

**Analysis of the methods being used to teach initial literacy in English at selected schools  
in Pemba District, Zambia**

**By**

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requirements for the award of the Master of Education in Literacy, Language and  
Applied Linguistics**

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**CERTIFICATE OF APPROVAL**

This dissertation by Charity Chilufya Mbalamweshi is approved as fulfilling part of the requirements for the award of the degree of the Master of Education in Literacy, Language and Applied Linguistics.

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## **ABSTRACT**

The language policy in Zambia indicated that initial literacy in Zambian Languages should be introduced in grade one while initial literacy in English should be introduced in grade three and a document called National Literacy Framework was provided to this effect. However, the document contained details of how to proceed with teaching initial literacy in each Zambian Language and none for the initial literacy in English. It was from this background that a study was conducted. The purpose of the study was to find out how the teachers in selected schools of Pemba District were teaching initial literacy in English without a guide by the Ministry of Education.

The research design was case study and the approach was qualitative. It included document analysis of teachers' preparations of grade three literacy lessons in English, lesson observations and checklists. There were also interviews with individual participant teachers. The target population involved all the Grade 3 teachers and all the Grade 3 learners in Pemba District. The sample consisted of 6 primary schools and 8 grade three teachers. The distribution of the teachers was not consistent because the selected had different numbers of Grade 3 teachers. Lesson preparation documents for initial literacy in English for the 8 teachers were analysed, the 8 teachers were observed teaching initial literacy in English and were subjected to a semi – structured interview. All the activities were done within their school and classroom environments. The data was analysed qualitatively. It was grouped into identified themes according to research objectives.

The findings revealed that teachers used whatever methods/strategies they thought could make their teaching effective. Such methods were question and answer, demonstrations, class and group discussions, role play, synthetic phonics, look and say, pair work and teacher expository. Further, the content was sequenced according to books and documents they thought could enable them to teach initial literacy in English effectively. Such books and documents were the syllabus, the National Literacy Framework, Grade 3 Teachers' Guide and Learners' Books. Another finding was that teachers were facing challenges to teach initial literacy in English to learners who could neither speak nor read English with understanding. In addition, teachers expressed desire to be up skilled in the teaching of initial literacy in English through Continuous Professional Development meetings.

In view of the findings, the following major recommendation was made: Curriculum developers to provide clear guidance on instruction to teach initial literacy in English for the Zambian schools.

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There are many people who have touched my life. I may need to write another dissertation full of their names but I will end here.

## **DEDICATION**

I wish to dedicate this dissertation to my father and mother who have always loved to witness the success of their children. They have worked very hard all their lives to make a better future for their children.

I also wish to dedicate this dissertation to my children who have understood as I encountered this academic journey. They always understood whenever I gave them little attention due to my studies.

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## CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION

### 1.0 Overview

This chapter provides the background, statement of the problem, purpose, research objectives, research questions, significance and delimitations of the study.

### 1.1 Background of the Study

The United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO, 2004) explained that the ability to recognise, comprehend, interpret, produce, communicate, and compute with printed and written materials in a variety of circumstances is known as literacy. It involves a continuum of learning in enabling individuals to achieve their goals, to develop their knowledge and potential, to participate fully in their community and wider society. Further, the European Literacy Policy Network, as cited by Montoya (2018) asserted that literacy refers to the ability to read and write at a level whereby individuals can effectively understand and use written communication in all media—be it print or electronic. The Australian Department of Education and Skills (DES) (2011) referred to literacy as the capacity to read, understand, and critically appreciate various forms of communication including spoken language, printed text, broadcast media, and digital media. The key to literacy is reading development, a progression of skills which begins with the ability to oral skills and the ability to decode written words, and which culminates in the comprehension of text. Reading development involves a range of complex language-underpinnings including awareness of speech sounds, spelling patterns, word meaning, grammar and patterns of word formation, all of which provide a necessary platform for reading, writing and comprehension (Silavwe, Mwewa and Mkandawire, 2019 in Malunga, 2020). This is cornerstone of attaining education. Therefore, a lot of importance is usually attached to how literacy is taught. “Reading and writing are essential life skills. If children do not learn to read and write early enough or well enough in primary school, they cannot learn other subjects properly” (Ministry of Education (MoE) 2003, p. 2).

Nevertheless, many Zambian learners seem not to have sufficient literacy skills. According to the MoE as cited in Education for all 2015 National Review p. 35 and National Literacy Framework (NLF) p. 4, “the literacy levels are as low as at 35.3%.” Southern and Eastern African Consortium for Monitoring Education Quality (SACMEQ) as cited in the NLF further commented that “the pattern of low performance has persisted

over the past decade.” SACMEQ further indicated that Zambian learners are performing at a level far lower than their regional counterparts.

The definitions for literacy above show its importance to the development of a community. Therefore, it is for this reason that every community or nation always strives to make the citizens literate. The Zambian Government is not an exception; it has changed the language policies in quest to facilitate high levels of reading among learners and all the citizens. Language and literacy are intertwined because language is a resource for teaching literacy, hence; the teaching of literacy is always engulfed in language policies (Simwinda, 2009 in Mwanza, 2012). The first formal way of teaching language got pronounced with the arrival of the missionaries in Zambia. This period is believed to have marked the beginning of a more or less formalized language policy in education involving the use of both English and local languages as media of classroom instruction.

The policy emanated from the missionaries who taught reading, writing and numeracy using local languages to facilitate evangelisation where they set up churches, hospitals and schools. Manchishi, 2004 in Mwanza, 2012, p 1 stated that “...the drive for evangelism proved extremely successful because the missionaries used local languages. ... and even in the schools, the medium of instruction was in the local languages at least up to the fourth grade”.

