



**CURBING ABSENTEEISM FROM JUNIOR SECONDARY
EXAMINATION: INVESTIGATING STRATEGIES EMPLOYED
IN SELECTED SCHOOLS OF CHINGOLA DISTRICT.**

By

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UNIVERSITY.**

2016

DECLARATION

I, Enelia S. Musumpuka, declare that this dissertation is my own work and that it has not been previously submitted by anyone at the University of Zambia or at any other University.

Signed

Date

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CERTIFICATE OF APPROVAL

This dissertation by Enelia S. Musumpuka is approved as partial fulfillment of the requirements for the award of the Masters of Education in Educational Management by the University of Zambia in collaboration with Zimbabwe Open University.

Examiners' Signatures

1. 2016
2. 2016
3. 2016

DEDICATION

I dedicate this work to my fantastic three girls Kutemba, Vumbi and Nduminga and my husband Peter Chishika. I owe it to you guys.

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ACRONYMS AND ABBREVIATIONS

DHT- Deputy Head Teacher

DEBS- District Education Board Secretary

ECZ- Examination Council of Zambia

HT- Head Teacher

MOE- Ministry of Education

UNICEF- United Nations International Children's Fund

ABSTRACT

Absenteeism from Junior Secondary Examination had been and still continues to be an issue for most schools country over. Chingola District Educations Board Secretary reported 6013 entries for the 2015 Grade 9 examinations, from this number the total sat were 5159, which makes 854 absentees from these exams. The Ministry of Education reported that 383,676 entered for Grade 7 examinations country over registered 39160 absentees. It is against this background that this study discussed curbing absenteeism from Junior Secondary Examinations: investigating the strategies employed in selected schools in Chingola district. The specific objectives were to investigate the strategies employed by schools management in curbing absenteeism from examinations and to suggest ways of strengthening the measures of curbing absenteeism.

The study employed a descriptive survey design following a qualitative technique of data collection and analysis. The qualitative method used semi-structured interviews and observation for head teachers and or deputy head teachers. The sample consisted of 10 head teachers and or deputy head teachers drawn from the 10 schools which offer Junior Secondary Examinations. The data was analyzed by use of thematic analysis of data, were the data was coded according to the emerging themes.

The results of the study revealed that schools employ various strategies among which were the implementation of the government policy on absenteeism, registration of pupils, counselling of pupils, parental involvement in education, motivation of pupils, syllabi coverage and examination preparation techniques. The respondents suggested the following ways to strengthen the above strategies, active parental involvement in the education of their children, adequate guidance and counselling departments, syllabi completion, policy on absenteeism and social welfare aid.

Suggestions and recommendations were made based on the findings to meet the objectives and these include; that a comprehensive policy on absenteeism be framed,; that full time counsellors be employed; those parents who do not show concern in the education of their children be tried to the full extent of the law and that teachers finish the syllabi before the examination and to have extensive revision designed by schools managements to revise with the pupils before the examinations.

CHAPTER ONE: INTRODUCTION

1.1. Background to the Study

In the year 2013 the Examination Council of Zambia conducted a research country wide on the causes of pupil absenteeism from Grade 7 and 9 examinations. The reason for this research was to determine the reasons why candidates absented themselves from these important exams against the environment of free education from Grade 1-7 and no examination fees for Grade 9 examinations. The research found among others that the major causes for this type of absenteeism included early marriages and teen pregnancies, lack of parental involvement in education of their children, customs and traditional beliefs, lack of seriousness and unprepared for the examinations, lack of examination centre status, double entries, geographical and natural causes such as illness, and distance covered by learners.

Apart from the ECZ country wide research on the matter there are other researchers that have been done by students for example Lubeya's study on the 'teachers and pupils perceptions of causes of pupil absenteeism during Grade12 national practical examinations in selected practical subjects: A case of selected high schools of Kabwe district'. Lubeya's findings were that pupil and teacher unpreparedness, lack of support from school administration, parents and teachers, peer pressure, fear of the examinations, pupils' laziness, inadequate provision of learning and teaching materials, poor infrastructure and unfavourable learning environment, poor teaching strategies by teachers, and low staffing levels.

Considering the findings of the highlighted researches and many others in the same line it can be concluded to say that the issue of absenteeism of pupils from exams has been dealt with effectively as solutions have been found after these studies. However, this is not the case as the rates of absenteeism from examinations have just remained about the same if not rampant. It is against this background that this study wishes to investigate the strategies employed by schools management to curb absenteeism from Junior Secondary final examinations. The following table shows the numbers of pupils that entered and who sat for the 2015 Grade 9 Final Examination in Chingola district.

of School	Girls Entered	Boys Entered	Total Entered	Girls Sat	Boys Sat	Total Sat	Girls Abs	Boys Abs	Total Abs
Secondary School	84	81	165	84	81	165	0	0	0
Mushishima Basic	33	29	62	28	24	52	5	5	10
Mala Basic	7	15	22	2	10	12	5	5	10
Mekke Secondary School	40	43	83	39	39	78	1	4	5
Mola Secondary School	117	100	217	113	98	211	4	2	6
Mudi Secondary School	114	110	224	112	107	219	2	3	5
Musa Secondary School	171	148	319	162	141	303	9	7	16
Mabwela Basic	108	110	218	106	106	212	2	4	6
Mole Basic	20	39	59	17	35	52	3	4	7
Makubi Basic	21	15	36	10	12	22	11	3	14
Internal Centre	24	32	56	20	27	47	4	5	9
Munda Basic	37	43	80	31	32	63	6	11	17
Muga Basic	133	81	214	121	70	191	12	11	23
Muka Basic	87	107	194	80	93	173	7	14	21
Mudi Basic	88	57	145	84	48	132	4	9	13
Mube Basic	64	41	105	47	29	76	17	12	29
Mua Basic	22	16	38	20	13	33	2	3	5
Mola Adult External	173	105	278	128	70	198	45	35	80
Munga Basic	59	80	139	44	61	105	15	19	34
Mnba Basic	34	45	79	30	39	69	4	6	10
Mobo Basic	72	77	149	61	71	132	11	6	17
Mu Basic	77	77	154	57	64	121	20	13	33
Mola Basic	259	226	485	222	198	420	37	28	65
Miba Basic	158	145	303	140	124	264	18	21	39
Mu Basic	116	90	206	88	71	159	28	19	47
Mnyama Basic	201	142	343	175	117	292	26	25	51
Mnpe Basic	126	128	254	101	105	206	25	23	48
Mu Basic	38	45	83	29	36	65	9	9	18
Mindi Basic	127	107	234	107	89	196	20	18	38
Mempala Basic	134	128	262	109	106	215	25	22	47
Mve Basic	133	89	222	108	73	181	25	16	41
Mlo Basic	80	56	136	73	47	120	7	9	16
Mnshi Basic	88	121	209	68	98	166	20	23	43
Masha Basic	115	125	240	101	108	209	14	17	31
AL	3160	2853	6013	2717	2442	5159	443	411	854

Source: Chingola Districts Educations Board Statistics Office (2015)

From the above statistics it is evident that absenteeism from junior secondary final examination is a real challenge for most schools in Chingola district, hence, the reason for this study.

1.2. Statement of the Problem

Referring to the statement issued by the Minister of Education on 4th December 2015, he stated that 383,676 Grade 7 pupils entered for the 2015 Grade 7 composite examinations and 39,160 were absent of which 20,016 were girls. From these statistics we can deduce to say about 11% of candidates were absent from this exam. From this analysis it is evident that absenteeism continues to be a vice of concern and if left unchecked all the government's plans and the Zambian community at large of becoming a 'middle income' economy by 2030 and many other aspirations will be futile. Also the levels of illiteracy will be on an increase as there will be no progression by pupils from one level of education to the next. It is against this that the researcher wishes to investigate the strategies employed by schools management in curbing absenteeism from junior level final examination.

1.3 Purpose of the Study

The study wishes to investigate the strategies employed by schools management to curb absenteeism from junior level final examination, in selected school of Chingola district Zambia. In turn seeks to find ways of improving the measures so that they are more effective.

1.4. Objectives of the Study

1.4.1 General Objective

To investigate the strategies employed by schools in Chingola district in curbing absenteeism from Junior Secondary Examinations.

1.4.2 Specific Objectives

1. To investigate the strategies employed by schools management in curbing absenteeism from exams.
2. Suggest ways of strengthening the measures of curbing absenteeism.

1.5 Research Questions

This study is informed by the following questions;

1. What measures or strategies are being used by schools management in curbing absenteeism?
2. How can these measures be strengthened?

1.6. Significance of the Study

The study is significant in that the information which will be generated will benefit all stakeholders of education in winning the battle against absenteeism from examinations. In this way the government's plans of having an educated human resource will be realized. It is especially significant for schools managers, teachers and parents in that they are the first in the line of curbing pupil absenteeism. Ultimately the study will inform policy, so as for the Ministry of Education to revise its policy on pupils absenteeism.

1.7. Theoretical Framework

This study will be underpinned by the Social Learning Theory which was propounded by Albert Bandura. He believed that behaviorism alone could not explain all that be observed. He believed that behavior and the environment affected each other. He called this phenomenon reciprocal determination. He extended his theory by braiding in a person's personality with behavior and the environment. After his acknowledgement of mental images, his behaviorism philosophy turned to cognitivism. The beginning of cognitivism leads to his expanded research on language acquisition, learning, and self-regulation.

Social learning theory posits that learning is a cognitive process that takes place in a social context and can occur purely through observation or direct instruction, even in the absence of motor reproduction or direct reinforcement (Bandura:1963:8) In addition to the observation of behavior, learning also occurs through the observation of rewards and punishments, a process known as vicarious reinforcement. The theory expands on traditional behavioral theories, in which behavior is governed solely by reinforcements, by placing emphasis on the important roles of various internal processes in the learning individual (Bandura:1971:6).

Social learning theory integrated behavioral and cognitive theories of learning in order to provide a comprehensive model that could account for the wide range of learning experiences that occur in the real world. As initially outlined by Bandura and Walters in 1963 and further detailed in 1977 (Bandura:1977:45), key tenets of social learning theory are as follows:

1. Learning is not purely behavioral; rather, it is a *cognitive* process that takes place in a social context.
2. Learning can occur by observing a behavior *and* by observing the consequences of the behavior (**vicarious reinforcement**).

