question, teacher three in a similar expression said that;

There those learners who were not progressed they passed with good marks and their ability and knowledge is so impressing, unlike the progressed learners who in most cases show little knowledge.

The response from teacher four was almost the same with teacher three and said that;

Not all learners were progressed some passed on their own and they're the ones who perform better because they can read and write in English and they show a certain level of knowledge. Progressed learners perform poorly due to low prior knowledge and literacy levels.

Basing on the same question, learners were then asked to describe the level at which they knew what was being taught in various subjects in class. Most of them indicated that they found learning content to be difficult in many study areas because most of the things they learnt were new to them except for Zambian language.

In response to the question on prior knowledge and learning content learner one said that;

I have no much knowledge of the learning content that I found in a secondary school, this makes my performance bad in both class exercises and in the class tests. This makes me feel bad as if I just escort my friends to school.

Like learner one, learner two had the same feelings and said that;

I don't understand what I learnt in subjects like mathematics, science, social studies and business studies. This makes me feel bad for I perform badly in these subjects and there is no one to teach me at home and only if I knew how read well in English, maybe I would have improved.

In the same way as learner two, learner three also said that;

I know less on what we learn in most subjects, because when the teacher is teaching in English it's a challenge to understand and I always wish it could also be explained in local language.

Learner four also said that;

Less knowledge on a subject matter affects my performance in both class exercises and the tests. This makes me feel bad especially that some of my age mates in our class perform better.

4.3 Findings of Research Question Two

Research question two sought to find out the extent to which automatic progression of learners to grade eight affected the morale and self-esteem of the learners. This question was also important in the study because it was put to try to understand the psychological and mental experience of the learners who were taken to the secondary school without consideration of the basic skills that the learner possessed such as literacy level and the prior knowledge on the subjects. The question also sought to understand the implications it had on the general academic programmes of the learners. The question was stated as here below;

To what extent did automatic progression of grade seven learners to grade eight affect the morale and self-esteem of the learners?

Respondents were requested to explain how automatic progression affected the learner morale and self-esteem. This area of the research concerned mainly the educators who were teachers and the learners. During an interview respondents were drawn to the aspects of learner activeness and participation in class activities and willingness to learn.

4.3.1 Learner participation in Classroom

In trying to answer to research question two, the researcher asked the respondents to express their views regarding the extent to which learner morale was affected. To this the research question, sub -questions were raised to investigate the readiness of the learners to learn and the extent to what learners actively participated in class? And many more.

Responding to the question, teacher one said that;

Most automatic progressed learners in my class show low morale and remain quite most of the time in both class discussions. Most of them lack some skills to help them in learning.

In a related response teacher two also disclosed that;

In most cases progressed learners avoid the responsibilities in the classroom during discussions. They are so passive in class especially when the lesson is on. On the other hand it's a different story when they are outside, they tend to be active. For example some of the learners who are so passive in class are seen active during sports.

The researcher further heard a similar view from teachers three who said that;

Progressed learners seem to have low morale in class as it is seen in their passiveness and low rate at which they write class exercises.

Similarly teacher four also said that;

I have a challenge with most progressed learners, because they don't participate in class they look so inferior, they cannot talk in class and when you give the exercise they write slowly. In most cases they don't even bring work for marking, unless you pay attention to them.

Teacher five also gave a similar expression and said that;

The learner's morale is quite low because very few of them are active in class, sometimes I try to motivate them by giving them responsibilities to perform in class like in group work but mostly they refuse.

To the requirements of the same questions, learner one also said that;

I feel so shy because I fail to express myself in English and I feel out of place especially when the teacher is saying what I cannot understand. I feel it's better to remain quite.

Learner two just like learner one also expressed that;

It's so hurting especially that sometimes my friends laugh and gossip about my performance in class. To avoid embarrassment I opt to remain quiet in classroom.

Learner three also said that;

Sometimes it's frustrating learning what you don't understand. In order to avoid embarrassment I choose to remain quiet especially when the subject is so difficult.

4.3.2 Willingness to Learn

In answering research question two further, the learners were asked to express their views and experience regarding their morale and self-esteem in relation to their ability and performance. To this research question, the sub-questions was raised to ask learners the extent to which they were eager to learn. Considering the research question above, during the interviews it was indicated that the willingness to learn by learners was low.

Responding to a question, one teacher said that;

Sometimes some of those learners especially if they know that tomorrow they will be writing a test they tend to miss classes, am not really sure if they fear to fail but I suspect so because when I asked my fellow teacher if they also miss their tests they agreed.

In a related view on willingness to learn, teacher two said that;

The morale to remain in class room is low for some learners. They prefer to remain outside than stay in class.

Teacher three also gave a similar expression and said that;

Most progressed learners willingness to learn is quite low as it may be evidenced by their less commitment to do class activities such as lessons and tests. In most cases they don't write exercises and miss tests.

Answering to the same interview question the learners reported that it was so demoralizing to be in class without knowing how to read and write in English which led to them develop low willingness to learn. Learners also reported that it was also heart breaking to be laughed at by colleagues when they failed. Most of the learners who were interviewed expressed the same experience concerning their morale in relation to their performance and ability.

In response to the same question learner one said that;

Learning sometimes becomes boring and I develop less morale to learn because in most cases I don't understand what the teachers says. If only I was able to read, write and understand English learning would be enjoyable.

Learner two also said that:

Sometimes my morale to learn goes because I see it at share wasting of time because grade nine examination is not easy from what those who have written it before say. Unless I improve then I can say I will pass. As at now I don't know if I can pass.

Learner three also seemed to be experiencing the same with learner two and said that;

I get demoralized sometimes and feel like not to learn. This is because of what I rate myself as at now I can't pass grade nine examinations if it started today, may be icibemba (local language) I can write and pass.

The fourth learner in a similar view also expressed that;

Some of our friends laugh at us when we fail and in most cases I feel like, it's better to be absent than to write and fail. My parents also don't take it easily when I fail, they shout at me.

4.4 Findings of Research Question Three

Research question three sought to find out how the enrolment was in the classes where automatically progressed learners were taken. The question was important in this study as it tried to find out how the population was in classes and how it affected quality education provision. The question was stated as here below;

How was the enrolment of the classes where learners are automatically moved?

The interview guide questions (see appendix) guided the researcher in investigating data for research question three. The participants who were mainly head teachers, teachers and learners were asked for their experience on the enrolment in the classes where automatic progressed learners were taken in their schools.