There was an adjustment to the language policy during the colonial period. The policy got presented in 1924 by the British Colonial Office through the Phelps Stokes Commission whose purpose was to examine the educational system in its colonies and advise how it could be improved (Mwanza, 2012; Banda & Mwanza, 2017). The commission was aware of the complementary roles that English and local languages could play in personal and national development. Consequently, the Commission recommended English to become the official language in education and government business while local languages were to be used for the preservation of national values and self-identity on the part of the Africans (Manchishi, 2004 in Mwanza, 2021, Banda & Mwanza, 2017). As a result of the recommendations made by the Phelps Stokes Commission, the government went further and formally recognized four main local languages; Cibemba, Cinyanja (Cicewa), Citonga and Silozi as regional official languages to be used in the African government schools as media of instruction for the first four years of primary education (Annual Report on Native education for the year 1927 in Mwanza, 2012; Banda & Mwanza, 2017). This declaration constituted a landmark in language policy formulation for the territory with regard to medium of

classroom instruction and, by extension, to language of wider communication by zone. The declaration gave legal status to and acknowledged the role of local indigenous languages in education (Simwinga, 2004 in Mwanza, 2012; Banda & Mwanza, 2017).

It is important to note that after independence, the matter of language policy continued to be looked into. This led the relevant stakeholders to make a proclamation of making English an official language for the nation and a language of classroom instruction from grade 1 to tertiary level, in 1966. Then, the 1977 educational reforms, which though acknowledging the limitations of English as a language of classroom instruction, recommended its continued use while making provisions for the utilization of the seven local official languages where necessary (Mwanza, 2012; Banda & Mwanza, 2017).

In 1992, the Ministry of Education revisited the issue of language- in- education policy which identified English as the language of instruction from grade 1 (MOE, 1992 in Mwanza, 2012; Banda & Mwanza, 2017). It was found out that the policy of using English language for classroom instruction from grade 1 to the highest level of education had weaknesses which included: downgrading of local languages, isolation of the school from the community, alienation of the learner from tradition and impairment of children's future learning. Having recognized these weaknesses, the 1992 policy document recommended that the MOE would institute a review of the primary school curriculum in order to establish the main local languages as the basic languages of instruction from grades 1-4. The 1992 recommendation provided the teacher with greater freedom to determine 'the main local language' to be used as language of instruction. Simwinga (2006) in Mwanza, (2012; Banda & Mwanza, 2017) observed that by 1992, it had become increasingly clear that the use of English as a language of instruction was not working well, particularly at lower primary school level.

A policy document known as *Educating our Future* was introduced in 1996. The document guided that while the language of classroom instruction from grade 1 to tertiary level remained English, initial literacy in grade 1 was to be taught in local languages. The language policy stated that '...all pupils will be given an opportunity to learn initial basic skills of reading and writing in a local language... officially, English will be used as a language of instruction'(MOE, 1996:27).

Besides the language policies having been changed, different approaches have also been adopted with the view of improving the literacy situation. The persistent low literacy levels gave birth to the Primary Reading Program (PRP) in 1998 as an intervention to

eradicate the low literacy levels. The program was composed of three courses: New Break Through to Literacy (NBTL) which was used to teach initial literacy using mother tongues, (implementing the 1996 Education Document; Educating Our Future) in grade one (1); Step Into English (SITE) which was used in grade two (2) when the learners were expected to transition the acquired literacy skills in their mother tongue into the second language, English; and Read On Course (ROC) which was used from grade three (3) to seven (7) with the aim of consolidating and building on the initial literacy skills learned in grades one (1) and two (2).

Despite this innovative literacy program in place, studies indicated that reading levels among Zambian children continued to be remarkably low (Kalindi, 2006; Matafwali, 2005; MoE, 2003; Ojanen, 2007). Banda (2000) also carried out a study during which he attempted to analyze if the one year for initial literacy was adequate for an average child to develop conceptual linguistics in the mother tongue that could be transferred to a second language. His findings were that the one year given to learners to learn initial literacy in their mother tongue was not enough. The reasons given by many informants included that NBTL should be given more than one year for pupils to achieve meaningful levels of proficiency in mother tongue that they can use in the learning of second language in grade two; the change is too abrupt and it happens at the moment when learners are just beginning to read sentences in their mother tongue, so they need more time to improve on the acquired skills (Banda, 2000, p. 35).

Apart from one year for NBTL not being enough, some informants in Banda (2000)'s research said that they could not expect to achieve a meaningful initial literacy program through mother tongue while foreign language, English, remained the medium of instruction. The realisation of the weaknesses experienced with PRP's prompted the MoE to come up with yet another intervention that resulted into the change of the Language Policy and introduction of Primary Literacy Program (PLP), in 2013, to teach initial literacy in the mother tongue.

The Ministry changed the length for the instruction in initial literacy in mother tongue from one year, during PRP, to two years without any interference by the print in the English Language. Another weakness which the Ministry might have noted was that the English Language as medium of instruction interfered with the acquisition of literacy skills in the mother tongue at grade one (1) (NLF, 2013). Therefore, the current language policy stated that the medium of instruction from early education to grade four was a familiar local language. Moreover, learners went to school with a thousand vocabulary

words and phonemes in their mother tongue therefore, there was need to scaffold on the knowledge they went with to school (NLF, 2013). It was for that reason NLF (2013 p. 5) stated that “low literacy levels in primary schools could be solved by scaffolding learning through instruction in a local language.”

Apart from the change in the language policy, the NLF had been developed in Zambia for the first time in order to provide a strategy for literacy instruction in Zambian Languages at grade one (1). The framework has been developed to guide the education community towards a national approach for the development of literacy skills (NLF p. 1). The NLF had not only been developed to provide a strategy to teach initial literacy in Zambian Languages but to also provide how to introduce English Language at grade two (2). Oral English was what the NLF had put in place to use to teach the English Language. The reason for this was that the promoters of PLP were applying the principle of teaching and learning from simple to complex. The advocacy was for the learners to start by acquiring enough vocabulary and basic grammar before getting exposed to the English print at grade three (3) (NLF, 2013).

The NLF contained the summary of what to teach and how to teach from grade one to grade four (4): The approach of PLP was to be used to teach literacy skills at grade one (1) and two (2); oral literacy had to be introduced at grade two (2) in English; however, there was no prescribed approach to be used to teach literacy skills in English at grade three (3). Having noticed that there was no nationally provided approach to teach literacy skills at grade three, the study intended to investigate how the Grade three (3) teachers were teaching initial literacy in English (NLF, 2013).