3. Learning involves observation, extraction of information from those observations, and making decisions about the performance of the behavior (observational learning or **modeling**). Thus, learning can occur without an observable change in behavior.
4. Reinforcement plays a role in learning but is not entirely responsible for learning.
5. The learner is not a passive recipient of information. Cognition, environment, and behavior all mutually influence each other (**reciprocal determinism**). (Grusec:1992:780)

Social learning theory draws heavily on the concept of modeling, or learning by observing a behavior. Bandura outlined three types of modeling stimuli:

1. Live model: in which an actual person is demonstrating the desired behavior
2. Verbal instruction: in which an individual describes the desired behavior in detail and instructs the participant in how to engage in the behavior
3. Symbolic: in which modeling occurs by means of the media, including movies, television, Internet, literature, and radio. Stimuli can be either real or fictional characters.

Exactly what information is gleaned from observation is influenced by the type of model, as well as a series of cognitive and behavioral processes, including (Bandura:1972:87)

In order to learn, observers must attend to the modeled behavior. Attention is impacted by characteristics of the observer (for example, perceptual abilities, cognitive abilities, arousal, past performance) and characteristics of the behavior or event (for example, relevance, novelty, affective valence, and functional value).

1. Retention: In order to reproduce an observed behavior, observers must be able to remember features of the behavior. Again, this process is influenced by observer characteristics (cognitive capabilities, cognitive rehearsal) and event characteristics (complexity).
2. Reproduction: To reproduce a behavior, the observer must organize responses in accordance with the model. Observer characteristics affecting reproduction include physical and cognitive capabilities and previous performance. Reproduction of a behaviour is usually done through testing and exams.
3. Motivation: The decision to reproduce (or refrain from reproducing) an observed behavior is dependent on the motivations and expectations of the observer, including anticipated consequences and internal standards.

An important factor in social learning theory is the concept of **reciprocal determinism**. This notion states that just as an individual's behavior is influenced by the environment, the environment is also influenced by the individual's behavior (Bandura: 1977:9). In other words, a person's behavior, environment, and personal qualities all reciprocally influence each other. For example, a child who plays violent video games will likely influence their peers to play as well, which then encourages the child to play more often. This could lead to the child becoming desensitized to violence, which in turn will likely affect the child's real life behaviors.

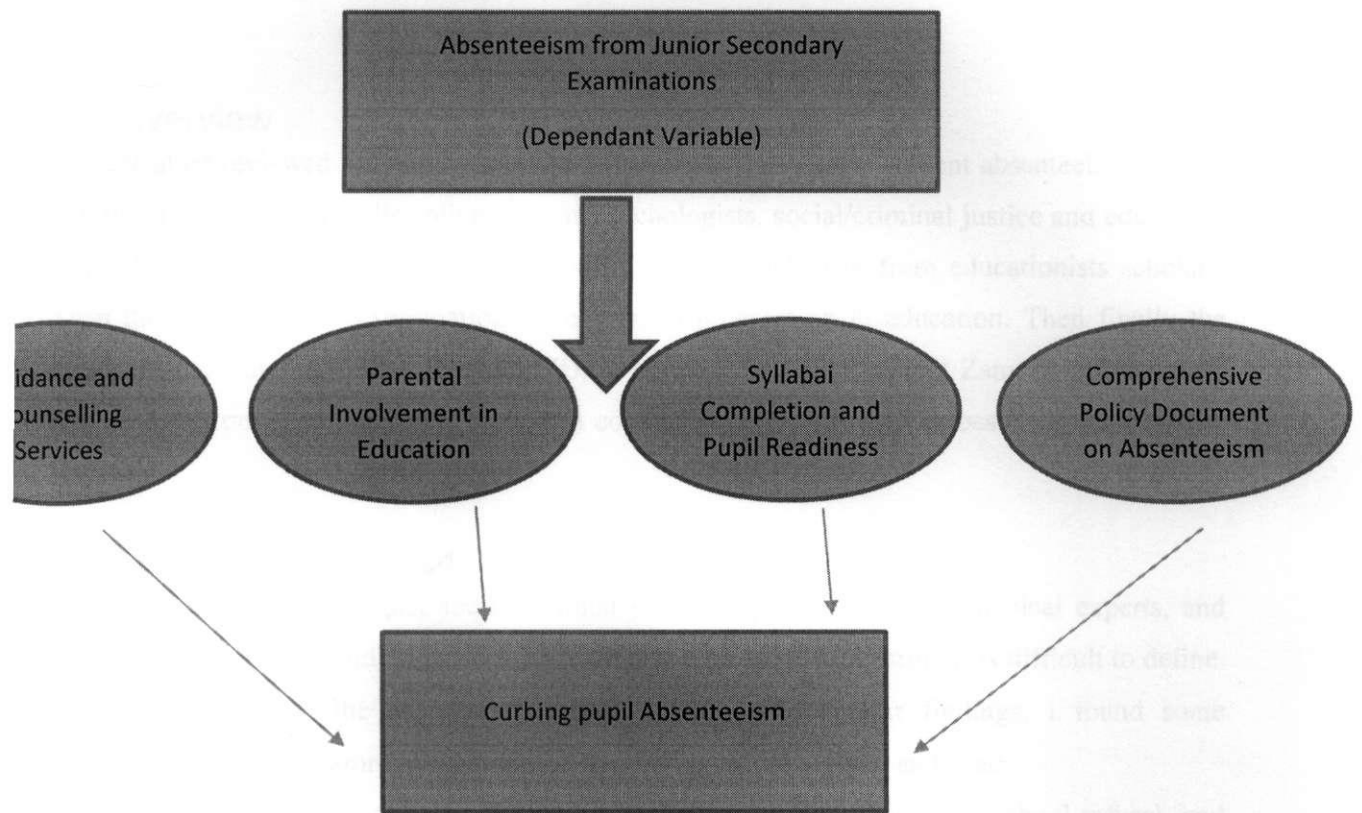
1.8. Application of Social Learning Theory in Curbing Absenteeism

The theory is holistic in nature in that it includes the learner and the environment both internal and external to which he/she is exposed to. The behavior of the learner is influenced by the environment to which he/she exposed to. In this case both the school and home environment will influence the behavior of the learner. Also the deliberate motivating factors which should be available for the learner to reproduce that which he/she has learnt in an exam is also considered in this theory.

According to Henry (2007) social learning theory may also be applied to the way parents pass on their values and expectations relatives to schooling and education. The attitude a student's parents have towards truancy plays an important role in the extent to which truant behavior persists. High rates of unexcused absences have been linked to school disengagement and lower academic achievement (Gotfried:2009:32), students with high number of unexcused absences are related to the extent to which students learn.

1.9. Conceptual Framework

A conceptual framework is a model of how one makes logical sense of the relationships among the several factors that have been identified as important to the problem (Sekaran, 2004). A conceptual framework therefore inter-relates the concepts involved in the problem. The framework enabled the researcher to develop the awareness and understanding of the situation under study and communicate the meaning of the subsequent findings to strategies employed by schools management in curbing absenteeism from junior secondary examinations. Data collection was based on the following conceptual framework.



1.10. Operational Definition of Terms.

The following are the terms used and their meanings.

Absenteeism: Failure to make oneself available for an activity.

Curbing: To limit or control something which you don't want.

Interventions: Something that changes the course of something.

Junior Secondary Examination: Will refer to Grades 7 and 9 final examinations.

Schools Management: Will refer to head teacher, deputy heads and all the teaching staff.

CHAPTER TWO: LITERATURE REVIEW

2.0. Overview

The literature reviewed literature under the following sub-headings, student absenteeism and its definitions from different discipline such as psychologists, social/criminal justice and educators. The schools managements' roles in addressing pupil absenteeism from educationists scholars. Then the importance of examination in relation to progression in education. Then finally the review of literature on United Kingdom (UK), Nigeria, South Africa and Zambia on how pupil absenteeism from examinations is curbed. A conclusion is therefore given based on the literature reviewed.

2.1. Student Absenteeism

Over the years, psychologists, social/criminal justice experts, educators, medical experts, and other researchers have studied student absenteeism, with some suggesting it is difficult to define. While studies across the aforementioned disciplines offer similar findings, I found some discrepancy across literature in how related terminologies are defined and used.

Psychologists tend to use terms such as school phobia, separation anxiety, school refusal, and school refusal behavior when describing absenteeism (Kearney, 2008). School phobia can be described as absenteeism driven by fears, which are often times linked to a circumstance within the school setting. For example, a student experiencing school phobia may have a fear of being bullied by his or her peers. Separation anxiety often stems from the fear of being away from a parent or guardian. Students experiencing separation anxiety may often times come to school but return home, because they are challenged by leaving the side of their parent or guardian when they enter the school. School refusal and school refusal behavior are characterized by an anxiety based or child-based absenteeism causing a general feeling of unrest across the entire school day beyond the fear of an isolated circumstance at school. All of the aforementioned terms are considered to be within-child, rather than related to the environment.

On the contrary, social/criminal justice experts place a greater emphasis on looking at behaviors and external factors related to truancy and delinquency when describing absenteeism (Attwood & Croll, 2006; Henry, 2007; Reid 2005). Truancy is termed by excessive unexcused absences caused by a variety of circumstances. Delinquency is associated with rule-breaking behaviors

and those often associated with conduct disorders. These terms are often characterized by factors within the environment, or in combination with internalizing factors.

Researchers such as Reid (2008b) and Wilkins (2008) referred to student absenteeism, as school non-attendance, while Dube and Orpinas (2009) described absenteeism as school refusal behavior. Eaton, Brenner, and Kann (2008), Hartnett (2007), and Kearney (2008) specifically defined absences as *excused* or *unexcused* at the elementary, middle, or high school. In comparison, García-Gracia (2008) referred to unexcused absences as *unacceptable* absences. In addition Reid (2005) suggested we must go a step further when defining terms by exploring the various types of absenteeism. Types of school absenteeism include, but are not limited to “lesson absence, post-registration absence, parentally condoned absence, psychological absence, school refusal, and school phobia” (Reid, 2005:59).

As previously noted, there is much inconsistency in how school leaders define and use terms related to student absenteeism. Therefore, one researcher specifically argued for a clear, common definition and understanding of non-attendance and student absenteeism (Kearney, 2008). Kearney (2008) sought to “develop consensus among researchers, practitioners, and policymakers...to arrive at efficient methods of preventing and reducing absenteeism at individual and systemic levels” (pp. 275-276). The use of a common definition and understanding would likely assist school leaders in effectively establishing and consistently implementing attendance practices and policies.