Various factors related to enrolment were considered in order to investigate more on the enrolment. Various questions were asked to participants depending on the post and roles they played in school concerning the enrolment of classrooms where progressed learners were taken. The views from the teachers and learners consistently gave the impression that the classes were overcrowded and the researcher wanted to investigate more on how it affected learning and quality of education. The reports were as follows:

4.4.1 Infrastructure and Learning Materials

In responding to the questions the DESO stated that the schools where automatic progressed learners were taken the enrolment was high and led to shortage of infrastructure and learning resources which in most cases did not match with the enrolment. The DESO said that;

There are more learners in those schools where automatic progressed learners are taken coupled with few infrastructure and few learning support items. It's a challenge in those schools.

In response to the same question on enrolment the responses from the all four (100%) head teachers gave the impression that the enrolment was high in those classes which led to having too many learners in junior secondary classes than the number of learning items which were desks, books and the infrastructure. The head teachers further reviewed that it was challenging since their schools lacked adequate infrastructure. This is what they said;

Head teacher one expressed that;

The classes where automatic progressed learners are taken are overcrowded leading to shortage of rooms, books and desks. For example here we have over 1000 learners with only six class rooms. It becomes a challenge even in delivering quality education.

In a similar expression head teacher two also said that;

The available desks and books we have don't match with the number of learners, this has contributed to a high ratio of four learners sitting on one desk.

In response to the same question head teacher three also gave a similar view as head teacher two and said that;

With automatic progression, class enrolment is high causing many challenges such as shortage of desks, text books. The challenge is quite big in this area because learners too overcrowded in the class rooms.

On the other hand teachers who daily interacted with learning in class responded to the questions on enrolment. Most of them expressed that they experienced shortage of rooms and other teaching related materials. This is what they responded.

In answering to the same question, teacher one stated that;

The enrolment is too high to the extent of having 116 learners in my class room. This causes problems when it comes to sitting and distribution of books. Some pupils just squat they fail to spare a desk. In most cases I just resort to write everything on the board because pupil-book ratio is too high. It's so challenging.

Teacher two like teachers one said that;

The class rooms we are teaching are overenrolled to the extent of experiencing shortage of desks and text books. It becomes a challenge for instance I teach English so it's a problem to teach comprehension which require learners to read on their own. I skip it because the books we have cannot match with the enrolment.

Guided by the interview schedule, the researcher also spoke to the learners separately, from their respective schools. In response to the same question, learners also expressed that the enrolment in their classes was high. They further voiced that the enrolment caused panic because desks were not enough to cater for the number of the learners, in one school it was even aired that some learners even squatted on blocks. This is what they voiced out;

In response to the question on enrolment learner one said that;

We are too many in our class such that some of our colleagues fail to secure the desks, and it becomes a problem during writing. In most cases we sit four per one desk while other remain standing or squat.

In a similar view of shortage of learning equipment learner two also said that;

Text books in many subject don't cater for all of us, they seem to be few because sometimes we use one (1) text book per five (5) or six (6) learners. It becomes a challenge especially if others write fast and turn a page before others. This sometimes contributes to failure to finish the exercise in time and remain unmarked.

On the same issue learner three also admitted that;

Our class is overcrowded and the class rooms are not big enough, so there is no space left. The desks are also not many most reaching the black board in front and it's difficult if you want to pass and the teachers complain about it.

Learner four also gave a similar expression as other learners and said that;

We are so many in our class and the desks are few. When it's to enter into class we rush just to secure a desk. Some learners fail to secure desks in class and remain standing. The text books are also very few to the extent that we share four or five pupils per book.

4.4.2 Individual Learner Attention

In trying to investigate more on the enrolment, teachers expressed that they failed to manage giving individual attention to the slow learners in relation to the class enrolment they had. Out of 8 teachers interviewed, 6 (75%) voiced that they failed to manage to give attention to each individual slow learner's due to high enrolment coupled with too many slow learners. This is what they expressed out:

In response to the question teacher one expressed that;

There are so many slow learners among the progressed and their classes are overcrowded. This is the reason why I fail to manage to pay attention to individual slow learners.

With a similar experience on enrolment teacher two also said that;

Paying attention to individual learner is not easy with the enrolment we have in our classes. To make matters worse the coming of automatic progression, there are a lot of slow learners which make it even more difficulty to look at one learner.

Responding to the same questions on enrolment teacher three also said that;

The classes we teach especially junior secondary level are overcrowded with a good number of slow learners. This makes it difficult to spend more time on one learner because a lot of them require same attention. In most cases i teach them generally.

On the same issue teacher three also narrated that;

Most of the progressed learners are slow learners because of the abilities. This is so challenging especially to give each one attention. Mainly I teach them generally as a whole

4.4.3 Marking of Learners Work

During interviews with teachers and learners, common report indicated that enrolment in the classes where automatic progressed learners were taken was high which it turn affected the provision of quality education in the way that it affected time management in terms of class exercise marking. This is what they said;

In response to the questions on the enrolment teacher one said that;

It is a challenge marking learners work within the period on time table. The classes are over enrolled. In most cases I mark the learners work after school.

In response to the same questions, teacher two also gave out a similar expression and said that;

In most cases I fail to mark the books for all learners due to time and over enrolment. If the number of learners was manageable like the case in senior secondary classes I can manage. I usually mark the books at spare time.

The expression which teacher two gave was also similar to teacher three who said that;

Marking all the learning learners work with this type of enrolment is not very possible. Sometimes I manage to mark those who finish fast but the majority I don't manage

Interestingly, answering to a similar question on enrolment most of the learners gave the common expression about it. They expressed that most of the time teachers were not marking all the learners' books within time. Here is what learners reviewed;

Responding to the question learner one said that;

Our teacher fails to mark all our books in most cases he carries them and marks at spare time. Sometimes it takes a day or two before the books are given back to us.

Learner two also spoke with similar experience as learner one and said that;

In most cases teachers carry our books and mark them at their spare time and sometimes it takes a days to bring them back. Some learners who write fast are marked but most of our books are marked after classes. Class monitors just collect them and take to the teachers.

Learner three also said that:

Our teachers rarely mark our exercises in class because of the time. The moment we finish writing the time elapses for the next teacher. They take our books and bring them back some other time.

In a similar experience learner four also said that;

Many times teachers mark our books after they have taught. It's in rare cases when they mark books whilst in class most of the time we take to them and they have many books to mark from other classes too so sometimes book take long to be marked even days to some extent.

4.4.4 Use of Teaching Methods

In responding to various questions on enrolment teachers expressed that they failed to use some of the teaching methods due to high enrolment and few resources in their classes. To respond to the questions they said;

Teacher one disclosed that;

Some concepts such as comprehension which demand for more attention and questioning are not regularly used because of high enrolment which makes it difficult to utilize it, looking at time number of questions and marking. The books are also not enough to cater for all learners.