The following is an example of explicit guidance in the NLF on how to teach initial literacy in Zambian Languages while there was none of such for initial literacy in English:

1. *Teach the vowels first: /a/, /e/, /i/, /o/, /u/ Use a key picture for each (drawing).*
2. *Teach one frequently – used consonant at a time in conjunction with the vowels:  
[mM] ma me mi mo mu Phonemic awareness – Start with /ma/ /me / /mi/ /mo/  
/mu/, then ask, “What is the sound you hear at the beginning of /ma/?”  
Learners respond, “/m/.”*
3. *Blend sounds /a/, /e/, /i/, /o/, /u/ and syllables /ma/ /me / /mi/ /mo/ /mu/ to form words: mama, uma, mu*
4. *Review all above but change order, eg, /mu/ /me/ /ma/ /mi/ /mo/ etc. using flash cards or the chalkboard. Write letters.*

*Repeat with another common consonant: [k K] ka ke ki ko ku Words: ku, koma, ake, ka (+more) [t T] ta te ti to tu tama, ikata, tata, teta, atate, moto, kuti (+more)*  
(NLF, 2013 p 10 – 11)

The following is another example of guidance on what to teach and when to teach it in one of the Zambian Languages. Teachers teaching initial literacy in Zambian languages from all the regions refer to such a sequence which is provided in each Zambian Language. The sequences are called weekly schedules and are found in the NLF as appendices. The ones extracted are for Chitonga terms 1, 2 and 3 (NLF, 2013, p. 39 – 41)

CHITONGA Term 1 - Weekly Schedule					
	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday
Week 1	Pre-reading/writing	Pre-reading/writing	Pre-reading/writing	Pre-reading/writing	Pre-reading/writing
Week 2	Letter sound 1 a A	Letter sound 2 e E	Letter sound 3 I I	Letter sound 4 o O	Letter sound 5 u U
Week 3	Introduce letter sound nN	Revise letter sound nN	Introduce letter sound kK	Revise letter sound kK	Revise work done nN, kK
Week 4	Introduce letter sound lL	Revise letter sound lL	Introduce letter sound mM	Revise letter sound mM	Revise work done lL, mM
Week 5	Introduce letter sound bB	Revise letter sound bB	Revise work done bB	Assessment and Remediation	Assessment and Remediation
Week 6	Introduce letter sound wW	Revise letter sound wW	Introduce letter sound yY	Revise letter sound yY	Revise work done wW, yY
Week 7	Introduce letter sound tT	Revise letter sound tT	Introduce letter sound sS	Revise letter sound sS	Revise work done tT, sS
Week 8	Introduce letter sound zZ	Revise letter sound zZ	Introduce letter sound dD	Revise letter sound dD	Revise work done zZ, dD
Week 9	Introduce letter sound cC	Revise letter sound cC	Introduce letter sound gG	Revise letter sound gG	Revise work done cC, gG
Week 10	Introduce letter sound pP	Revise letter sound pP	Revise work done pP	Assessment and Remediation	Assessment and Remediation
Week 11	Introduce letter sound jJ	Revise letter sound jJ	Introduce letter sound bB	Revise letter sound bB	Revise work done jJ, bB
Week 12	Introduce letter sound vV	Revise letter sound vV	Introduce letter sound fF	Revise letter sound fF	Revise work done vV, fF
Week 13	End of Term Assessment				

CHITONGA Term 2 - Weekly Schedule					
	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday
Week 1	Introduce letter sound <b>kk</b>	Revise letter sound <b>kk</b>	Introduce letter sound <b>cc</b>	Revise letter sound <b>cc</b>	Revise work done <b>kk, cc</b>
Week 2	Introduce letter sound <b>hh</b>	Revise letter sound <b>hh</b>	Introduce letter sound <b>jj</b>	Revise letter sound <b>jj</b>	Revise work done <b>hh, jj</b>
Week 3	Introduce letter sound <b>ng' NG'</b>	Revise letter sound <b>ng' NG'</b>	Introduce letter sound <b>nk NK</b>	Revise letter sound <b>nk NK</b>	Revise work done <b>ng' NG', nk NK</b>
Week 4	Introduce letter sound <b>nw NW</b>	Revise letter sound <b>nw NW</b>	Introduce letter sound <b>ny NY</b>	Revise letter sound <b>ny NY</b>	Revise work done <b>nw NW, ny NY</b>
Week 5	Introduce letter sound <b>nt NT</b>	Revise letter sound <b>nt NT</b>	Revise work done <b>nt NT</b>	Assessment and Remediation	Assessment and Remediation
Week 6	Introduce letter sound <b>ns NS</b>	Revise letter sound <b>ns NS</b>	Introduce letter sound <b>nz NZ</b>	Revise letter sound <b>nz NZ</b>	Revise work done <b>ns NS, nz NZ</b>
Week 7	Introduce letter sound <b>nd ND</b>	Revise letter sound <b>nd ND</b>	Introduce letter sound <b>nc NC</b>	Revise letter sound <b>nc NC</b>	Revise work done <b>nd ND, nc NC</b>
Week 8	Introduce letter sound <b>ng NG</b>	Revise letter sound <b>ng NG</b>	Introduce letter sound <b>nj NJ</b>	Revise letter sound <b>nj NJ</b>	Revise work done <b>ng NG, nj NJ</b>
Week 9	Introduce letter sound <b>mb</b>	Revise letter sound <b>mb</b>	Introduce letter sound <b>mw</b>	Revise letter sound <b>mw</b>	Revise work done <b>mb MB, Mw MW</b>
Week 10	Introduce letter sound <b>my, MY</b>	Revise letter sound <b>my MY</b>	Revise work done <b>my MY</b>	Assessment and Remediation	Assessment and Remediation
Week 11	Introduce letter sound <b>vw VW</b>	Revise letter sound <b>vw VW</b>	Introduce letter sound <b>by BY</b>	Revise letter sound <b>by BY</b>	Revise work done <b>vw VW, by BY</b>
Week 12	Introduce letter sound <b>tw TW</b>	Revise letter sound <b>tw TW</b>	Introduce letter sound <b>ty TY</b>	Revise letter sound <b>ty TY</b>	Revise work done <b>tw TW, ty TY</b>
Week 13	End of Term Assessment				