2.2. The School Managements’ Role in Addressing Student Absenteeism

Throughout history, school managements have often responded to student attendance and truancy issues by blaming students (Epstein & Sheldon, 2002; Hartnett, 2007). Schools have blamed students rather than seeking to understand their individual needs and those factors which may be driving their absenteeism. Consequently, one researcher suggested there is a need “to intervene in the causes of absenteeism beyond normative and reactive practices that end up generating more absenteeism” (García-Gracia, 2008:276). Further, the researcher suggested schools identify and address any internal risk factors within the school which may lead to student absenteeism. This means schools must be willing and prepared to respond to any internal risk factors and to make change, as deemed necessary, in the best interest of students.

Researchers have suggested school managements take a more supportive approach to addressing

student absenteeism (Epstein & Sheldon, 2002). This would require school leaders to embrace the complex task of exploring their role in promoting student absence by evaluating their current attendance practices and policies (García-Gracia, 2008; Hartnett, 2007; Wilkins, 2008).

Essentially, in studying their role, school leaders would need to identify and take ownership of their actions related to student attendance, whether positive or negative. School leaders would need to recognize and respond to the positives and negatives related to their actions with the intent of improving the system.

Multiple researchers suggested school managements' take a comprehensive approach to addressing student absenteeism alongside students, parents, educators, and community members (Dube & Orpinas, 2009; Eaton et al., 2008; Epstein & Sheldon, 2002; García-Gracia, 2008).

Researchers have suggested school managements' work hand-in-hand with those most greatly impacted by student absenteeism. In particular the students and families impacted by student absenteeism.

Hartnett (2007) suggested school managements' get personal with other stakeholders to change the culture of non-attendance. One study in particular pointed to the "benefits of going outside the school, of involving others, of understanding more fully the whole experience of the child" (Cullingford & Morrison, 1999). The authors suggested there is a need to understand individuals students and their parents. In doing so, this involves establishing, building, and maintaining relationships. Taking a comprehensive approach would require school

Managements' to look beyond the walls of the school by establishing and committing to a strong two way communication system with students and their families (Epstein & Sheldon, 2002).

More than one study suggested school managers must take into account student voice when addressing attendance problems (Hartnett, 2007; Reid, 2008a). This means school managers must actively engage in reflective conversation with students to gain an understanding of their perspectives related to student absenteeism. As they build this understanding, school managers must be prepared to work with students to improve student attendance. "Making affective change means getting down to the personal, relationship level and addressing the cultural beliefs and practices" (Hartnett, 2007) with students. In our Zambian situation this is being done through students associations such as the Students Council.

2.3. Importance of Examinations

Life today has become so complex that examinations have come to play an important part in one's educational career. Examinations are considered so important that most students are afraid of them.

The ability to pass an examination is indeed a valuable quality. It shows that the student is able to express his thought and ideas to a manner others can understand. It also shows that the student has acquired a certain amount of knowledge in some branches of study. Besides, the mind of a student, even if he is dull, receives good exercise when he prepares for an examination. A student's success in an examination, therefore, helps employers and others to assess his mental or general ability.

Some people, however, argue that examinations test only a certain kind of skill. They say that many people have a good memory and a special ability to pass examinations and achieve brilliant results, though they have no capacity for original thought or imagination. But it should be realized that today the syllabuses are so extensive that a student cannot expect to pass an examination by relying entirely on his memory. The student of today must not only have a fair knowledge of the subject matter but also be able to show his intelligence and power of reasoning, especially if he is sitting for a higher examination. Therefore, a student's ability to pass an examination must indicate some of his mental powers as well as his grasp of the subjects that he has studied.

If there were no examinations, most scholars would have been less informed than they are today. Examinations compel students to read as much as they can, and as they do so, they absorb knowledge unconsciously. Further, because of examinations; teachers have to confine themselves to the syllabuses which are aimed at imparting knowledge in a systematic manner, and thus develop mental discipline. Examinations are therefore an important part of academic studies.

Public (external) examinations have played a major role throughout the history of modern education in Africa. In most countries, three major examinations are administered by an agency outside the school (usually a national examinations authority in Anglophone countries and a ministry of education in francophone countries): at the end of primary schooling when students

are examined in the major subjects of the curriculum (e.g., English or French, a local language, science, and social studies); after two or three years in secondary school usually in a wider range of subjects; and at the end of secondary school (Kellaghan :1992:43). The role of examinations in secondary education is key, dictating what is taught in schools, and acting as gatekeepers guarding entry to schools, selecting students during the course of their careers, and providing an evaluation of students when leaving school that is likely to have very important implications for their further education and even life chances. The continued existence and central importance of public examinations in Africa can be attributed to the fact that they serve a number of important functions. First, by providing a specification of clear goals and standards for teachers and students, they control the disparate elements of the education system, helping to ensure that all schools teach to the same standards. Second, in selecting students for further education, they are perceived to allocate scarce educational benefits in an objective and unbiased way. Third, examinations have a certification function, though this is often lost sight of because of the emphasis on their use for selection.

Formal certification of academic achievements, however, can be important for some students in gaining access to employment or training. Fourth, examinations can be used to underpin changes in curriculum and teaching methods, and to maintain national standards. Fifth, examinations, especially when results are published, may serve an accountability function for teachers and schools. Finally, examinations at the end of secondary schooling legitimate membership in the international global society, and facilitate international mobility (Kellaghan, 1992; Kellaghan & Greaney, 1992; Kellaghan & Greaney, 2004).

2.4. Curbing Absenteeism in United Kingdom, Nigeria and South Africa Respectively.

2.4.1. United Kingdom Situation

For over 10 years the UK government has promoted the raising of school attendance with targets for schools and local authorities. In 2004 David Miliband, then schools minister, wrote in a letter to local authority directors that it is:

“because of the strong link between attendance and attainment – and also because of the well known links between truancy and street crime and antisocial behaviour – that government sees reducing absence from school as a priority”. (DfES, 2004)

This statement assumes that increasing school attendance will solve the problems of attainment and antisocial behaviour in a straight forward causal manner and is the justification for expenditure on trying to improve school attendance, with schools having ever-higher targets to reach.

Of course, most children and young people do not question whether they should go to school. They believe what their parents, teachers and society tell them: that going to school will give them the qualifications they need for a good career. Most go to school regularly with varying mixtures of enjoyment, acceptance and dislike. However, every day 8–10 per cent of pupils miss school (Reid, 1999:56), and this figure has barely changed since compulsory schooling began in 1870. In spite of £885 million being spent on initiatives to reduce school absence between 1997/98 and 2003/4, there has been no decrease in rate and some indication that the problem is worsening, with children showing absence earlier in their school careers (Reid, 2006:23).

Also unchanged since compulsory schooling began is the responsibility given to parents for ensuring that their children receive an education (although this need not be in school). Both the Elementary Education Act 1876 and the Education Act 1996 enforced this, threatening parents with legal sanctions, including a possible prison sentence since 2004.

This research is significant to this study because it stresses the importance of parent involvement in the education of their children to an extent that if they neglect this responsibility they will be legally tried and charged.

The UK government has a number of policy documents to improve pupil attendance among these are the Admission Policy, Anti-Bullying Policy, Behaviour and Reward Policy, Exclusion Policy and Special Educational Needs Policy, (Hampshire County Council School Services:2015:8) to mention just a few. The mentioned policies are there to improve attendance of pupils for school and ultimately examinations. It should also be noted that individual schools are also encouraged to come up with attendance policies of their own depending on their local situations. Though this be the case these local school policies must be tailored in the line of the

various national policies. The UK scenario is a good example to draw from as it seems to have a comprehensive way of dealing with the issue of absenteeism.

2.4.2. Nigerian Situation

A study was conducted in Nigeria this study examined the causes of attendance challenge and their impact on the academic performance of Secondary Schools' students in Osun State of Nigeria. To achieve this aim, scores in attendance and examinations for 3,050 students in the last three years were collected from 61 state-owned Secondary Schools out of a total of 208 Schools in the State. The results indicated that the average attendance scores of students across the ten constituencies in the state were proportional to their examination scores. Also, parents/guardians ranked poverty level, unbearable extra fees imposed on students by the school authority and high cost of instructional materials as major significant causes for their wards' absenteeism at school. It was concluded that a mechanism should be put in place by the State Government to curb the extra fees being charged by the various school authorities. (Olufunke:2014:6)

This research is of great significance as it highlighted the great influence that high fees play in the retention of pupils at different levels of education. However it ignored the role which is played by parents and society at large in curbing absenteeism. Also this research ignored the effectiveness of the implementation of the policy on absenteeism in that country.

On the other had a research conducted by Musa (2014) in Ogun State revealed that peer pressure is among the most causes of absenteeism and truancy among pupils. To this effect he recommended that the guidance and counselling departments in school plays a key role in counselling pupils against the vices of peer pressure. This research is import for our consideration because of the important role played by this department in molding the behaviours of pupils in our schools.

2.4.3. South African Situation

In South Africa a research was conducted by 'The Community for Social Enquiry' on 'learner absenteeism in South African schooling system'. It reported to say in dealing with learner absenteeism it requires both a clear approach and policy, as well as effective monitoring systems that can provide a basis for decision-making and intervention.

Approaches to managing absenteeism should be devised in a holistic way, to take account of the broader problems that contribute to absenteeism, but should also be specific to the socio-economic and cultural characteristics of the schools and surrounding communities where absenteeism is a problem.

The literature review revealed that attendance policies are an important first step in managing, monitoring and reducing learner absenteeism. Schools should be assisted and encouraged to develop these policies. Schools should be accountable to provincial offices and ultimately to the national office of the Department of Education for absenteeism rates, as is the case in, for example, the United Kingdom.

In designing the required record keeping and information management system, the Department of Education should first be clear on what information they will need to record and also why they need it. In this regard efforts should be made to increase the involvement of parents, representatives of the School Governing Body's and the community in general in ensuring attendance and monitoring absenteeism and truancy. The national Department of Education can, for example, invest in educational programmes and communication initiatives to highlight to parents the importance of their involvement in their children's education. Expanding access to free basic education to more learners will contribute to reducing levels of absenteeism, as will the extension of feeding schemes/nutrition programmes and the provision of transport assistance to schools.

2.4.4.Zambian Situation

In 2013 the Examination Council of Zambia conducted a research on the extent and causes of pupil absenteeism from Grade 7 and 9 composite examination. The research found among others parental problems, peer pressure, lack of pupil preparedness, poverty to mention just a few. The research recommended to say girls be sensitization on the dangers of early marriages and teenage pregnancies, also for schools to design programmes that can encourage parents to be more involved in the education of their children. And to encourage a reading culture among learners and the community at large to reduce cases of learner unpreparedness and general fear of the examinations others among. Other literature in this line has been refered to already for example Lubeya's (2012) report. Form the literature it can be deduced that very little has been done strategies that schools use or can use to reduce on absenteeism from examinations. Hence this

study which will look into the strategies that schools employ to curb absenteeism from examinations.

