

## **DEDICATION**

This study is dedicated to my son, Gift.

## APPROVAL

The University of Zambia approves the dissertation of   ssie Tembo as fulfilling part of the requirements for the award of the Degree of Master of Education in Literacy and Learning.

Signed \_\_\_\_\_

Date \_\_\_\_\_

Signed \_\_\_\_\_

Date \_\_\_\_\_

Signed \_\_\_\_\_

Date \_\_\_\_\_

## ABSTRACT

Literate citizens of any country are an asset to that particular country. Furthermore, if a country has got human resource that is literate, then that country stands a better chance of developing and continuing to do so. Literacy is, however, a broad notion. Different types of literacy are talked about today. There is basic literacy that entails one's ability to read and to write. This literacy, basic as it is, forms the springboard from which one can move to other more advanced forms of literacy. Technological literacy cannot be attained if one does not know how to read and write neither can any other forms of literacy be realized. The departure point is, therefore, basic literacy. But despite it being the springboard and gateway to other strands of literacy, basic literacy in itself is not enough. It is not sufficient for development, be it individual or societal.

The Literacy strand of particular interest is that which intertwines with the cognitive abilities. The development of an individual's cognitive abilities is an indicator of the literacy that this study sought to establish. One scholar said that to be considered literate one should be in possession of sound thinking abilities (Rajendran, 1998).

This study sought to find out the cognitive levels of grade 12 learners. It thus addressed itself to two major questions. These were;

to find out which question levels of the Bloom's classification of cognitive abilities the learners were able to answer; and

to find out which of the question levels of Bloom's classification of cognitive abilities the learners are not able to answer.

A case study design was used to assist the researcher to gain more insight into this issue. The study used the qualitative method to collect data from the respondents. The population consisted of all the grade 12 learners in the Central District of Zambia. Using a random sampling procedure, 60 grade 12 learners were selected. This was the total sample population of the study.

Data was collected from the respondents using two standardized reading comprehension passages. One was extracted from a grade 12 English language text book and another was from a past grade 12 final examination paper under the Examinations Council of Zambia.

Percentages were obtained using simple calculations and analysed through themes and question categories.

The findings of the study revealed that the learners did not have the desired cognitive abilities that would be expected of a soon-to-be school leaver. The study established that most of the learners were not able to even answer questions that merely required of them to recall certain information.

Advanced cognitive levels of learners are an integral part of the developmental process of any kind. It is important that the Ministry of Education addresses the issue of learners cognitive levels by coming up with a deliberate policy. A policy of ensuring that a literacy course package for learners in upper grades is a good step forward. The package should be one that will assist the learners develop their cognitive abilities to those levels that entail higher order thinking. An analytical mind, a creative mind and a mind that is capable of evaluating information and facts is not only an enlightened mind. It is a literate mind.

So the government, through the Ministry of Education, should address this concern by coming up with a literacy package that will enhance the development of the cognitive abilities of the learners. Today's learners are the ones that constitute a reservoir from which the much needed human capital can be drawn.

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