CHITONGA Term 3 - Weekly Schedule					
	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday
Week 1	Introduce letter sound <b>sw SW</b>	Revise letter sound <b>sw SW</b>	Introduce letter sound <b>sy SY</b>	Revise letter sound <b>sy SY</b>	Revise work done <b>sw SW, sy SY</b>
Week 2	Introduce letter sound <b>zw ZW</b>	Revise letter sound <b>zw ZW</b>	Introduce letter sound <b>zy ZY</b>	Revise letter sound <b>zy ZY</b>	Revise work done <b>zw ZW, zy ZY</b>
Week 3	Introduce letter sound <b>dw DW</b>	Revise letter sound <b>dw DW</b>	Introduce letter sound <b>dy DY</b>	Revise letter sound <b>dy DY</b>	Revise work done <b>dw DW, dy DY</b>
Week 4	Introduce letter sound <b>gw GW</b>	Revise letter sound <b>gw GW</b>	Introduce letter sound <b>pw PW</b>	Revise letter sound <b>pw PW</b>	Revise work done <b>gw GW, pw PW</b>
Week 5	Introduce letter sound <b>py PY</b>	Revise letter sound <b>py PY</b>	Revise work done <b>py PY</b>	Assessment and Remediation	Assessment and Remediation
Week 6	Introduce letter sound <b>jw JW</b>	Revise letter sound <b>jw JW</b>	Introduce letter sound <b>vw VW</b>	Revise letter sound <b>vw VW</b>	Revise work <b>jw JW, vw VW</b>
Week 7	Introduce letter sound <b>fw FW</b>	Revise letter sound <b>fw FW</b>	Introduce letter sound <b>nkW NKW</b>	Revise letter sound <b>nkW NKW</b>	Revise work <b>fw FW, nkW NKW</b>
Week 8	Introduce letter sound <b>nyw NYW</b>	Revise letter sound <b>nyw NYW</b>	Introduce letter sound <b>ntw NTW</b>	Revise letter sound <b>ntw NTW</b>	Revise work done <b>nyw NYW, ntw NTW</b>
Week 9	Introduce letter sound <b>nsw NSW</b>	Introduce letter sound <b>nty NTY</b>	Introduce letter sound <b>nsy NSY</b>	Revise letter sound <b>nsw NSW, nty NTY, nsy NSY</b>	Revise work done <b>nsw NSW, nty NTY, nsy NSY</b>
Week 10	Introduce letter sound <b>nzw NZW</b>	Introduce letter sound <b>nzy NZY</b>	Revise work done <b>nzw NZW, nzy NZY</b>	Assessment and Remediation	Assessment and Remediation
Week 11	Introduce letter sound <b>ndw NDW</b>	Introduce letter sound <b>ndy NDY</b>	Introduce letter sound <b>ngw NGW</b>	Revise letter sound <b>ndw NDW, ndy NDY, ngw NGW</b>	Revise work done <b>ndw NDW, ndy NDY, ngw NGW</b>
Week 12	Introduce letter sound <b>mbw MBW</b>	Revise letter sound <b>mbw MBW</b>	Introduce letter sound <b>mvw MVW</b>	Revise letter sound <b>mvw MVW</b>	Revise work done, <b>mbw MBW, mvw MVW</b>
Week 13	<b>End of Term Assessment</b>				

## **1.2 Statement of the Problem**

The statement of the problem to the study was that despite the Ministry of Education providing a well-defined way of teaching initial literacy in Zambian Languages at grade one (1), it had not done so at grade three (3) where initial literacy in English was expected to be taught. The MoE has published a document that contains the skills to be taught, the sequenced content, specific outcomes, assessment targets and a sample lesson procedure of how to teach initial literacy in all the Zambian Languages at grade one (1) (NLF p.2, 8-10, 13 and 26-54). The same document indicated that learners were to be introduced to literacy in English at grade three (3) (NLF p.5) but remained silent on how and what to teach when the transition takes place. It was for this reason why the problem of the study was the gap in a clear guidance of what and how to teach literacy in English at grade three (3). Besides, the provided school syllabus by the MoE did not contain outcomes that were clearly pointing to the teaching of initial literacy in English at grade three (3). There was only one outcome which was closer to the knowledge of initial literacy in English in the syllabus; “identify syllables of familiar words” (p. 19). It was in the wake of this that this study intended to ascertain the methods that the teachers were applying to teach initial literacy in English in the absence of a prescribed approach by the MoE. In summary, the problem was that there was a gap in the instruction of literacy in English at Grade 3 because clear guidance by the MoE was missing.

## **1.3 Purpose of the Study**

The purpose of the study was to ascertain how teachers were teaching initial literacy in English in the absence of a prescribed approach by the MoE.

## **1.4 Objectives of the Study**

The study intended to:

- a) Ascertain the methods that were being applied to teach initial literacy in English.
- b) Establish how the teachers were sequencing the content to teach initial literacy in English.
- c) Determine the interventions that the grade three (3) teachers would need in order to effectively teach initial literacy in English.

### **1.5 Research Questions**

- a) What methods are being used to teach initial literacy in English?
- b) How are the grade three (3) teachers sequencing the content to teach initial literacy in English?
- c) What interventions would the grade three (3) teachers need in order to effectively teach initial literacy in English?

### **1.6 Significance of the Study**

The study was significant in that the findings were likely to contribute to the body of knowledge by ascertaining the methods that teachers were using to teach initial literacy in English in the absence of a clear guidance by the MoE. The findings were also going to bring to light the gap that existed in the literacy instruction while revealing what and how initial literacy in English was being taught at grade three (3). The findings to this study were further expected to create an awareness of what grade three (3) teachers would like to be changed or enhanced in order for them to effectively teach initial literacy in English. The findings to this study were finally going to benefit the grade three (3) learners who might have been finding it a challenge to acquire the literacy skills due to the current gap in literacy instruction.