2.5. Conclusion

In conclusion absenteeism is failure of someone to present him or herself for an activity in this case the junior secondary examination. The schools administration and parents plays a key role in curbing absenteeism because they are the first in the line of duty, they deal with pupils on a daily basis. Schools need to deal with absenteeism beyond normative and reactive ways, they need to identify the causes and address these causes. Examination are an important tool in the life of a learner in that they are a guarantee for someone progression to the next level in their education. Failure to present oneself for examinations will mean that such a one will not progress to the next level, hence stagnation in their education. Different countries deals with absenteeism differently, for example the Unite Kingdom has a policy on absenteeism which includes all form of absences from school and they encourage individual schools to form local absenteeism policies based on their challenges. In Zambia however there is no policy on absenteeism perse, except for the 10 days absence from school policy. Most schools in Zambia deals with other forms of absenteeism as they see fit. This study therefore wishes to learn the strategies that schools employ in order to curb absenteeism from examinations.

CHAPTER THREE: METHODOLOGY

3.0. Overview

This chapter discusses the research methods which will be employed in this study. It describes the research design, target population, study area, study population, sample size and sampling procedure, data collection techniques, data analysis, and ethical considerations.

3.1. Research Design

A research design is defined as, 'the planning of any scientific research from the first to the last step. It is a specification of the most adequate operations to be performed in order to test a specific hypothesis under given conditions' (Bless & Achola, 1988:54). A descriptive survey design was used to conduct this research. According to Best & Kahn (2007) a descriptive survey design is devoted to gathering information about prevailing conditions or situations for purposes of describing and interpreting. This design was ideal for this research because the information was collected without changing or manipulating the environment. Also it was useful because it was not only concerned with the characteristics of individual schools but with the characteristics of the whole sample, therefore, it provided information useful to the solutions of local issues. Qualitative technique of data collection and analysis was employed. Kombo and Tromp (2006) describe qualitative research is a form of research that involves descriptions; it seeks to describe and analyses the culture and behavior of humans and their groups from the point of view of those being studied. The qualitative technique was employed so as to gain an in-depth understanding of the issue at hand.

3.2. Study Area

This research study targeted ten (10) schools. These are Maiteneke secondary school, Nakatindi Basic School, Twateka Basic School, Kabundi Secondary School, Chingola basic School, Nchanga Secondary school Chingola Secondary School, Matero Basic School, Sekela Secondary School and Chingola Skills for Continuing Education. These schools were easily accessed by the researcher and a good rapport was created with the informants.

3.3. Study Population

Population is defined as "all those people about whom a researcher wishes to make statements" (Finch, 2008:37). Chingola district has a total number of fifty five (55) schools, from which ten

(10) are secondary schools and thirty two (32) are basic schools, the rest are primary schools. The study population consisted of head teachers or deputy heads of the sampled schools. The sampled schools present unique attributes which ensured that the findings could easily be attributed to the other schools within the district.

3.4. Target Population

In the context of research the term “target population” has been defined as all members of any well defined class of people, events, or objects which have been designated as being the focus of an investigation. It is also known as a universe. It is called special universe in order to distinguish it from the general universe or population to which the study’s findings can be generalized (Bless & Achola, 1988). The target population for this study was head teachers or deputy head teachers.

3.5. Data Collection Techniques

Data was collected through semi-structured interviews (SSI) for the school heads or deputy head teachers and by observation coupled with document analysis. A semi-structured interview is a qualitative method of inquiry that combines a pre-determined set of open questions (questions that prompt discussion) with the opportunity for the interviewer to explore particular themes or responses (Kombo & Tromp, 2006). In a semi-structured interview respondents are not limited to a set of determined answers. Respondents are allowed to discuss and raise issues that were not even considered. Semi structured interviews were conducted with the target group in order to get responses which helped the researcher to collect first hand responses from the respondents. The researcher used semi-structured interviews because they provided reliable and comparable qualitative data.

3.6. Sample Size

According to Best & Kahn (2007) a sample is a group chosen from a larger population with the aim of yielding information about this population as a whole. It is a miniature picture of the entire group or aggregate from which it has been taken. The sample size in this research comprised ten (10) school heads or deputies.

3.7. Sampling Procedure

Purposive sampling of schools was used to select ten (10) schools which participated in this study. Purposive sampling was used because it allowed the researcher to select or handpick supposedly typical or interesting cases (Blaxter et al, 2006). This sampling method gives every element in the sampling frame an equal chance of being included in the sample (Kombo & Tromp, 2006).

3.8. Data Analysis

Qualitative methods of data analysis was employed in this study. Qualitative data was obtained through semi-structured interviews was analysed by coding and grouping the emerging themes. Kombo & Tromp (2006) says that in using this form of analysis major concepts or themes are identified by the researcher by way of perusing through the collected data and identifying information which is relevant to the research questions and objectives. Themes as already alluded to were in relation to the research questions and represented a level of patterned response or meaning within the data set. After this step, data was categorized into two (2) codes as; strategies employed by schools managements in curbing absenteeism from Junior Secondary Examinations and suggested measures of strengthening these strategies. The data was organized and transcribed, from which a framework was identified. The data was then sorted out in a framework and coded accordingly. Recurrent themes were identified, hence all related themes were summarized into one. Then the frequencies of strategies used by schools and their suggestions on how to strengthen them was tabulated to answer the research questions. In short we can say that data was analyzed through development of data categories and recognizing relationships to produce well-grounded conclusions. Results of data analysis were presented thematically in tables and bar graphs

3.9. Reliability and Validity of Data.

Kothari, (2011) defines instrument reliability as the ability of a measuring instrument to provide consistent results. Reliable measuring instrument does not contribute to validity, but a reliable instrument need not be a varied instrument. Pilot study enabled the researcher to assess the clarity of the semi structured interview and focus group guides so that modifications were made to improve on the quality of the research instrument hence increasing its reliability.

Kothari, (2011) defines instrument validity as the extent to which differences found with a measuring instrument reflect true differences among those being tested. Validity of the instruments was subjective to the opinions and judgments of the researcher. Instrument validity was improved through expert judgment, where the researcher sought assistance of her supervisors who are experts in research to help in improvement of the instrument validity. After analyzing the results of the pilot study some responses were amended and irrelevant items were discarded and replaced with more useful, relevant and logical ones which elicited the required responses.

3.10. Ethical Consideration

Participants were assured that data collected from them would be used for academic purposes only. That the researcher would be responsible for the ethical standards to which the study adheres. It was therefore clearly stated that all the information collected from schools would not be exposed hence confidentiality of their identity will be guaranteed.

Finally, there was informed consent by the respondents to participate willingly in the research and exercise their right to be part of this research. The research conformed to the ethical standards of the university.

CHAPTER FOUR: PRESENTATION OF FINDINGS

4.0. Overview

This chapter presents the findings of the research aimed at curbing absenteeism from junior secondary examination investigating strategies employed by selected schools of Chingola district. The chapter includes the following sections, that is: characteristics and background of the respondents, strategies employed by schools management in curbing absenteeism and suggestions on how to strengthen these strategies.

4.1. Characteristics and Background Information of Respondents

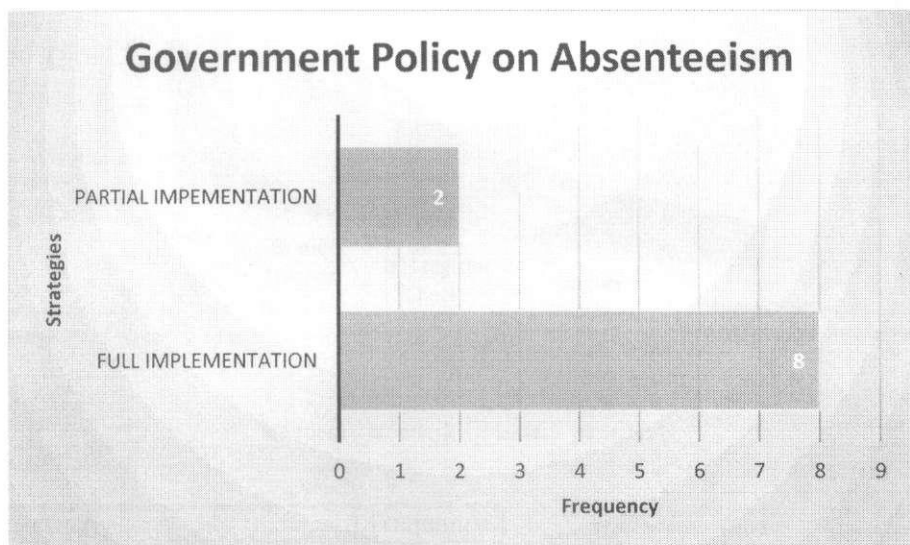
This section presents the gender, position and the highest qualification that the respondents have. Of the four (4) female administrators two (2) were Deputy Head Teachers and the other two (2) were Head Teachers. Of the six (6) males, two (2) were Deputy Head Teachers and the remaining four (4) were Head Teachers. Of the four (4) degree holders, three (3) were Head Teachers and one (1) was a Deputy Head Teacher. Of the six (6) diploma holders, two (2) were Head Teachers and the four (4) were Deputy Head Teachers.

4.2. Strategies Employed By Schools Management in Curbing Absenteeism.

This section presents the various strategies that the respondents use in their schools to curb absenteeism from Junior Secondary Examination. All the respondents were of the view that absenteeism from exams has its root cause from absence from classes or lessons, therefore the respondents were of the view that absenteeism from exams can best be dealt with absenteeism from classes, hence the strategies. The main themes and sub-themes that indicate the strategies employed by schools managements in curbing absenteeism are summarized in *figures 1-7* respectively.