The second teacher in a similar response also said that;

Due to high enrolment I fail to utilize various teaching strategies, I mainly stick to traditional way of teaching such as lecture method just to ensure I catch up with time and manage.

Teacher three also had a similar experience with other fellow teachers and said that;

In most cases I use lecture method due to enrolment because some teaching methods are not applicable. For instance it's so difficulty to use other teaching strategies which consume time. They are applicable if the enrolment is quite normal and not in an overcrowded class.

In a similar view which seemed to be correlating with other teachers said that;

Teaching some concepts in an overenrolled classes like the ones we teach in junior secondary is so challenging. Mostly I prefer using teaching methods that will ensure that all learners get the concepts at one time such as lecture method.

4.5 Research Question Four

Research question four sought to establish teachers and parents' views on automatic grade seven progressions to grade eight. The respondents to this question were only teachers and parents. Teachers were the professionals in the area of education delivery and automatic progression because they were implementers of the policy. They had experience on the

effects and had different views about it. The parents were the guardians and experienced the outcome of the policy in the way the learners progressed academically. The question was stated as here below;

What were the teachers and parents views on the automatic grade seven progression to grade eight?

The interview guide questions (see appendix) guided the researcher in gathering views from the teachers and parents. All the respondents who were interviewed had mixed feelings and views. The following sentiments were given.

4.5.1 Syllabus Coverage

The teachers were interviewed separately at different times at their respective schools. their views about the automatic progression were then probed. A lot of varying views were expressed out regarding automatic grade seven progression to grade eight by the teachers. One of the common views was that learner progression slowed the pace at which the syllabus was covered because most of progressed learners were slow learners. This prompted teachers to move slowly to allow easy understanding. Here is what they stated;

In response to the questions on the views teacher one said that;

The policy slows the pace at which the syllabus is covered. This is because automatic progression brings every grade seven learner to secondary school, some can't even understand nor write in English. This forces us to move slowly because we tend to repeat concepts just to try and help slow learners who are the majority with automatic progression.

Teacher two also aired out a similar view as teacher one and said that;

It's so difficult to complete the syllabus with automatic progressed learners because of their low level of understanding of the concepts, as a result I tend to move slowly to ensure that the learners gets something out of it. To me automatic progression is just a source of delay of syllabus completion.

Teacher three's sentiments were similar to other teachers who said that;

Automatic grade seven progression is not very a useful policy from the academic point of view in the sense it takes all learners to grade eight

regardless of their ability and literacy levels. This has contributed to having more slow learners in the classes which in turn has affected learning and the rate at which coverage of work is done.

4.5.2 Lowering Education Standards

Responding to the same interview questions most teachers aired out a common view that automatic progression was lowering the education standard as it brought every learner to the secondary school which in turn promoted failing and lowered education standards. Here is what they said:

Teacher one in response to the questions said that;

The policy of automatic progression is lowering the education standards in some way. This is because it is bringing a lot of slow learners who are in most found in overcrowded classes, giving the teachers no time for individual attention.

Viewing it in the same line of thought, teacher two also said that;

Due to high class enrolments associated with the automatic moving of learners to grade eight, the quality of teaching is compromised, because various teaching methods are not implemented, hence we just stick to traditional methods of teaching to ensure that the concepts are explained in general. This in turn lowers the standards of education.

Teacher three also said that;

Automatic progression contributes to lowering of quality education because most progressed learners are not able to read and write fully in English which leads to low academic performance and progression into senior secondary school.

Responding to the same question the views one parents also talked the same way as teachers and said that;

Promoting all learners to go to grade eight even if the scores are too low is not a good thing to do. It is just lowering the quality of education because, those learners ability is low that's why they fail to score good marks. In old

days those that came out of secondary school were better because qualification to secondary school was by ability and knowledge.

Parent two also expressed the similar view and said that;

Saying everyone who sits for examination should go to secondary is just making our education system weaker. It is obvious that those learners who are automatically taken will perform poorly and in the end the education system will be seen to be serving no purpose to the learners.

With a similar view on the automatic progression parent three also said that;

The issue of automatic progression to grade eight might promotes the use examination leakages and cheating. This because all learners are taken to grade eight regardless of their ability as a result they all want to pass and impress parents and teachers.

4.5.3 Promoting Failing

Answering to the same questions on views the teachers also gave out a common view on automatic progression that the policy promoted failing as it disadvantaged low performing learners who failed to progress due their low ability learner. Here is what they aired out;

Responding to the questions on views one teacher said that;

The policy is also somehow a destructor to slow learners. Most progressed learners cannot read and write well in English, then in the secondary school we follow the content of the syllabus. We don't teach learners how to read because that's done at primary school. This make learners be disadvantaged because the content becomes even more difficult in secondary school.

The other teacher also had similar view and said that;

The policy allows all learners regardless of the ability to the secondary school where the learners are faced with numeracy academic challenges such as failing to read in English and many more which in turn increases failing among the junior secondary learners.

With a similar view as teachers one, parents one also said that;

Automatic grade progression from primary to secondary school will increase joblessness because when some of those learners who are below average in performance are taken to secondary school, very few are likely to catch up the majority will leave school as failures and will have nothing to do because to enter any college or trades a reasonable academic qualification will be needed as entry.

The other parent with a similar view also said that;

Promoting a child whose ability is low to grade eight will mean share waste of money by the parent, because where there going the work becomes even more challenging, hence promoting failing.

Another parents when asked to express the views said that:

The policy of automatic progression is only helpful to the learners who are literate and whose ability is good. To the low ability and illiterate learners it's a destructor because they learn are subjected to a content which is even more difficult than what they learnt at primary.

Summary

In this section the researcher presented the findings of the study. The findings of the research helped the researcher to establish whether the research objectives of the study were achieved or not. The data of the study were presented under the headings which were in line with the four objectives of the study, namely: academic performance of the automatically progressed learners, enrolment of the classes where automatic progressed learners were taken, morale and self-esteem of progressed learners and teachers and parents view on automatic learner progression to grade eight. The findings in this section indicated that automatic grade seven progression affected the academic performance of the learners with low ability and low literacy levels. They faced challenges in learning. It also affected learning because in most cases, classes for progressed learners were over enrolled causing shortage of desks and books. Individual learner attention and the marking of exercise books was also affected by high enrolment levels. Progressed learner's morale and self-esteem was also affected and caused low eagerness to learn and passiveness in classes. Teachers and parents views also

indicated that the policy of automatic progressing learners promoted failing, lowered the quality of education and lowered the pace at which the syllabus moved. These findings are fully discussed in the next chapter which is discussion of findings.