### **1.7 Delimitation and Limitations**

The study intended to deal with how the grade three (3) teachers were teaching initial literacy in English in the absence of a prescribed approach/methodology by the MoE. The study was conducted in selected schools of Pemba District. The target group was grade three (3) teachers in the selected schools.

It was a case study, hence the findings cannot be generalised. Only eight teachers out of the so many in Southern Province were involved in the study. Another limitation would be that the different conditions prevailing in the four schools may influence the findings in one way or another.

## 1.8 Operational Definitions of Terms and Abbreviations

**Alphabetic Principles:** Knowledge that letters of the alphabet have names and sounds (phonemes) which enables one to learn reading.

**Competences:** A set of skills required in order to achieve required knowledge/skills.

**Initial literacy:** The first level of learning literacy or learning to read.

**Instruction:** Refers to the teaching of a given subject.

**Literacy:** The ability to read and write with the ability to communicate effectively.

**Skills:** The ability to perform certain tasks such as reading and writing.

## **Chapter 2: Review of Related Literature**

### **2.1 Overview**

The Zambia National Curriculum Framework (MoE, 2012) defines literacy as the ability to read and write so as to understand and communicate effectively. Literacy is an essential element in a person's learning process as it enables one to confidently participate in key aspects of life such as the social, economic and political spheres. It is therefore important that learners grasp the skill of literacy in their early years in primary school in order to increase their chances of excelling in their educational endeavours. Since it is important that learners need to grasp the skill of literacy in their early years, it is necessary that the MoE pay particular attention to providing clear guidance of how to proceed in the teaching initial literacy at grade three (3). This chapter reviews some of the literature related to the study about some factors related to the achievement of literacy skills among primary school learners. It also reviews literature on some of the necessary interventions in the teaching process of initial literacy.

#### **2.2.1 Methods of teaching Initial literacy in English**

Shanahan and Lonigan (2013) in their study investigated instructional approaches that contribute to gains in children's skills and abilities that are linked to later outcomes in reading and writing or spelling skills. The study found out that one strategy for teaching early English literacy is to teach letter names and sounds. The study further explained that children who learn the names of the letters make use of the sound clues in the names to aid in their learning of the letter sounds. The study added on to say that another strategy for teaching English first-year literacy includes using mnemonics and multisensory learning.

A similar study by Naning, Hikmat and Fauziati (2016) investigated effectiveness of using phonics instruction and storybooks in English reading classes. The study revealed that reading programmes which accurately follow the systematic phonics principles teach students the Alphabet code directly, systematically and discretely. An alphabet code is the reversible relationship between the phonemes (the smallest discernible sounds in spoken words) and the graphemes (spellings) (McGuinness, 2004 p. 5 in Naning, Hikmat and Fauziati, 2016). Henceforth, phonics for reading starts with teaching learners to associate a spoken sound with a letter or letter-pair. This process is known as phonemic awareness or letter/sound associations. As soon as the letter/sound associations have been introduced, they are immediately placed in words that reflect common English

configurations Naning, Hikmat and Fauziati (2016). Students are explicitly taught a decoding strategy in which they say the sounds for each grapheme (letter(s) that represent a sound), say the sounds quickly, and then pronounce the entire word. Through focused instruction learners repeatedly sound out and blend words. A whole of this process is called decodable words (UK National reading panel, 2000 in Naning, Hikmat and Fauziati 2016). The last process in phonics instruction is relating these letter/sound associations and also reading word to the larger scale of reading printed data which consist of a lot of words or sentences in particular context, such as sentence reading, book reading or story reading Naning, Hikmat and Fauziati (2016).

The above studies showed that teachers of initial literacy in English at grade three (3), for the Zambian case needed proper guidance of when to teach the various letters of the alphabet as well as their sounds. It even became more critical with the realisation that letters of the alphabet manifested themselves in various forms, such as graphs, digraphs, trigraphs and quadgraphs, to form the 44 phonemes that learners were expected to learn in the English Language.

Devries (2019) in his study explored the major components of literacy, methods and tools for diagnosis and assessment, intervention strategies and activities, and technology applications to increase student skills. The study explained that the phonics technique was one method used to teach reading to young children. It placed focus on the names of all the alphabetic letters as well as the numerous letter sounds. The study therefore showed that it was an obligation for the MoE to guide the teachers on an appropriate approach to teach initial literacy in English. The approach in this particular study required a uniform national approach to the alphabetic letters and the numerous associated sounds.

In addition to the teaching of phonics (letter-sound relationship), Naning, Hikmat and Fauziati (2016) in their study on effectiveness of using phonics instruction and storybooks in English reading classes, alluded to incorporate context of storybooks which could be expected to endorse the use of phonic knowledge during reading activities because decoding is embedded in the context in which it is used, thus stimulating generalization of taught knowledge. It also might extend learner's understanding that mastering the alphabetic principle can help in retrieving the meaning of printed language; hence it also encouraged them to understand the functional and the benefits of learning to decode (Adams, 1998 in Naning, Hikmat and Fauziati (2016). Further, systematic instruction in beginning phonics embedded in story reading could be expected to nurture learner's ability to read words in related text and to raise comprehension by evolving

understanding of the utility of word decoding skills for comprehension Naning, Hikmat and Fauziati (2016). This study also showed the need for the MoE to provide a clear guidance in the teaching of initial literacy in English.

Mwanza (2017) carried out a study on conceptualisations and misconceptions about the eclectic approach. The study found out that eclecticism is an approach which strives to respond to diversities and exigencies which normally exist in a classroom, hence promoting flexibility in teaching. The eclectic method can add to effective teaching if used in the teaching of initial literacy in English; nevertheless, this flexibility in teaching can be better applied if teachers are clearly guided with what to teach and when to teach it.