4.2.1. Implementation of Government Policy on Absenteeism

Figure 1

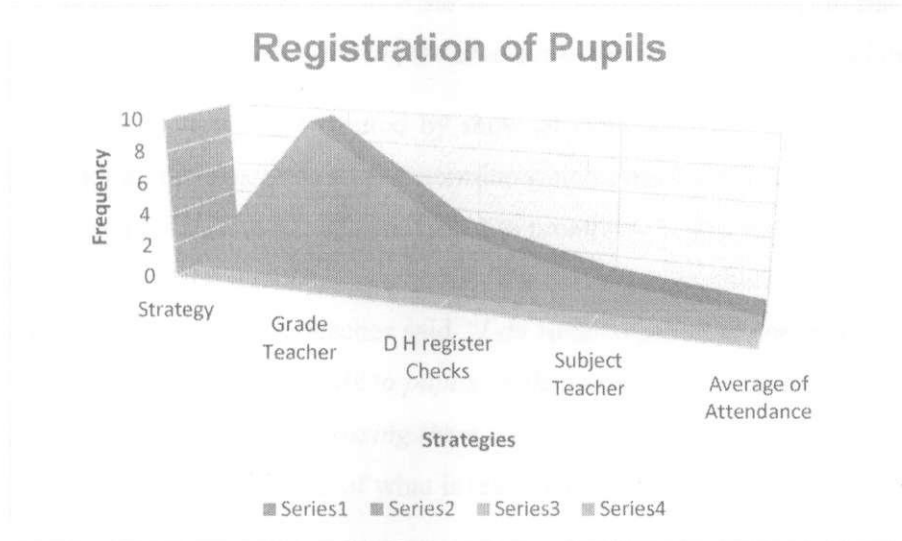


Strategy	Frequency
Full Implementation	8
Partial Implementation	2

The research found that schools implement the government policy on absenteeism which is provided for in the Education Act 2011 (which states that if a child is absent from school for ten (10) working days without leave they must be expelled from school) differently. Others implement the policy fully and others partially, one head teacher indicated to say *“I do not expel pupils who have been absent for more than ten days, instead I encourage the parents to repeat the grade of a child if they are in an exam class so as to accord them a chance to have an education”*. Apart from this it was observed that there is no any other provision in the Act or the national policy on absenteeism. Therefore schools are left to deal with other forms of absenteeism as they see fit.

4.2.2. Registration of Pupils

Figure 2



Strategy	Frequency
Grade Teacher	10
Deputy Head Register Check	4
Subject Teacher Registration	2
Average of Attendance	1

Registration of pupils who attend school appears to be very cardinal in the education sector as it provides educators with accurate records as to who is present and who is absent. Respondents attested to the fact that normal registration every day through the grade teachers is conducted, that through this they are able to track down those pupils who are irregular in attendance. They indicated that although the marking of the register should be done in class every morning by way of calling out names of pupils to confirm that they are there, some grade teachers do not do this but marks the register at their own time, hence compromising the essence of this exercise. To this effect one respondent indicated that *“as deputy head teacher I ask all the grade teachers to bring their class registers to my office 07:35hrs immediately after registration, and pick them up from my office at 14:00hrs”*.

Some respondents indicated with show of evidence that they compel their teachers to have subject registers for each class they teach. This is to ensure that the pupils that were marked

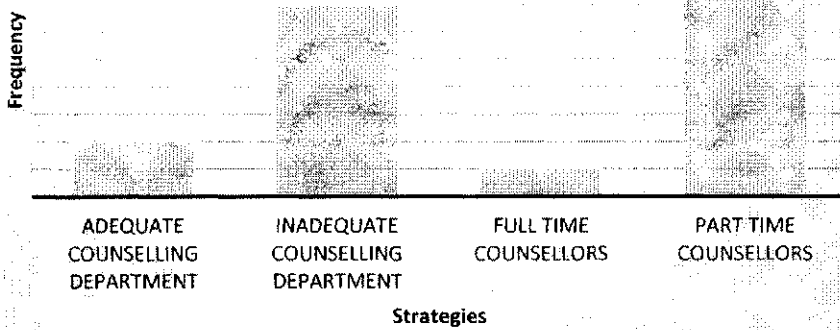
present in the morning by the grade teacher attend all the lessons for that day, so subject teachers take their own registration for all the pupils that they teach. One head teacher acknowledged the fact that *“this is a good way of ensuring that pupils are attending all the lessons and are getting ready for exams, hence reducing the chances of being absent from final examinations”*.

Other respondents demonstrated by show of evidence that they do averages of attendance per week for all the classes so as to determine which class has the lowest attendance. After which the concerned pupils and parents are talked to promptly. To top it all the deputy or head teacher do a physical check on attendance especially the exam classes, this is done at random at least once per week. One deputy head teacher said *“I do random physical checks once per week especially on examination classes, and talk to pupils on the importance of attending classes for the purposes of preparing for exams and passing them... ..”* This is to ensure that what is reported by the grade teachers is a true reflection of what is really happening.

4.2.3. Counselling of Pupils

Figure 3.

Counselling of Pupils



Strategy	Frequency
Adequate Counselling Department	2
Inadequate Counselling Department	7
Full Time Counsellors	1
Part-Time Counsellors	9

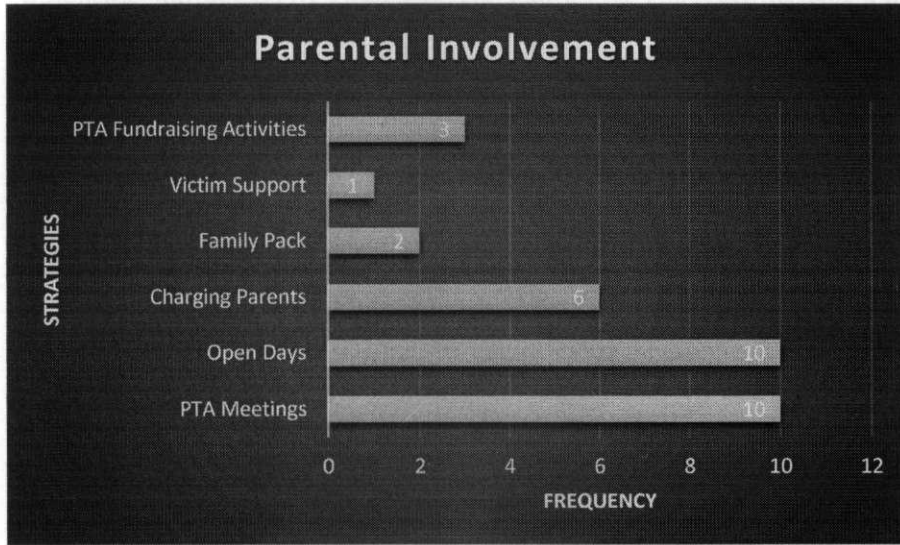
All the respondents acknowledge the fact that counselling before sanctions or punishment of any sort is administered should be done. All the schools have the Counselling and Guidance Department which is tasked with this task. This department counsels pupils with issues and calls parents of children who are being counselled. The establishment of this department is as per government policy.

The findings revealed that the counselling and guidance department in most schools is not adequate in that it is ill staffed and the population of the schools are too big to be handled by a department of one person or two people. One head teacher reported that *"the school only has one counselling teacher who at the same time has a normal teaching load like any other teacher in school, this has made it difficult to conduct proper guidance and counselling to pupils in need....."*. Most teachers in this department are not trained in counselling and they have the normal teaching loads just like any other teachers, therefore making it difficult for them to be effective in counselling pupils. However one head teacher indicated that; *"I have one trained teacher in guidance and counselling who is a full time counsellor with no teaching classes"*. The respondent attested to the fact that having a full time counsellor has made counselling to be more effective and that pupils with personal or academic problems are being attended to promptly. The respondent further said that *"priority is given to pupils in exam classes as these are about to cross over to the next level in their education"*.

Some respondents also indicated that they encourages peer counselling among pupils, that they have even formed some clubs as pupils to help fellow pupils with personal and academic problems. One deputy head teacher said *"we encourage pupils to counsel each other and only engage a teacher when the matter is out of their hand"* These respondents attested to the fact the Scripture Union also plays an important role in peer counselling and that if it were to receive financial support by supplying it with literature it will be of great help to learners.

4.2.4. Parental Involvement in Education

Figure 4.



Strategy	Frequency
PTA Meetings	10
Open Days	10
Charging Parents	6
Family Pack	1
Victim Support	1
PTA Fundraising Activities	3

The findings revealed that schools involve parents and guardians in the education of their children through the Parent Teacher Association meetings, Open Days and through community liason. However it was observed that not all parents attend these meetings hence making it difficult for the schools activities and voice to be effective. Some respondents indicated that they fine the parents who do not come for open days and sometimes even punish pupils who did not rely the message to their parents about open day and other PTA activities. All the respondents attested to the fact that Open Days are an important activity of a school in that at such an interaction both parents and teachers tend to come up with interventions that will improve or maintain the performance of the learner. Also during open day parents get to learn of the strengths and weaknesses and attendance record of their children, hence they are in a better way of helping their children and realizing the best potential in them.

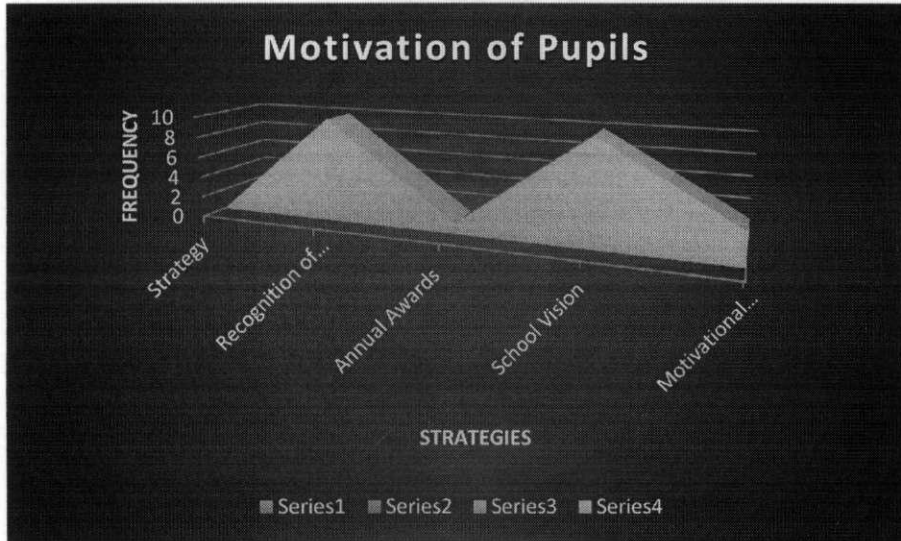
Some respondents indicated that their schools involves parents and guardians alike in the teaching and learning of their children by way of fully implementing the 'Family Pack' initiative which was introduced by UNICEF. The Family Pack accords parents a chance to learn with their children at least twice in a term. This is in a vain of strengthening the relationship between the home and school so as for the two stakeholders to share the same vision and goal. The respondents testified to say ever since the school started to implement this initiative the levels of truancy in school has reduced and absenteeism from classes reduced significantly.