CHAPTER FIVE

DISCUSSION

Overview

In this chapter the findings on effects of automatic grade seven progression to grade eight on learner academic performance and provision of quality education in selected schools of Mwense district have been discussed. The chapter is centred on four main themes which are; academic performance of the progressed learners; enrolment of the classes where automatic progressed are taken; morale and self-esteem of the progressed learners and teachers and parents views on automatic learner progression to grade eight.

Four questions guided this study. The first one was; how is the performance of automatically moved grade seven learners to grade eight? The second was, to what extent does automatic progression of grade seven learners to grade eight affect the morale and self-esteem of the learners? The third was, how is the enrolment of the classes where learners are automatically and the fourth and last question was; what are the teachers and parent's views on the automatic grade seven to grade eight? This discussion helped to bring about similar views, variations, and interpretations.

5.1 Academic Performance of the Automatically Progressed Learners

Good academic learner performance is supported by literacy, numeracy and life skills which a learners must have to help understand what is being taught and interpret it. A learners who is in secondary school must also be able to understand English which is a medium of instruction at that level in Zambia where the research was conducted. Knowledge of the previous learning content should also be present in a learner to help in linking up with the new content. Attitude and values are also important for a learner to perform better.

The findings for this objective were guided by research question one. The first question that sought to investigate the academic learner performance of the automatically progressed learners read: how was the performance of the automatically moved grade seven learners to grade eight? Two themes emerged from the findings learner ability and prior knowledge on learning content.

5.1.1 Progressed Learners Ability

During the interviews with the DESO, head teachers, teachers, learners and parents, the findings indicated that the performance of the progressed learners was generally below average. This was according to the perspective and experiences of the respondents. The head teachers, teachers and learners who were directly experiencing the performance gave the indication that most of the progressed learner's ability was low. Most of them did not know how to read and write in English which was the medium of instruction in secondary school. Automatic learner progression did not take into consideration the learner's literacy levels. The researcher further discovered that the progressed learners could not write nor read in class unless things were pre-written and then they copied. This contributed to the low performance of most progressed learners. It is in this line of thought that Davies (2011) also asserted that experience suggests that promoted learners arrive in the next grade level with little or no understanding of the basic rules of grammar, mathematics or any other subject because they were supposed to 'discover' these along the way.

5.1.2 Prior Knowledge of Learning Content

The other finding which was associated to the poor performance of the automatically progressed learners was inability to comprehend the concepts due to low prior knowledge and low ability levels. For instance 12 out of 16 interviewed learners expressed that they learnt things which they could not understand. Most progressed learners entered secondary school with low or no knowledge prior to what they found in secondary. Building upon the new knowledge was a challenge because they lacked prior knowledge and it contributed to low performance. This is also in line with Davies (2011) who noted that most automatic progressed learners to a higher grade had neither little or no background knowledge nor those concepts fundamental to the mastery of the subjects they are doing. Brighter learners succeed not because they know the content have ability.

When a learner lacks prior knowledge of the subject, it becomes a challenge especially to connect the ideas and to fully understand what is being taught. Progressed learners were found to lack prior knowledge and faced challenges in understanding most concepts. This lowered their performance. In the same line of thought Bloch (2009) also noted that learners who were automatically moved on to the next grade performed more poorly on average than if they had repeated. The learner who fails but merely repeats the same curriculum or instruction is likely not to face the problem as before. Also in support is Chimombo (2005)

who stated that when everyone is taken to grade eight without considering the capability, the quality of learning will be lowered as it becomes difficulty for the teacher to accommodate the low performing pupil who even fail to meet the required grade for secondary qualification.

5.2 Morale and Self-Esteem of the Progressed Learners

High morale is very important as it prepares the learner with confidence and good emotions which increases desire towards learning. When a learner has high morale, self-esteem also increases and pushes the interest to learn and participate fully in the activities of learning. In most cases learner morale is fostered by ability and skills that a learners possesses.

The findings for this objective were guided by research question two. The second research question that sought to establish the extent to which automatically progressed learner's morale and self-esteem towards learning was: how was the performance of the automatically moved grade seven learners to grade eight? Teachers and learners were associated to research question two because teachers taught the learners so they were in a better place to explain how the learners behaved towards learning. Learners themselves were also the right people to answer that question on themselves and how their morale and self-esteem was. Two themes emerged from the findings learner participation in classroom and willingness to learn.

5.2.1 Learner Participation in Classrooms

During the interviews with the learners and teachers it was found that the learner's morale and self-esteem was affected by their low ability which contributed to most learners have low morale in active participation. They were passive in class and rarely actively participated in the class room participation such as discussions. For instance 7 out of 10 teachers interviewed disclosed that progressed learners had low morale in participating and normally kept quiet. It was also noted that most automatically progressed learners lacked basic skills such as numeracy and literacy which hindered them to compete with their fellow learners. This affected the way they interacted with their friends and it contributed to them feeling shy and be laughed at by their friends as disclosed by most interviewed learners. This finding seemed to be in line with Thompson (2012) who stated that automatic grade promotion may be even more damaging to a child's self-esteem.

In the same line of thought Jean (2015) also stated that on the other hand the automatic progression policy was viewed to eliminate competition and motivation for both the learners

and the teachers. Low motivation on the side of the learners came as a result of continuous poor performance because they knew they did not have ability to compete with others.

5.2.2 Willingness to Learn

It was also found that most progressed learners willingness to learn was low. This affected the morale for the learners. They lost much hope in learning. Learners themselves expressed that they felt bad learning things that they did not understand. This affected their performance in such a way that they rated themselves low and this lowered their morale to work extra hard to catch up. They further expressed that they felt sitting in class was just for the sake of presence and not learning. For instance 9 out of 16 learners expressed that the way they rated themselves they couldn't sit for grade nine examinations and pass. Willingness which was found to be lacking in most progressed learners, is the driving force for eagerness to learn, participation, and regular class attendance. These findings are in line with those of Koppensteiner (2014) in his study on the relationship between automatic promotion and learning achievements and found that it had negative effect on the overall quality of education, as it is believed to eliminate competition, reducing student's motivation as it lowers the learning outcomes. Additionally this finding is related to the view of Athan (2014) who indicted that automatic promoted learners who struggled were overwhelmed and decided to give up which indicated the correlation on the automatic grade promotion and increased high school dropout rates, as a results of learners being confused in school which seemed to be discouraging.