Ehri, Deffner, & Wilce (1984) in their study reviewed Ehri's influential four phases of reading development: pre-alphabetic, partial alphabetic, full alphabetic and consolidated alphabetic. Shmidman & Ehri (2010) focussed on finding out whether pictures in learning to read a foreign language can ease the task. The findings to the above studies showed benefits to children's letter – sound knowledge via the use of pictorial representations in which letter shapes and sounds were embedded. It was for this reason that the MoE suggesting the methods to teach initial literacy at grade three (3) would be important and facilitate effective teaching. Teachers, of course would be guided by the provided approach to teach initial literacy in *Zambian Languages (ZL)* but some letters do not sound the same in *ZL* and English; all the letters maintain the same sound in *ZL* while some, such as letter 'c' change in English.

Hanover Research and Utah leading through Effective, Actionable and Dynamic Education (Unlead) (2019) reviewed literature and policy guidance on reading instruction in elementary school. The research found out that direct, explicit instruction models the strategies and thinking skills that effective readers employ. The findings further indicated that teachers may model strategies to acquire literacy skills to the whole class, small groups, or individual students, based on needs. However, teachers of initial literacy in English would only have the ability to apply the direct, explicit instruction by modelling the strategies if they have a clear roadmap of how to proceed by the MoE.

### **2.2.2 Alignment of content to teach initial literacy in English**

Changwe and Mwanza (2022) carried out a study on curriculum implementation in Zambia: Best practices of bridging the gap between the intended and the achieved curriculum. The study found out that curriculum implementation is part and parcel of the

curriculum development process. When curriculum developers intend to develop a curriculum, they are expected to put in place ways and means of having it implemented. Once this is ignored, all the good efforts and aspirations of curriculum developers as well as of the general public risk being wasted and misrepresented (Changwe and Mwanza 2022). Therefore, a very good curriculum is worthless if it cannot bring about the results of what it was intended for. The study shows that the Zambian curriculum needed to provide relevant intended guide in order to achieve the planed goals of learners to learn initial literacy in English at Grade 3.

Changwe and Mwanza in their study further found that, however, in Zambia as well as most other countries, there appears to be a disconnect between the curriculum as intended and as implemented. Wanjiru (2008) in Changwe and Mwanza, 2022 defined curriculum implementation as the process by which teachers translate the officially prescribed subjects or courses of study into syllabuses, work plans, and lessons that are taught to students at various levels. Besides, Okello and Kagoire (1996) in Changwe and Mwanza, 2022 defined curriculum implementation as a network of diverse activities aimed at converting lesson plans into classroom activities and influencing people's perspectives to embrace and engage in these activities. Thus, curriculum implementation involves the correct interpretation of what is contained in official curricula documents and ensuring that they are effectively put into good practice Changwe and Mwanza, 2022. This study shows that the intended curriculum to enable learners acquire initial literacy in English at Grade 3 was not met due to a gap in the course development.

Mills and Unsworth (2016) carried out a study with an aim to critically review literacy curriculum. The study found out that a literacy curriculum is the organisation of information through the application of symbol systems and related social behaviours that the curriculum designers find valuable. Every literacy curriculum is structured to consider three key elements: text, which deals with the learner's performance of the required text or production of text, as well as its evaluation; time, which relates to learning trajectories and usually takes the learners' age into account; and space, which refers to the social context of the learning (Bernstein, 2000 in Mills and Unsworth, 2016). This is clear that Zambian teachers for initial literacy n English need a curriculum which is well prepared taking the complexity of the content into consideration.

The same study further found out that for a long time, the literacy curriculum has been viewed as a political tool, a "state sponsored cultural apparatus," and a resource that either directly or indirectly advances economic success (Green, 1993, p.2 in Mills and

Unsworth, 2016). The literacy curriculum has been intricately, if not entirely, entwined with the social reproduction of the political connections that uphold the curriculum in schools (Mills and Unsworth, 2016). This is seen by the way education and literacy programmes work to uphold hegemony by creating well-educated citizens, disciplined bodies, and logo centric reasoning (Mills and Unsworth, 2016). This study shows how important a clear and well sequenced curriculum is in the process of teaching of teaching literacy.

Hanover Research and Unlead (2019) during the review of literature and policy guidance on reading instruction in elementary school found out that a systematic direct and explicit guidance was necessary to promote the logical development of the desired literacy abilities. Another finding was that training should be carefully scheduled so that learners are exposed to more fundamental abilities before coming across or using more advanced ones. The above findings showed evidence that the teaching of initial literacy in English at grade three (3) needed a uniform and clear guidance which was logically sequenced by the Zambian MoE.

Snow and Matthews (2016), in their study focussed on how literacy develops in children's early years and what programs or practices promote adequate literacy for all children. The study indicated that the backbone of well-structured primary literacy instruction is a comprehensive and rationally sequenced curriculum, which is commonly mentioned as a quality of successful early childhood programs. Similarly, the Finnish National Agency for Education (2016) carried out a study aimed at finding out the connection between basic literacy and media literacy. The study explained that the basic topic objectives and age-specific goals for reading teaching were laid forth in the national core curriculum. The findings from the above studies showed that for the initial literacy skills in English at Grade 3 in the Zambian schools to develop and connect to the advanced literacy skills, the ministry needed to come up with a centrally prepared curriculum outline.

Shanahan and Lonigan (2013) in their study investigated instructional approaches that contribute to gains in children's skills and abilities that are linked to later outcomes in reading and writing or spelling skills. The study found out that that phonemic awareness (PA) was regarded as an all-encompassing phrase that encompassed children's awareness of and ability to control sounds within spoken language at varied degrees of linguistic complexity, from the complete word to a phoneme. The study further indicated that many different tasks that ask learners to match, identify, delete, segment, mix, and

eliminate sound parts within words could be used to test PA. In addition, the study also found out that PA and alphabetic knowledge (AK) worked together to help learners understand the fundamentals of the alphabetic principle, acquire the patterns of how sounds and letters go together, and use these insights to phonetically decode and sound out words in print. These findings of the study pointed to the fact that without guidance on the alignment of what to teach and when to teach it, teachers of initial literacy in English in Zambia would have a challenge on what content to teach at a given ability level of students.