In community liason one head teacher said that *"where it has been established that a child is being abused at home by the guardians or parents in terms of child labour and that the child's education is suffering. The schools have taken the initiative of taking such parents and guardians to Victim Support Unit"*. The respondent revealed that this good rapport with the police has made a lot of parents to refrain from abusing their children and putting their education first. Also it has made a lot of parents and guardians to provide their children with school supplies such as books and food for school.

Some respondents by show of evidence said that the school receives very good support from the PTA in that the PTA organizes fundraising activities which challenge pupil's intellect. An example of a fundraising activity is a 'Spelling Bee' where classes compete with each other in spelling big English words and the winning classes are given prizes. The prizes are presented by the PTA chairperson and the pupils that were directly involved in the competition are given special prizes at the end of the competition. By doing so pupils writing, spelling and reading skills are improved, hence contributing to adequate preparation for their exams.

4.2.5. Motivation of Pupils

Figure 5.



Strategy	Frequency
Recognition of Excellence	10
Annual Awards	1
Schools Vision	10
Motivational Speakers	3

Motivation of pupils was identified by all respondents to be one of the key strategy to curb absenteeism. All the respondents reported to say they motivate learners by way of praising the achievers at assembly or giving them presents in form of school requirements. That some schools during the graduation and awards day recognizes all the pupils with 100% attendance for that year and gives them awards. This practice encourages learners not to be absent from school as they are assured of a prize at the end of the year. Also those grade teachers whose classes have recorded very good attendance by the end of the year are also commended and awarded. This encourages them to work very hard and sets as an example for the other teachers.

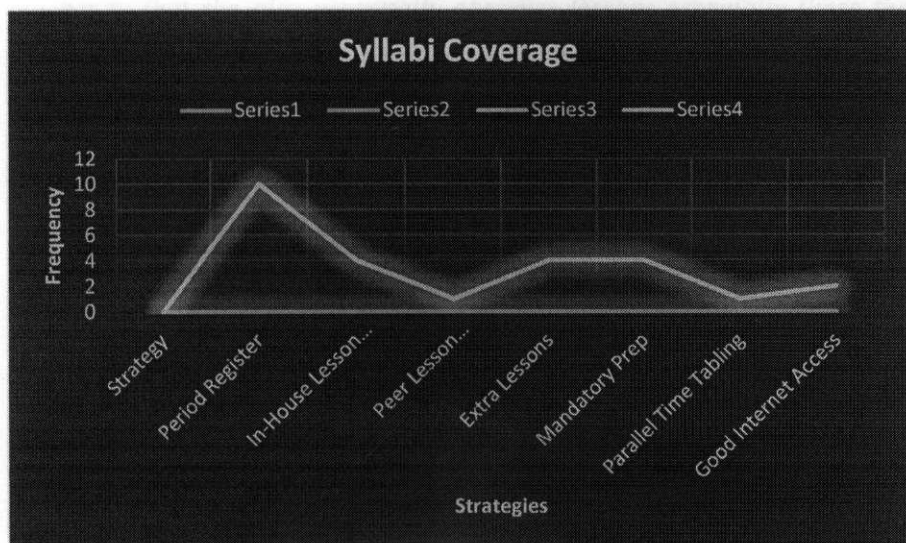
Respondents attested to the fact that a visionary school is well focused and all its members efforts are directed to the achievement of the vision of the school. The respondents indicated that they use the schools vision to get pupils to behave in a certain way and creates a sense of belonging in pupils. For example some respondents stated that their schools visions were

"Eradicating pupil and teacher absenteeism in promoting quality delivery of education" and *"A team of educators dedicated to fulfilling the potential for all in order to develop valued citizens of tomorrow"* respectively. They said that they inculcate the schools visions in the learners through lessons, assembly, sports activities and so on. They reported to say by so doing they have both teachers and learners working towards the achievement of the schools' vision. They said the schools' vision is a reminder of what and where they have to be as learners and therefore they will have a focused mind and efforts directed to that.

Some respondents indicated that they also motivate their pupils especially those in examination classes by way of holding careers day where the schools invite motivational speakers, careers people such as lawyers, engineers, doctors and so on. These come to the schools to motivate the pupils to aim high and to work very hard if they wish to be as successful. Some respondents indicated that their schools invites former pupils who had performed very well in their exams to come and give talks to pupils in exam classes. One head teacher said *".... The school invites former students who performed well to come and talk to students in examination classes during grade meetings,that such talks have helped many students as they are motivated to challenge those former students."* This has proven very effective for some schools as there is some form of competition going on in schools as to which intake and school is going to produce the best result for the district. By so doing a lot of pupils are motivated to be the best and they look forward to the examinations.

4.2.6. Syllabi Coverage.

Figure 6.



Strategy	Frequency
Period Register	10
In-House Lesson Observations	4
Peer Lesson Observation	1
Extra Lessons	4
Parallel Time Tabling	1
Good Internet Access	2

Research findings observed to say all the schools do not complete the syllabi in all the subjects. To this effect individual schools have strategies put in place to at least prepare the pupils adequately for the exams.

Some respondents reported that they have an in house inspection of the teaching and learning process other than the District education Standards Officer (DESO) termly inspections. They said that the heads of Department and the schools' management have drawn up a time tables for the observation of the lessons. Apart from observing lessons the deputies checks the books of the learners to ensure that what is reported in the records of work is true (note that this is a policy requirement). To this effect a respondent reported to say *"my school encourages peer lesson observations, this works very well as teachers criticize and counsels one another on delivery of some lessons"*. Some respondent indicated that at least once per term the head teacher observes a

selected few teachers at random. In so doing the teachers are forced to be prepared for all their lessons, hence no lazier fair. One deputy head teacher said “... *I have the support of my head teacher in that she also personally observes lessons especially those that teach exam classes*” The respondents acknowledged to say by so doing the syllabi coverage is enhanced and missing of exams for lack of preparedness is lessened.

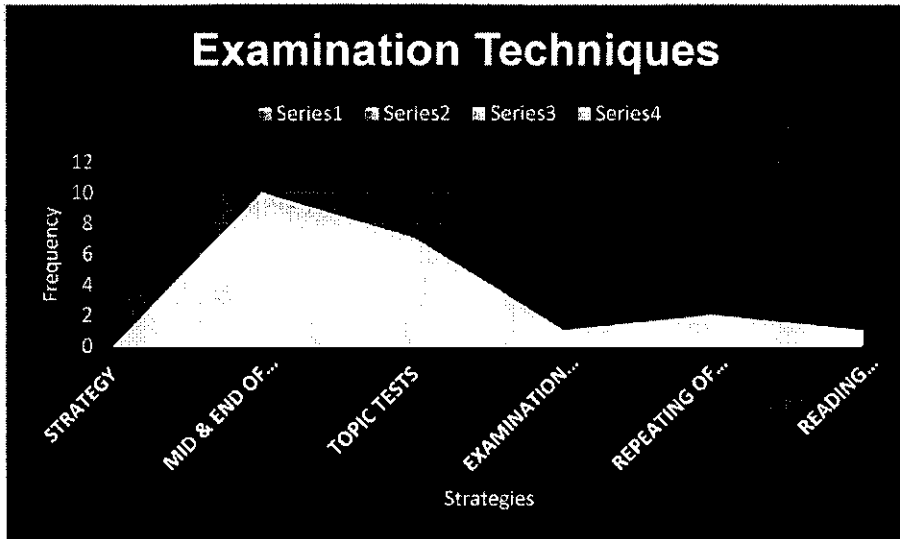
Some respondents attested that they conduct extra lessons for those subjects that are really behind, that is during clubs or sports such classes are excused to have lessons so as for them to catch up. One head teacher said that “*the school has a deliberate policy to excuse pupils in examination classes from clubs and sports activities, from term two onwards.*” On the other hand some respondents indicated that their schools conducts mandatory prep for all pupils in exam classes which is supervised by the teachers on duty. The mandatory prep has proven to be effective for tis school as pupils are made to read ahead of their teachers in preparation for exams.

One administrator reported that “*teacher presence is the strength of my school especially for exam classes*”. He reported to say when time tabling his teachers, those that teach exam classes are parallel plotted, this is to mean that a class will have two teachers plotted to it at the same time. This means that if one teacher is absent from work the other teacher will be available to teach the class. In this way learners know that there will not go without a teacher at any moment. This enhances syllabi coverage as there is maximization of time and labor. On the other hand other respondents indicated that it is difficult to fully provide adequate cover for those teachers that are absent or are on leave because most teachers have over loads and cannot take on extra classes. One head teacher said “*it is a nightmare to complete the syllabi in government schools because of the so many programmes*”

Some respondents indicated that they have good internet access for pupils to use especially for those that are doing projects for the purposes of the exams. They attested that the internet has been very handy in speeding the completion of projects that students do for the purposes of passing the exams. However, other schools indicated that they have computer rooms but internet connection is not readily available because of the high tariffs when buying bundles. Therefore their pupils usually uses their own resources when conducting research which usually leads to late submission of reports or no submission at all.

4.2.7. Examination Preparation Techniques

Figure 7.



Strategy	Frequency
Mid & End of Term Tests	10
Topic Tests	7
Examination Practice	1
Repeating of Grade	1
Reading Competition	1

All the respondents attested to the fact that they do give tests as prescribed by the Ministry of Education. However, some respondents indicated that they only give the end of term tests only as opposed to the mid-term tests and monthly tests because of the little coverage of the content. Some respondents indicated that they have an in house agreement to say if a child is absent from these internal exams and or does not do well in them he/she will not progress to the next grade. That the school administrations will recommend that the child repeats the grade. For fear of repeating the grade pupils at these schools strive not to be absent from lessons and studies very hard to prepare for these internal exams so they can pass and proceed to the next grade.