In the same line of thought Steiner (1986) also argued against automatic promotion and stated that it negatively affected the overall quality of education since it eliminated competition, demotivates students and teachers alike hence lowering teaching and learning outcomes

5.3 Enrolment of the Classes Where Learners were Automatically Moved.

Pupil to teacher ratio is one of the important aspects for effective teaching. If a number of learners in a class is reasonable, the teacher finds it easy to manage the class and easily monitor each learner's rate of progress. Time for individual learners' attention can also be managed if the class enrolment is reasonable. Available infrastructure is also another important aspect to consider when talking about enrolment in schools.

The findings for this objective were guided by research question three. The third question that sought to examine the enrolment levels in junior secondary classes where the automatically

progressed learners were taken read: how was the enrolment of the classes where learners were automatically moved? During the interviews with the DESO, head teachers, teachers and learners, the findings indicated that the enrolment in the classes where automatic progressed learners were taken was high. Four themes emerged from the findings infrastructure and learning materials, individual learner attention, marking of learners work and the use of teaching methods.

5.3.1 Infrastructure and Learning Materials

From all the respondents the findings seemed to indicate that the enrolment in the classes was high and led to overcrowding in classes. Some teachers talked to indicated that in some instances the classes had over 100 learners. For instance at one school the teacher reviewed that the class had 109 learners.

It was also found that due to high enrolment in the classes where automatic progressed learners were taken, there was shortage of desks and text books which led to high learners-book ratio. For instance some teachers disclosed that the ration was so high to the extent of one text book per six learners. Teacher- pupil ratio was high in the four schools visited, when schools had no enough desks and text books, which in turn affected the teacher's capacities to teach effectively. This finding seem to be supported by Nugent (2013) who disclosed that most countries do not have enough resources and repletion of slow learners in the systems was creating congested classroom and other facilities, the teachers were also straining to handle the learners because of the large numbers.

5.3.2 Individual Learner Attention

Teaching was also found to be challenging in high populated classes where progressed learners were found. It led to the teachers fail to give individual learner attention. This was a result of overpopulated classes which contained large numbers of learners with low ability. It was also found that such a situation affected teacher effectiveness in delivering quality education as it hampered teachers to render individual pupil attention because of over enrolment. These findings are in line with the words of Owen and Ranick (2012) who noted that when everyone who sits for the examination is made to go to the next grade level the classes might be overcrowded and in the end reduce the quality of learning due to high pupil teacher ratios.

5.3.3 Marking of Learners Work

The findings also indicated that teachers failed to mark class exercises within specified time. This was because of high class enrolments coupled with slow learners who usually took a lot of time to finish writing. Instead they marked the books at spare time in most cases. It was also expressed that progressed learners needed much attention and even additional programme to help them catch up but due to high enrolment.

It was further found that in most cases books spent some time with the teachers because they did not mark them immediately, when they stopped teaching one class, they went to teach into other classes too. This affected the immediate feedback of the learning outcome. This finding seem to be in the same thought with Thompson (2012) who stated that grade promotion could have negative effect on learners with learning disorders in that they need a lot of additional support that may not be offered by demotivated and over stressed teacher.

5.3.4 Use of Teaching Methods

From the interview conducted with teachers and learners, it could be concluded that teachers failed to utilize some of the teaching methods due high class enrolment and shortage of books and other learning materials. For instance three teachers disclosed that some contents such as comprehension were rarely taught due to high enrolment which reduced pupil-book ratio. Comprehension needed learners to read on their own but failed because the number of the books were not matching to give a learner read at free pace.

Teachers further disclosed that they mainly used traditional methods of teaching in order to catch up with time and the class enrolment. They rarely applied such methods which were not supported by too big class enrolment. This affected quality teaching as it restricted teachers to similar approaches of teaching. These findings seem to validate the statement of Roselle (2010) who stated that overcrowded classes reduce the quality of learning due to high pupil teacher ratios.

5.4 Teachers and Parents Views on Progression.

The findings for this objective were guided by research question four. The fourth research question that sought to establish teachers and parents' views on automatic grade seven progressions to grade eight read: what are the teachers and parents views on the automatic grade seven progression to grade eight? Teachers and parents were associated to research

question four because teachers taught the learners so they were in a better place to understand and have certain views about the policy. Parents also had their views concerning education of their children.

During the interviews with the teachers and parents the findings indicated that both the parents and teachers were fully aware of the automatic progression policy and its meaning. They expressed various views about the policy and three themes emerged which have been elaborated below

5.4.1 Syllabus Coverage

The researcher found that teachers viewed the policy as a contributing factor to the slow pace at which teachers finished the syllabus. This was because automatic progression brought every grade seven learner to secondary school. It was also found that some progressed learners couldn't understand nor write in English which forced teachers move slowly because they intended to repeat concepts to help slow learners who were the majority. This view by teachers is supported Athan (2014) noted that automatic learner promotion policy did not address the most important issues. It was also believed that it created a lot of time wasting as teachers were forced to repeat most of the things to create understanding of the new concepts as they built on each other, yet the syllabus did not provide a teacher with time to review the topic learnt in the lower grades for the slow learners in order to understand the next level concepts.

5.4.2 Lowering Education Standards

Automatic progression was also viewed to be lowering the education standards in some way. This was because it brought a lot of slow learners who were in most cases found in overcrowded classes, giving the teachers no time for individual learner attention.

Due to high class enrolments associated with the automatic moving of learners to grade eight, the policy was also viewed to lower quality of teaching which in most cases was compromised, because various teaching methods were difficulty to implement, which led to teachers sticking to traditional methods of teaching to ensure that the concepts were explained in general.

Just like the teachers voiced out, it was also found that parents viewed the policy of promoting all learners to go to grade eight even if their scores were too low as not a good

thing done. They viewed it as just lowering the quality of education because, those learners ability was low that's why they failed to score good marks. They compared it with old days that those who came out of secondary school were better because qualification to secondary school was by ability and knowledge.

5.4.3 Promoting Failing

It was also found that from academic point, teachers viewed automatic grade seven progression as not very a useful policy because learners were promoted to grade eight regardless of their ability and literacy levels which contributed to learners performing below average in junior secondary school.

The policy was also viewed as a destructor to slow learners. This was because the morale was destroyed by low level of learner's ability to comprehend the concepts. More worse in the secondary school where teachers followed the content of the syllabus. They didn't teach learners how to read because that was done at primary school.

All the four parents interviewed viewed automatic grade progression as a promoter of failure because when some of those learners who were below average in performance were taken to secondary school, very few were likely to catch up. The majority would leave school as failures and had nothing to do because to enter any college or trades a reasonable academic qualification was needed as entry. The view was similar with UNESCO (2016) that although enrolment rates have been increasing throughout the country, the overall quality of education raises concerns. While the system has been able to raise educational attainment at primary and lower secondary levels, this success has not given rise to a similar increase in upper-secondary and tertiary level attainment. Nor has it been translated into significant improvements in literacy levels among children and adults.