Shanahan and Lonigan (2013) in their study to investigate instructional approaches that contribute to gains in children's skills and abilities that are linked to later outcomes in reading and writing or spelling skills also explained that because there was evidence of a developmental progression for both, factors of instruction relating to the kind of cognitive operations for larger unit, tasks should be taken into account in the context of the language complexity of the activities that children are expected to complete. This finding also reflected the importance of systematically sequencing content to be covered when teaching initial literacy in English, otherwise teachers might not be able to effectively align content to the cognitive developmental progression. Consequently, this becomes the duty of the MoE to carefully order content in literacy.

### **2.2.3 Interventions in the teaching of initial literacy in English**

Hanover Research and Unlead (2019) during the review of literature and policy guidance on reading instruction in elementary school found that to accommodate diverse learners' varying needs, skill sets, and ability levels, teachers must differentiate their literacy instruction. Virinkoski et al., (2017) carried out a study aiming at investigating the kinds of assessment practices classroom teachers and special educational needs (SEN) teachers use in assessing first grade learners' pre-reading skills (letter knowledge and phonological skills). The study found out that differentiated instruction is an intervention which would enable instructors to meet various learning profiles across the curriculum. This finding showed that teachers of initial literacy needed to be exposed to interventions that would enable them to accommodate learners with different learning abilities.

Banda and Mwanza carried out a research aiming at pedagogical benefits of multilingual discourse in classroom practices in multilingual and multicultural context. The study found out that for initial literacy development in multilingual context like Zambia, more than one language, including hybrid forms to ensure learner involvement

in classroom practices would promote learner driven and centred pedagogy (William, 1994; Baker, 2003, 2011; Mkandawire et al., 2022; Garcia, 2009; Banda, 2010, Hornberger and Links, 2012 in Banda and Mwanza, 2017)). This finding showed that a multilingual and multicultural approach, as an intervention, to the teaching of initial literacy would enable teachers to accommodate learners with various linguistic backgrounds as they teach initial literacy in English. Moreover, this would enable the learners to meaningfully participate in the classroom and at the same time get exposed to the various language varieties including the standard ones (Banda, 2010 in Banda and Mwanza, 2017).

Morrow, et al (1999) in the study that focussed on disaster vulnerability which arises out of the social and economic circumstances of everyday living found out that “meeting individual needs required instructing children in small groups based on specific needs. ...; a supportive attitude towards students and a positive atmosphere in their rooms to motivate children to learn. ...” This study also found out that “teachers of early grade literacy recommended some interventions: advocated for extended periods of time in literacy instruction to develop the language art. ...” (p. 464).

Besides the interventions that the teachers in the above study advocated, a rich print environment and the physical presence of literacy objects and tools in play areas stimulated impulsive literacy interactions among children. In addition, involving early grade learners of literacy in social activities that would include modelling and supporting reading and writing enhanced the quality of literacy interactions in play settings. As a result, children’s experience increases exposure to print and literacy which has implications for their overall literacy development (Mol & Bus, 2011 in Barone & Mallete 2013; Lungu & Mkandawire, 2022; Mkandawire et al., 2023;). The findings from the above studies showed that there was need for all sorts of interventions to teach initial literacy in English since many learners in Zambia came from different linguistic backgrounds.

Malunga (2020) in her study focussing on the contribution of teaching and learning materials to the teaching of literacy defined the teaching and learning materials as any collection of materials including animate and inanimate objects and human and non-human resources that a teacher may use in teaching and learning situations to help achieve desired learning objectives. Instructional materials may aid a learner in concretizing a learning experience so as to make learning more exciting, interesting and interactive. They are tools used in instructional activities, which include active learning

and assessment (Mkandawire, 2012 in Malunga, 2020). The term encompasses all the materials and physical means an instructor might use to implement instruction and facilitate pupils' achievement of instructional objectives (Chileshe et al, 2018 in Malunga, 2020). This study shows the necessity for interventions on the inclusion of teaching materials in the teaching of initial literacy in English.

The matter of teaching and learning materials in the teaching of literacy becomes even more critical since many Zambian parents might not understand this. Many families in Zambia are not in a position to provide such an enriching and stimulating environment to children because they themselves live in deprived conditions and do not know how to give the desirable stimulation to their children. Hence, at initial stages of learning literacy, the more experience the child receives at this stage, the richer the literacy skills the child will have at a later stage in life. Therefore, a school with good management, enough space for movement and proper teaching and learning materials are the source of these experiences (Mkandawire, and Daka, 2018 in Malunga, 2012).

In their study tagged 'Distance Learner's Perspective on User-Friendly Instructional Materials at the University of Zambia,' Simui, et al (2017)'s study in Malunga, 2020 revealed that the shortage of teaching and learning materials in schools may not just slow down the progress of students in higher education but they may also make the learning process unfriendly. While this study was centered on higher education, it had no bearing on the impact it would have in primary schools of Zambia where the present study took place. The findings by Simui and others were supported by other previous publications such as Mkandawire (2010), Mwanza (2012) and Mkandawire (2015) in Malunga, (2020) who observed that the absence or presence of teaching and learning materials may determine the success or challenge of any education system. This justifies the need and importance of interventions on producing teaching and learning materials in the teaching of initial literacy in English.

Malunga, 2020 in her study further found out that in the acquisition of literacy skills, teaching learning materials help learners to develop holistically because they get attracted to them, hold the interest and facilitate cognitive development. During the absence of a teacher in class, learners can be kept busy reading charts thereby, developing their skills (Silavwe et al, 2019 in Malunga, 2020). An intervention should be taken to the competency of the teachers regarding mediating teaching learning materials for the learners and countercheck the availability of teaching and learning materials in the classrooms. Some special teaching learning materials could be prepared and

demonstrated to the teachers as well as children for proper implementation in the initial stages of learning literacy in English (Malunga, 2020). In a similar vein, Nkosha and Mwanza (2009) in Changwe and Mwanza, 2020 claimed that without adequate teaching and learning resources, curriculum developers could not achieve their goals.

### **2.3 Summary**

It was important for the MoE to provide methodology and sequence content such that teaching and learning of initial literacy in English is done from simple to complex. This is so because English is a second language to the majority of the Zambian children. Besides teaching and learning, necessary interventions are important in initial literacy instruction as they enable teachers to meet various learning profiles.