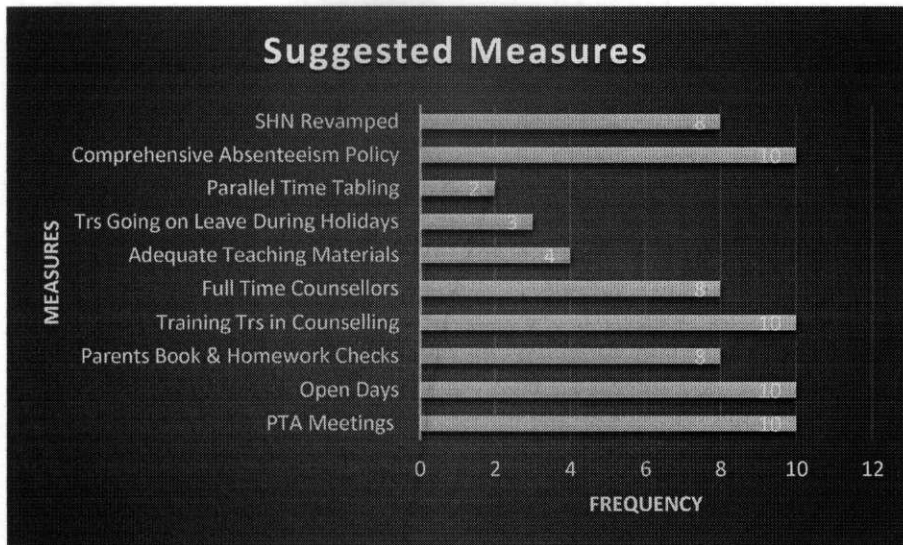
A school administrator indicated that *“my school uses a special exam for those in exam classes, we call them as ‘examination practice’ in which teachers prepare full examination papers and test the pupils on them so as for the pupils to have a feel of the exam environment”*. In these examination practices the respondent said all the examination regulations are adhered to by both the teachers and the pupils, after which the papers are marked and the teachers with his or her

pupils revise the content of the paper. In so doing the pupils are psyched up for the final examination and the examination fears are gotten rid of ultimately absenteeism from examination is the thing of the past.

4.3. Suggestions of Strengthening Strategies of Curbing Absenteeism.

This section provides suggestions made by respondents to strengthen the strategies employed by schools management in curbing absenteeism from examinations. Figure shows a summary of suggested measures to strengthen the above strategies. The sub-themes that indicate the suggestions made are summarized in figure 8 and are subsequently discussed in the preceding paragraphs.

Figure 8.



Measure	Frequency
SHN Revamped	8
Comprehensive Absenteeism Policy	10
Parallel Time Tabling	2
Trs Going on Leave During Holidays	3
Adequate Teaching Materials	4
Full Time Counsellors	8
Training Trs in Counselling	10
Parents Book and Homework Checks	8
Open Days	10
PTA Meetings	10

4.3.1. Active Parental Involvement in the Education of their Children.

All the respondents suggested that all parents takes an active role in the education of their children, it was argued to say if truant behavior such as absenteeism is to be curbed, full support and participation from parents is key. It was observed that not all parents respond positively to the requests of the school such as parental meetings or call outs, also that some parents no matter how many times you send word for them to come to their child's school will not come. One deputy said *"in the years I have served as deputy head I have noticed that, those parents who do not attend open days, annual general meetings or any other whose children miss lessons and examinations ultimately."* Respondents were also of the view that all the parents and guardians alike check their children's books and sign homework. One head teachers said *"that parents do not have to be literate to be able to check their children's homework or just books generally."* By so doing parents will be able to arrest a lot of bad vices that their children may fall prey of such as dodging or absenting themselves from school. Some respondents suggested that a law be made to take to task those parents who do not care for their childrens' education.

4.3.2. Adequate Guidance and Counselling Departments.

The findings indicated that all the schools are ill equipped with guidance and counselling teachers hence the need to training more teachers in this so as for counseling to be more effective. It was also suggested that the guidance and counselling teachers be made to be full time or they should have fewer teaching loads. One deputy head teacher said *"teenagers have a lot of issues which cut across all aspects of life and if left unchecked will lead to unpleasant behaviours such as absenteeism, the reason why there should be adequate guidance and counselling"* Some respondents suggested that the PTA executive to come up with a parents committee which can help the schools guidance and counselling department so as for the home-school ties to be strengthened.

4.3.3. Syllabi Completion.

All the respondents shared the same sentiment of completing the syllabi before the start of the final examination. However, it was appreciated that it is almost impossible to complete the entire syllabi in all the subjects. To this effect some respondents suggested that the schools parallel plot its teachers, especially for those that teach examination classes. This is to ensure that each time one teacher is not available the other teacher will go in to teach and in this way there will be no

teaching time lost. One administrator said *“I have tried to parallel plot the teachers teaching examination classes, and to this effect on rare occasions those classes go without a teacher.”*

The respondents emphasized teacher presence in class at all the time during lessons.

Respondents suggested that schools be equipped with enough teaching and learning materials such as computers and have their internet services subsidized by the providers or the government. This is to ensure that pupils have access to the internet, are able to research and do their projects on time so as finish quickly. A deputy head teacher said *“if our computer laboratory was to be fully stocked and internet paid for on a subsidized rate, then the school will have internet all year round and pupils will be able to research on their own.”* Also the pupils will be able to read ahead of the teacher and be able to finish the syllabi on their own.

4.3.4. Policy on Absenteeism.

It was observed by all respondents that absenteeism has not be dealt with comprehensively in our policy documents. That apart from what the Educations Act 2011 says the ‘whoever is absent from school for a continuous period of 10 working days will lose a school place’ there is no any other provision for other forms of absenteeism such as from a lesson in a particular subject, or just an irregular school attendant but not for a continuous 10 days. In this way schools managements are left to handle such situations as they see fit. One head teacher reported that *“even the 10 days absence from school policy is not very clear, therefore we just deal with absenteeism by use of reasonableness judgement.”*

4.3.5. Social Welfare Aid

Some respondents suggested that the government revamp the School Health and Nutrition (SHN) programme so as to feed those pupils who are coming from poor families. It was observed by all that poverty is a contributing factor to absenteeism from school and ultimately examination. One head teacher suggested to say *“if all the parents were economically sound then the issues of child labour will reduce the government need to come up with a deliberate policy to empower its citizens because lack of resources has its effects on so many aspects of life such as education.....”* Therefore, if pupils are given food at school they will be looking forward to coming to school instead of staying away helping their parents look for food. In the same line some respondents suggested that the majority of the Zambian communities be empowered

economically so that they be able to provide adequately for their families. In this way many social problems both for the schools and the community at large will be solved.

4.4. Summary of Findings

The findings revealed that schools employ a number of strategies to curb absenteeism from junior secondary examination. That all schools involve parents in the education of their children by calling for various meetings, however majority of the schools do not receive the desired response from parents for example some do not turn up for open days. Also that all schools conduct registration of pupils in the morning and that if a pupil is absent for a continuous 10 days is excluded from school, however only two schools attested to having excluded some pupils on this ground the rest they just warn.

Also some schools have a number of internal academic monitoring tools which ensures that teaching and learning are taking place as expected. Also some schools have other internal testing methods away from the traditional testing methods which renders their learners very ready for the examinations.

The findings revealed that an active role by parents should be undertaken in order to curb absenteeism, also that the government take those parents who do not respond to the schools demands to task. That the government to revamp the SHN programme so as to alleviate poverty among pupils. Finally that the teachers teaching exam classes be taken to task in finishing the syllabi.

CHAPTER FIVE: DISCUSSION OF FINDINGS.

5.1. Overview

The study revealed a number of strategies that schools management employ in order to curb absenteeism from Junior Secondary Examinations, also suggestions made as to how these strategies can be strengthened. It is in this light that this chapter discusses the findings under the identified main themes, outlines and summarizes the findings as reflected in the research and finally gives recommendations for educational stakeholders to consider.

The findings indicated that all the schools implement the “exclude from school after 10 days continuous absence from school”. Although this is a policy most schools do not exclude such pupils they are mostly counselled and given warnings, only in very rare cases pupils are excluded on the ground of absence from school for 10 days. It was observed that this provision is not adequate as it does not deal with other forms of absences such as dodging certain classes and many others. According to the Ministry Of Education in England Attendance Policy for Pupils (2014) states that a policy on attendance and absenteeism must be a comprehensive framework defining the roles and responsibilities of all stakeholders in relation to pupil attendance, that also it should define all forms of absences so as to improve the overall attendance of pupils. Therefore an adequate policy on overall school attendance which caters for all forms of absences and has clear roles for each education stakeholder can help reduce absenteeism.

The findings showed overwhelming response that registration of pupils when they are in school is on key factor that schools use to curb absenteeism from examination, in that, schools use the information from the attendance register to identify regular absentees from school to counsel them and sometimes call their parents. It was also observed that other forms of capturing attendance are employed by schools such as period registers and subject teacher’s registers. In this way administrators are able to capture those pupils that completely absent themselves from school and those that dodge lessons. This strategy is very cardinal especially for those that are in an examination grade as administrators are even able to predict the attendance of learners for that years examinations, for it has been proven by many researchers that lesson attendance is a guarantee for examination attendance. Lubeya (2012) was of the view that poor lesson attendance is a recipe for failure to present oneself for an exam in that particular subject as it renders one not ready. Therefore staying in check of pupil attendance at all the levels of school is

key to curbing absenteeism. Registration or taking account of who is present and absent is very important in all organization's, schools inclusive, if this is not done then the levels of truancy such as absenteeism will be high. If schools do not conduct registration of pupils upon arrival in school and during other activities in school then the teachers and the school at large will not know the levels of absenteeism in classes and school. It should also be noted that this is the first attempt in addressing the issue of all forms of absenteeism.

All the schools have the Guidance and Counselling Department which is tasked to counsel pupils with various problems such as personal, academic, physical and many others. The findings indicated that most schools do not have qualified counsellors and that the part time counsellors have the normal teaching load just like any other teacher. This scenario renders the department to be ineffective as the counsellors will concentrate more on teaching than counselling. Sinclair & Anderson (2003) alluded to the fact that counsellor in schools plays a very important role in dealing with truancy such as absenteeism in schools. They further said that for counselling to be effective a school must have a team of dedicated counsellors with no any extra responsibilities. In the same line Lubeya (2012) stated that the MOE should consider employing full time counsellor in all the schools. Counsellors are key personnel in dealing with most forms of truancy, most schools in Chingola district do not have qualified counsellors. Counselling of pupils with absenteeism problem should be coupled with sensitization on the consequences of absenteeism from examinations if it is to be effective.

The findings indicated that schools involve parents in the education of their children through PTA activities such as annual general meetings, also through open days and community liason. Although this is the case it was observed that some schools register poor attendance of parents from such meetings, such occurrences renders the efforts of the schools futile as their activities will not have the full support from parents. It's like the schools are fighting the battle of excellence alone. Bandura (2003) in his social learning theory alludes to the importance of full parental involvement in the education of their children so as to attain the desired results. Bandura in his reciprocal determinism argues that the school and home influence each other in that the lapse on one part will be detrimental to the other.

It should be noted that the success of most organization's calls for the involvement of all the stakeholders involved to do their part, schools are not in exception of this. It can be argued

therefore that if schools are to be effective and efficient, all the stakeholders must play their part without fail, in this case parents must do their part.