The policy of automatic progression was also viewed to be helpful only to the learners who were literate and whose ability was good. To the low ability and illiterate learners it was a destructor because the content of the subjects was even more difficult than what they learnt at primary school. This view is in line with Halverstadt's (2009) who stated that automatic grade promotion, when compared with retention of similar children, is an ineffective and possibly harmful intervention. It affected children with low achievement in academic progression.

Summary

In this chapter the researcher discussed the findings of the research which had been categorized in four main themes and 12 sub themes. The themes indicated the findings relating to academic performance of the progressed learners, the enrolment of the class where automatic progressed learners were taken, morale and self-esteem of the progressed learners and the teachers and parents view on automatic grade seven progression to grade eight. Regarding the academic performance of the progressed learners, it was found that the performance was poor due to learners' inability to read and write in English. Additionally, the learners did not have much prior knowledge to help build up new concepts which contributed led many learners failing to get the concepts and perform below average.

Concerning the enrolment of the classes where learners were taken, it was found that the classes were overenrolled causing shortage of infrastructure and other education materials. It affected quality teaching because the teachers failed to give individual learners attention and the pupil-book and teacher-pupil ratios were high posing challenges in quality education delivery. Marking of learners work was also challenged by over enrolment, most teachers marked learners work at spare time which delayed feedback.

The findings on learner morale and self-esteem were that automatically progressed learners exhibited passiveness in class, low eagerness to learn, this was as a result of low morale due to inability to read and understand English which hindered their active participation. Self-esteem was also found to be low in most progressed learners because of low ability which made them fail rate themselves very low with no hope of passing the examinations at grade nine.

As regard to the teachers and parents views on the policy, it was found that generally teachers and parents viewed automatic progression as being the cause of slow pace at which the syllabus was moving, It was also viewed as lowering educational standards and promoting failure. In the next chapter the researcher presents conclusions and recommendations.

CHAPTER SIX

CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Overview

In this chapter conclusions, the recommendations as well as the suggestions of the future related study are presented. The purpose of this study was to investigate the effects of automatic grade seven progression to grade eight on learner academic performance and the provision of quality education. The summary of the four research questions which the study answered were; how was the performance of the automatically moved grade seven learners to grade eight, to what extent did automatic progression of grade seven learners to grade eight affect the morale and self-esteem of the learners, how was the enrolment of the classes where learners are automatically moved and what were the teachers and parents views on automatic grade seven progression to grade eight.

6.1 Academic Performance of the Progressed Learners

The main research findings on the academic learner performance of the progressed learners as given by respondents were that; the performance for most progressed learners was below average due to the learner's inability to read and write in English which was a medium of instruction for secondary school. Additionally, most progressed learners lacked basic skills and prior knowledge in most subjects being taught and could not get the concepts because they were not understanding English.

This researcher concluded that most automatic progressed learners' performance was below average which was as a results of low ability of most of them. As expressed by the DESO, ability and literacy of the learners was not taken into consideration when progressing them to grade eight. This seemed to have contributed to most progressed learners inability to read and write in English which was the medium of instruction in the secondary school. Learners could not understand English which also restricted their acquisition of the concepts which were taught in English. Most automatically progressed learners had little prior knowledge to help them build on the content they found in secondary school which also reduced academic performance.

6.2 Morale and Self-Esteem of the Progressed Learners

From the findings it was discovered that most progressed learners had low morale which resulted from low abilities and low performance. Learning was so challenging due to inability to read and write in English which demoralized the learners and caused passiveness in class and low participation in learning. Additionally, most progressed learners could not participate fully in the class which led to low willingness to learn, hence lost hope of passing examination and progressing. This led to low self-esteem among the learners.

The researcher concluded that learner morale and self-esteem among the automatically progressed learners was low. This was due to low ability amongst most of the progressed learners. The performance of most progressed learners was not good which affected their morale and the way they participated in the class activities. This led to passiveness among the progressed learners in class. Most of them were not able to read and write in English nor understand English which contributed to reduced willingness to learn.

6.3 Enrolment of the Classes Where Learners were Automatically Moved.

Regarding the enrolment of the classes where automatic moved learners were taken, the study shown that the classes were over enrolled which affected the quality teaching in terms of shortage of infrastructure and other teaching and learning materials. High teacher-pupil ratio also contributed to the teachers less time to give each learner individual attention. Pupil-book ratio was also high which affected learning especially when learners needed to use the books. It was also found that the use various teaching methods could not be applied because high enrolment restricted the teachers to traditional methods of teaching to save time by explaining the concepts generally. High class enrolment was also found to have contributed to failure by teachers to mark learner's work books within the time. Teachers marked the learners work at spare which even delayed feedback.

The researcher concluded that most of the classes where automatic progressed learners were taken were over enrolled. Over enrolment in those classes affected quality teaching due to high teacher-pupil ratio which prevented the teachers from giving attention to individual learner needs. Due to over enrolment in the classes for automatically progressed learners, the teachers also failed to employ a variety of teaching methods and mainly used traditional methods of teaching in order to catch up with time and class population. High enrolment also caused the shortage of infrastructure, desks and books which gave both teachers and learners

challenges in teaching and learning respectively. It was also found that teacher did not manage to mark the learners work during the lesson periods due high enrolment and slow pace at which most progressed wrote. Instead they marked the work at spare time and in turn it affected immediate feedback of learning.

6.4 Teachers and Parents Views on Automatic Learner Progression.

Many views by the teachers and parents concerning automatic progression of grade seven learners to grade eight were established. The policy was viewed as not useful from academic perspective because it moved all learners regardless of their ability skills which promoted failing among the learners. The policy was also viewed to be slowing the pace at which the syllabus was covered because most progressed learners were low performing which led to teachers take time to explain the concepts to help them understand. It was viewed as the contributing factor to the lowering of education standards as it low ability learners who in most cases did not catch up but and ended up failures.

The researcher concluded that parents and teachers viewed the policy as promoting failing, because literacy and ability of the learner was not considered before taken to secondary school which resulted into low performing learners fail to catch up. The other held common view was that the policy might contribute to the lowering of education standards because some progressed learners who in most cases were performing poorly did not match the level of secondary school. This was because the most progressed learners were of low ability and the chances of catching up were low which contributed to failure, might leave learners with no certificates to support them enter into tertiary learning. Lastly the other common held view mostly by the teachers was that the policy contributed to the slow pace at which the syllabus moved. The reason here was that teachers were not teaching with the normal speed to push the syllabus, they moved slowly to allow low ability learners pick up few things before they proceeded.

6.6 Recommendations

In this study, a number of issues were revealed regarding automatic grade seven progression to grade eight and its effects on learner academic performance and the provision of quality education in selected schools of Mwense district in Zambia. In view of the above, the following recommendations were made:

1. The Ministry of General Education should stop automatic learner progression to grade eight and re-introduce reasonable cut-off point system of selection in order to allow only those with certain levels of knowledge and ability to enter into a secondary school.
2. The Ministry of General Education should also re-introduce Grade 4 competence examinations to help scrutinize learners who are able to proceed to upper primary for better preparation of grade seven examinations.
3. The Ministry of General Education should consider re-introducing teaching in English alongside with local languages in lower primary school in order to perfect learners in understanding and writing of English which is the language of instruction in secondary school.
4. The head teachers and teachers should be assessing automatic progressed learners' literacy levels before they are taken to secondary school to avoid poor performing and illiterate learners in secondary school.
5. Government should open more youth skills training centres so that those learners who cannot catch up academically can be given other survival skills in life.
6. Teachers in schools should consider repeating those learners who fail at grade seven especially if they are not able to and read write in order to help them catch up and then proceed afterwards if they pass.

6.7 Suggestion for Further Research

1. Future research may focus on investigating the literacy levels of the automatically progressed learners and its effects on quality education provision.

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PPENDIX 1-Consent Form for Parents

Parent's Consent Form

Introduction

I am seeking your consent to be involved in a study that I am carrying out.

Description

The study is titled Automatic grade seven progression to grade eight: its effects on learner academic performance and the provision of quality education. It will involve you answering questions and explanations on experiences you have as a parents or guardian whose child has automatically been progressed from grade seven to grade eight.

Ethics and Participant's rights

This study adheres to research ethics and I assure you that:

1. The study will not interfere with your home and family programmes nor your work and career.
2. You will not be identified or named.
3. You can choose to withdraw from the study at any time. Thank you for considering this.

Participant's Consent

School where your child isDate.....

Grade..... Signed

APPENDIX 2-Interview guide for parents

INTERVIEW GUIDE FOR THE PARENTS

SECTION A: GENERAL INFORMATION

1. What is your occupation?
2. At which school is your child?
3. In which grade is your child?

SECTION B: INFORMATION ON RESEARCH QUESTIONS

4. Are you aware of the marks that your child obtained in grade seven composite examinations?
5. From your opinion do you think the marks were reasonable for your child to enter the secondary school? Explain your answer
6. Have you heard about automatic learner progression to from primary to secondary school?
7. What do you know about automatic learner progression to grade eight?
8. From your experience and opinion as a parent, how useful is automatic learner progression to grade 8?
9. From the termly academic reports you get from the school, how would describe your child general academic performance?
10. With your best knowledge and experience as a parent/guardian what are the reasons for such academic performance?
11. What are your views about automatic progression of grade seven learners to grade eight?
12. As a parent what would you recommend for the government and other stake holders to do about learner automatic progression to grade 8

APPENDIX 3- Consent form for teachers

Teachers' Consent Form

Introduction

I am seeking your consent to be involved in a study that I am carrying out.

Description

The study is titled Automatic grade seven progression to grade eight: its effects on learner academic performance and the provision of quality education. It will involve you answering questions and explanations on experiences you have in teaching the automatically progressed learners.

Ethics and Participant's rights

This study adheres to research ethics and I assure you that:

1. The study will not interfere with your activities and programme and your school and in your teaching career.
2. You will not be identified or named.
3. You can choose to withdraw from the study at any time. Thank you for considering this.

Participant's Consent

Grade taught Date

Signed

APPENDIX 4-Interview guide for teachers

INTERVIEW GUIDE FOR TEACHERS

SECTION A: GENERAL INFORMATION

1. Which grades do you teach?
2. What are your qualification?
3. What other responsibilities do you have at this school?
4. What subject(s) do you teach?
5. For how long have you been teaching at this school?
6. Are you aware of the automatic progression of grade seven learners to grade eight?
7. What do you know about it?

SECTION B: INFORMATION ON RESEARCH QUESTIONS

8. How would describe enrolment in your junior secondary classes?
9. From your best knowledge and experience you have as a teacher, what are the reasons for that enrolment?
10. How do you manage to give each individual learners attention in relation with the enrolment?
11. How is giving of class activities and marking manageable in relation to the enrolment?
12. How is quality teaching and learning achieved with regards to the enrolment?

Performance

13. As a teacher you daily interact with automatically progressed learners in the class room. How are their literacy levels in English which is a medium of instruction?

14. How is the level of understanding of English by progressed learners as you teach?
15. How is the level of acquisition of the concepts by progressed learners in relation to understanding English which the medium of instruction in secondary school?
16. How would you describe the general performance of the progressed learners in your class?
17. What could be the reason for such performance?
18. As you compile the test results and as you administer daily class exercise how is the performance of progressed learners as compared to those who scored highly?
19. From your experience as a teacher on performance of progressed learners, how is the possibility of them sitting and passing grade nine examinations?

Morale

20. From your experience, are the progressed learners active in participating in class room activities?
21. From your daily experience as a teacher, to what extent are progressed learners eager to learn and take part in various class room activities?
22. How can you describe generally the morale and self-esteem of the progressed learners towards learning?
23. Generally if any, how and to what extent is teaching progressed learners challenging?
24. As a teacher with experience in teaching automatically progressed learners, what are your views about the automatic learner progression?
25. With your experience as a teacher who teach progressed learners, what would you recommend for the government and other stake holders to do concerning automatic grade seven progression to grade eight?

Thank you for participating

APPENDIX 5-Consent form for learners

Learners Consent Form

Introduction

I am seeking your consent to be involved in a study that I am carrying out.

Description

The study is titled Automatic grade seven progression to grade eight: its effects on learner academic performance and the provision of quality education. It will involve you answering questions and explanations on experiences you have as a learner who have been progressed to grade eight.

Ethics and Participant's rights

This study adheres to research ethics and I assure you that:

1. The study will not interfere with your learning and other programmes at your school and in your learning.
2. You will not be identified or named.
3. You can choose to withdraw from the study at any time. Thank you for considering this.

Participant's Consent

Grade Date

Signed

APENDIX 6- Interview guide for learners

Interview guide for Learners

SECTION A: GENERAL INFORMATION

1. In which grade are you?
2. How old are you?
3. How many marks did you obtain in grade seven composite examinations?
4. How would you rate the marks you got in terms of suitability to let you enter secondary school?