Schools employ a number of motivational strategies such as recognizing excellence at assemblies, awarding achiever, inculcating visionary ideas in the pupils, inviting motivational speakers and many others. All these activities are meant to psych the pupils and drive their behaviour in a desired direction. It was observed that some teachers go late for classes and others absent themselves, although these were in the minority they set as a very bad example for learners as the learners will grow up thinking that is the way to behave. Bandura (2003) argues that motivation of pupils is key in getting learners to behave in a certain way. He further argues that truancy in schools is reduced when you have a highly motivated and focused learners. He recommends among others forms of motivations such as awards, praises, inspirational peers and models. Shooba (2013) on the other hand argues that pupils must be motivated to reproduce what they have learnt in the final examination. That both parents and teachers must see to it that the children are highly focused and motivated, in this way they will look forward to the final examination so they can progress to the next level. As part of motivation, it is important to educate the pupils on the benefits of a good education at personal level, that the private benefits someone gets from attending and finishing school. It can be argued that if pupils are fully aware of these benefits, then they will look forward to complete primary education then secondary, and finally higher education, in turn this will solve the issue of absenteeism from examinations.

Schools employ a number of strategies so as to complete the syllabi among them are extra lessons for those classes that are behind, the use of period registers where both pupils and teachers sign to show that teaching and learning took place and also parallel time tabling of teachers. Bandura (2003) argues that for the learners to reproduce what they have learnt in an exam they have to be adequately prepared, failure of which they will either perform badly or will not present themselves for such an exam. In this line it can be argued to say adequate syllabi coverage will render the pupils ready for the exams and will ultimately reduce the levels of absenteeism. From the findings and literature it can be seen that full syllabi coverage does not only prepare the pupils for the examination but also gives them the confidence to attend the exams, hence reducing absenteeism from final examinations.

The findings indicated to say apart from the methods of testing outline in the education policies, some schools use other forms of testing such as “examination practice” which is a depiction of the full examination type papers and all the examination regulations are adhered to. In this way such schools help their learners get rid of examination phobia and reduce on chances of involving themselves in leakages. These examination preparations techniques are made to help learners get ready for examination so they do not absent themselves from the exams. They are also part of syllabi completion and helps the teacher prepare a meaningful revision to further help learners understand the concepts that they need to reproduce in an exam. It should also be argued that examination preparation techniques such as testing at all levels, will expose the learners to examination questioning techniques and in this will get rid of the phobia that pupils may have to approach the exam.

Active parental involvement in the education of their children was suggested as key to the strengthening of the strategies that schools employ in dealing with absenteeism. It was observed that some parents do not check their children’s books in terms of home work or just general book checks so as to keep up with the progress that their children are making in school. Also that some parents do not come for PTA meetings and open days. This make it difficult for schools to execute their duties as they do not have the support of the parents. As already alluded to Bandura (2003) argues that the school and home influences each other, and that if schools are to perform effectively the home and community at large must be actively involved in all schools activities. Other scholars such as Adejumo & Adetunji (2013) and Thornton, Darmody & McCoy (2013) state that participation in parent–teacher meetings and other activities, monitoring the child’s school attendance and homework supports the child’s academic progress and school attendance. It is seen that the children of families who cannot have a good communication with their children, who are highly oppressive or who have no authority on their children and have accepted the failure of their children show considerably high cases of absenteeism from examinations.

Research findings suggested that schools have full time counsellors whose core business will be to counsel pupils with issues and to bridge the gap between the school and home. In this way pupils with issue will be attended to effectively which will reduce absenteeism ultimately. Sinclair & Anderson (2003) have argued that schools that have adequate counsellors have

registered low levels of truancy in schools as these are arrested in good time by counsellors and are addressed with the help of parents and guardians. Shooba 2013 alluded to the fact that if the guidance and counselling departments in schools were to be active then pupils with academic challenges will be identified and helped accordingly. Shooba said this because her findings showed that some pupils miss examinations because of fear of failing certain subjects because they have difficult contents to understand. Guidance and counselling are key in addressing most truant behavior amongst pupils, therefore if it is adequate by way of having enough man power to do this will arrest the issue of absenteeism in early stages.

It was observed that if the syllabi have to be completed enough time for pupil-teacher contact must be created, that this can be done through adequate cover provided for those teachers that are absent. Also that all the teachers teaching exam classes are parallel time tabled so that cover for one another is automatic. Bandura (2003) in his social learning theory allude to the fact if learners are to reproduce what they have learnt in an examination then they have to be prepared adequately for each concept which they will be examined on, failure to do so learners are likely not to present themselves for such an exam. This renders syllabi completion very cardinal if absenteeism from examination is to be reduced.

The research findings found that most school deals with other forms of absenteeism as they see fit because they are not provided for in the Education Act or the national policy. In this line it was the view of most respondents that a comprehensive policy on all forms of absenteeism be framed by the government so as to have the schools activities defined. The Ministry Of Education in England Attendance Policy for Pupils (2014) alludes to the fact that a comprehensive policy on absenteeism from school equips the schools with a uniform way of dealing with the issue. That a uniform way of dealing with the issue of absenteeism will create a sense of confidence and direction in all the stakeholders in education. Most countries such as UK, Nigeria, South Africa, to mention just a few have national policies specifically to address absenteeism as a whole. This makes it easy for schools in these countries to deal with absenteeism proactively especially with regard to final examinations.

The findings indicated that poverty is also the cause of absenteeism from lessons and ultimately examinations. To this effect respondents suggested that the "School Health Nutrition" programme be revamped, in this way the schools will be able to provide atleast a meal for those

vulnerable children. This is believed to strengthen the strategies of curbing absenteeism in that pupils will be looking forward to going to school for they will be assured of a meal. Some respondents also felt that if parents were economically empowered and that if the means of production were fairly distributed then the issue of poverty will be dealt with adequately. Balfanz & Byrnes (2012) show that absenteeism is highly common among students who come from low-income families. It can be said that particularly the obligation of boys to work at a job and contribute to the economy of the family are important factors in school dropout. In their study, they found out that factors emerging from the family such as the obligation of students to help their parents at home, look after their younger siblings and work and bring money home have significant effects on their absence from school. To this effect that is why some respondents felt that parents should be economically empowered so that they do not have to withdraw their children from school.

5.2. CONCLUSION

The general conclusion is that schools managements have not sat idle as regards to absenteeism from Junior Secondary examinations, they have employed a number of strategies to deal with the vise. In dealing with absenteeism schools conducts various forms of registration of pupils such as normal registration by grade teachers and subject teacher registration during each lesson. Also schools strives counsels pupils with personal and academic issues though most guidance and counselling department in schools are not adequate. Also school involve parents in the education of their children through PTA meeting, open days and through the signing of homework books. Schools use a number of motivating styles so as to help learners explore their potential, for example praising achievers at assemblies and awarding excellence. Schools also inculcate the schools visions in the learners so as for them to behave in a desired way. Schools also ensures that pupils are taught the right syllabi and that it is adequately covered to prepare pupils for examinations. On the other hand schools use various testing methods for purposes of preparing pupils for the examinations.

School administrators suggested a number of measures that can be used to strengthen the above strategies, such as; active parental participation in the education of their children, also having a comprehensive policy on absenteeism, also for the schools to complete the syllabi before examinations. They also suggested that government train and employ full time guidance and counselling teachers so as to making counselling effective. And finally that schools reintroduce SHN so as to feed vulnerable pupils. In this way the absenteeism from lessons and examinations will be reduced significantly.

5.3. RECOMMENDATIONS.

Based on the findings of the study, the following recommendations are made

- ❖ Full time counsellors be trained and employed by government.
- ❖ Teachers to finish the syllabi before the examination or to have extensive revision designed by schools managements to revise with the pupils before the examinations.
- ❖ MOE revamps the SHN programme so as to help the needy pupils
- ❖ Schools should have deliberate local motivating initiatives for pupils, for example “no school fees policy” for those pupils that perform very well.

5.4. Suggestions for Future Research

Due to the nature of the research it was not possible to deal with all the issues for there to be a comprehensive solution to the issue at hand, hence the following suggestions for future research.

1. There is need to conduct the same research at national level to obtain and establish the strategies used by schools in curbing absenteeism from Junior Secondary examinations.
2. Research may be conducted to find out which subjects are affected the most with absenteeism from examination.
3. Research may be conducted to find out what most private schools do in order to retain a 100% attendance for final examination.
4. Research can be conducted to find out what motivate or demotivates pupils to perform in a certain manner.

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APPENDICES

SEMI STRUCTURED INTERVIEW (SSI) SCHEDULE FOR HEAD TEACHERS OR DEPUTY HEAD TEACHERS

Dear respondent,

I am a Post graduate student from the University of Zambia, conducting a research on

'Curbing Absenteeism from Junior Secondary Examinations: Investigating Strategies Employed in Selected Schools of Chingola District'. This study is purely academic therefore all responses will be treated as confidential.

Thank you for your time.

PART ONE DEMODGRAPHIC INFORMATION

1. Name of your School

.....

2. What is your highest qualification?

a. Diploma () b. Degree () c. Masters degree ()

d. Other (specify)

3. How long have you served as Head Teacher or Deputy Head Teacher?

a. 1-5 years () b. 6-10 years () c. 11 years and above ()

4. How many Grade7 and 9 candidates entered for examinations in 2015?

.....

5. How many were absent from these exams?

.....

PART TWO OBJECTIVES.

a) Strategies employed by schools management in curbing absenteeism

6. Are you familiar with the national policy of the Ministry of Education on absenteeism?

a. Yes () b. No ()

7. Do you follow the guidelines of this policy?

a. Yes () b. No ()

8. If the answer in 7 is “No” then what has the school management put in place in order to deal with pupil absenteeism?

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9. What are the strategies that your school uses in order to curb absenteeism of pupils from Junior Secondary Examinations?

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10. What is the general attitude towards the implementations of these strategies?

a. Very Good () b. Good () c. Poor ()

11. If the answer in question 11 is 'C' give atleast two reasons why this is so

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.....

12. Do you have a guidance and counselling department in your school?

a. Yes () b. No ()

13. Is there a change noticed in these pupils? If not what has the school done in order to supplement the schools counselling service? (give atleast 2 strategies)

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14. What is the general parent's response to meetings such as Parent Teachers Association AGM and Open Days?

a. Very Good () b. Good () c. Average or () d. Poor ()

15. If the answer in number 15 is 'c or d' give atleast 2 reasons why?

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16. What happens to those parents who are not captured during the above meetings?

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17. Suggest ways through which parents can be fully involved in the education of their children?

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b) Suggestions on how to strengthen the strategies

18. Suggest measures through which the government can strengthen these strategies in curbing absenteeism from examinations.

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.....

THANK YOU FOR YOUR TIME