SECTION B: RESEARCH QUESTIONS RELATED INFORMATION

Enrolment

5. How can you describe the level of learner enrolment in your class?
6. How often does the teacher give attention to you as an individual learner in class?
7. If any, how does such enrolment affect your learning?

Literacy levels

8. Are you able to read and write in English?
9. How is learning possible for you in relation to your literacy levels more especially English which is the medium of instruction in secondary school?
10. How is learning and understanding of concepts possible for you in terms of understanding English which is the medium of instruction in secondary school?
11. Does the way you understand English affect the way you learn generally?

Performance and morale

12. How is your perform in the class room activities such as tests and class exercises?

13. From the experience why is your performance like that?
14. How would you describe your performance in comparison with that of other learners in your class?
15. How is your morale towards learning in relation to your literacy levels and your performance?
16. What feelings do you have towards learning?
17. How does such feeling affect your morale and relationship with your friends?

Absenteeism

18. How often do you come to school?
19. If not all the days what are the reasons for such absenteeism?
20. Do you in any way miss classes for fear of failing or being laughed at? If so how often?

Readiness

21. With regards to your literacy level and the results you got at grade seven, how ready were you ready to enter secondary school?
22. From your own experience in relation to your readiness do you think you can sit for grade nine examinations and pass?

Opinions and recommendations

23. From your learning experience what are your views on automatic learner progression to grade eight?
24. As a learner with experience, what can you recommend for the government and other stake holders to do about automatic learner progression to grade eight?

Thank you for participating

APPENDIX 7- Consent Form for Head Teachers

Head teacher's Consent Form

Introduction

I am seeking your consent to be involved in a study that I am carrying out.

Description

The study is titled Automatic grade seven progression to grade eight: its effects on learner academic performance and the provision of quality education. It will involve you answering questions and explanations on experiences you have as head teacher in the school where learners who have been progressed to grade eight are found learn from.

Ethics and Participant's rights

This study adheres to research ethics and I assure you that:

1. The study will not interfere with your administration and supervision programmes at your school and in your work and career.
2. You will not be identified or named.
3. You can choose to withdraw from the study at any time. Thank you for considering this.

Participant's Consent

School headed..... Date

Signed

APPENDIX 8- Interview Guide for Head Teachers.

INTERVIEW GUIDE FOR HEAD TEACHER

SECTION A: GENERAL INFORMATION

1. For how long have you been heading this school?
2. What are your academic qualifications?
3. When was the school opened?
4. When did your school become a secondary school?
5. What have been the school pass percentages in junior secondary school leaving examinations for the past three years?
6. Grade seven examination results are given categories of marks and schools where learners are taken. In which category is your school?
7. In this category you belong to, do you receive the automatic progressed learners?

SECTION B: INFORMATION RELATED TO RESEARCH QUESTIONS

Enrolment

8. As head teacher at a school where automatic progressed learners are taken how can you describe the enrolment of their classes?
9. As you conduct lesson observations in junior secondary classes, what problems do you see in teaching such classes in relation to the enrolment?
10. As an administrator responsible for provision of learning materials such as books, desks, how enough are they in relation to enrolment?
11. How does the enrolment in those classrooms where automatic progressed have been taken affect learning?

Performance

12. From the analysis reports you get from the teachers about progressed learner, are they able to read and write in English which is a medium of instruction?
13. How is learning possible for the learners in relation to their ability in reading and writing in English?
14. As head teacher who routinely endorses in the learners academic report books and their exercise books. How would you describe the performance of most automatically progressed learners?
15. What could have contributed to such performance?
16. From the previous junior leaving examinations, how has been the performance of the progressed learners?
17. As the one in charge of ensuring learning takes place in school, what specific challenges do teachers face when teaching automatic progressed learners?
18. With your experience as head teachers what are your views on automatic grade seven progression to grade eight?
19. What would be your recommendations to the government and other stake holders on automatic grade seven progression to grade eight?

Thank you for participating

APPENDIX 9-Consent form for the DESO.

District education standard officer's Consent Form

Introduction

I am seeking your consent to be involved in a study that I am carrying out.

Description

The study is titled Automatic grade seven progression to grade eight: its effects on learner academic performance and the provision of quality education. It will involve you answering questions and explanations on experiences you have as DESO in a district where automatic learner's progression to grade eight is practised.

Ethics and Participant's rights

This study adheres to research ethics and I assure you that:

1. The study will not interfere with your administration and supervision programmes in your district and in your work and career.
2. You will not be identified or named.
3. You can choose to withdraw from the study at any time. Thank you for considering this.

Participant's Consent

District..... Date

Signed

APPENDIX 10 –Interview Guide for the DESO.

Interview guide for District Education Standard Officer

PART A: GENERAL INFORMATION

1. Post:
2. For how many years have you been in the service:
3. For how long have you been in this district?

SECTION B: INFORMATION ON RESEARCH QUESTIONS

4. From your experience as DESO when and why was automatic progression to grade eight introduced?
5. Some secondary schools in your district especially boarding schools do not take the learners with low marks at grade seven. They have their own high score as cut off point. Why is it like that?
6. Are the skills and ability of learners considered when you progress those with low marks to grade eight?

Performance

7. Do you also consider literacy levels of the learners who are automatically progressed to grade eight especially in English which is the medium of instruction in secondary school?
8. Secondary school content is somehow more improved and detailed as compared to primary school content, do you consider prior knowledge of the learner before progressing them?
9. As an officer responsible for maintaining education standards in the district, do you think automatic progression is beneficial to the learners? Justify your answer
10. As you go round to monitor those schools where automatic progressed learners are taken, how is general performance of those learners?

11. How is the performance of those schools in comparison with other schools in the district which do not take automatic progressed learners?
12. What could be the reason for such performance and such difference?
13. From your experience as an officer responsible for upholding education standards, do you think automatic learner progression affect quality of education? How?
14. What measures have you put in place as standard officers to ensure that required education standards are maintained in schools where automatically progressed learners are taken?

Part B: Enrolment

15. From the data you get from secondary school, how can you describe the enrolment of the schools where automatically progressed learners are taken?
16. As you monitor those schools with automatically progressed learners, are the learning resources enough to cater for the enrolment?

Part C: Other challenges and views

17. From the assessment analysis reports you receive from the secondary schools where automatically progressed learners are taken, what challenges do the schools face in teaching such learners?
18. From the experience you have as standard officer, what are your views about automatic learner progression to grade eight?
19. Being the one responsible for standards what would you recommend to the government and other stakeholders about automatic learner progression to grade eight?

Thank you for time and participating.