## **Chapter 3: Research Methodology**

### **3.0 Overview**

This chapter discussed research methods and processes that were used in the study investigating the methods that were being applied to teach initial literacy in English. It presented and supported some of the key decisions that the researcher made with regards to the research design, the population, sample, sampling techniques, methods to collect data, decision on the research instruments, procedure for data collection, data analysis and how to proceed with ethical considerations.

### **3.1 Research Design**

Since the study investigated the methods that the grade three (3) teachers were applying to teach initial literacy in English, a case study under the approach of qualitative was used. A single case study was used because the study was addressing a how question and one case, methods used by grade 3 teachers to teach initial literacy in Grade 3 (Baxter & Jack, 2010). The design was selected because it seemed to be suitable for the study where the participants were expected to narrate the methods applied when teaching literacy and the researcher observed lessons, analysed the teaching documents and narrated the observations.

### **3.2 Study Population**

The study population comprised all Grade 3 teachers and all Grade 3 learners in Pemba District. The learners were part of the population as they were part of the lesson observations. Collection of data from the teacher participants was conducted within their school environments.

### **3.3 Study Sample and Sampling Techniques**

The sample of 11% of the teacher population was used for the study. This translated into a total number of 1 male and 7 female, giving a total of eight sampled teachers. The researcher sampled 11% of the population because homogeneous sampling aims to reduce variation, simplifying the analysis and describing a particular subgroup in depth (Nikolopoulou, 2022). Homogeneous purposeful sampling procedure was employed to identify teachers to work with in order to gather the desired data for the study. In homogeneous purposive sampling, a researcher set out to identify a specific set of participants who were likely to possess the desired characteristics or experiences. In this

way, one can select the individuals or cases that fit the study, focusing on a relatively small sample (Nikolopoulou, 2022).

### **3.4 Methods of Data Collection**

The methods of data collection in this study were document analysis, lesson observations and a semi structured interview. The researcher chose the semi structured interview because it was appropriate for this study. This kind of structure allowed the researcher to come up with follow-up questions if it was realised that the intended information was not coming out as expected. Heather (2013) indicated that the interviewee's responses dictate the direction of the interview in a semi-structured interview, where the researcher provides an outline for the subjects to be discussed.

### **3.5 Research Instruments**

Three types of instruments were used to collect data in this study. The first was the document analysis tool. The second was a lesson observation checklist. The third was an interview guide.

The purpose of analysing the planning and teaching documents was to make an observation in the consistence of the planned content and its suitability to the teaching of initial literacy in English. Planning and teaching documents for eight (8) teachers were analysed using the following parameters: schemes of work, weekly planning/forecast and lesson plans.

The purpose of observing the lesson after document analysis was to establish the relationship between what was planned and what was being taught. The other reason was to observe how the different teachers were applying methodologies that would enhance learners' development of literacy skills in English.

The purpose of the interview was to triangulate the findings as well as finding out the consistencies among what the teachers planned to teach, what and how one taught and what s/he said when interviewed.

### **3.6 Data Collection Procedure**

After approval of the research proposal by the supervisor, the researcher reviewed the planning documents (schemes of work for that term, five weekly forecasts for the past weeks and ten recent lesson plans up to the day of observation) in order to observe the consistence of content coverage as well as targeted competences and skills. Thereafter,

the researcher observed grade three (3) teachers in the selected schools teaching initial literacy in English. The researcher finally interviewed the teachers and the interviews were recorded.

The instruments were used to collect data by partitioning them according to the objectives. All the instruments were designed in such a way that they revealed the methods used to teach initial literacy in English at Grade 3, the sequencing of the content and the interview guide, in particular, revealed the interventions that the teachers needed.

### **3.7 Methods of Data Analysis**

The collected data was analysed by sorting and categorising it according to themes. The themes emerged according to the data that was collected. The themes that emerged were methods to teach initial literacy in English, sequencing content to teach initial literacy in English and interventions to teach initial literacy in English.

To analyse the documents, the researcher always started with document analysis whenever she visited a class. The purpose of analysing the planning and teaching documents was to make an observation in the consistence of the planned content and its suitability to the teaching of initial literacy in English. Planning and teaching documents for eight (8) teachers were analysed using the following parameters: schemes of work, weekly planning/forecast and lesson plans.

### **3.8 Ethical Considerations**

A number of ethical issues were put into consideration. In the first place, permission and consent were requested from UNZA Ethics Committee and an introductory letter from the Assistant Dean Post Graduate in the School of Education before going into the field for data collection. Thereafter, authority to conduct a study in schools sought from the Pemba District Education Board Secretary. Also, the researcher ensured confidentiality by not writing names of participants and by coding the findings in such a way that it was not associated to an individual participant or school. A copy of a consent form to each school for the target grade three (3) teachers to read, understand and sign were provided.

## Chapter 4: Presentation of Findings

### 4.0 Overview

This chapter presents findings of the study. The findings followed the research questions and some themes that were generated from the data.

The purpose of the study was to ascertain how teachers were teaching initial literacy in English in the absence of a prescribed approach by the MoE. In order to gather data, the researcher analysed the planning and teaching documents (schemes of work for that term, five weekly forecasts for the past weeks and ten recent lesson plans up to the day of observation), observed lessons, and conducted a semi-structured interview. The planning and teaching documents were analysed in order to observe the consistence of content coverage and the development of the targeted competences and skills in the learners. Additionally, document analysis enabled the researcher to observe whether the planned content over weeks was meant to systematically build learners' initial literacy skills in English. The lessons were observed to perceive how the teachers were teaching initial literacy in English without a prescribed approach and content by the MoE. Another reason was to ascertain whether the activities the learners were engaged in nurtured the development of initial literacy skills in English. The semi-structured interview was conducted so that the teachers could speak for themselves on how they were teaching initial literacy in English in the absence of clear guidance.

### Bio-Data for the informants

Category	Description	Number of teachers
Gender	Male	1
	Female	7
Number of Years in the teaching service	1 – 5 years	3
	6 – 10 years	1
	11 – 15 years	2
	Above 15 years	2

<b>Qualifications</b>	Primary Diploma	4
	Primary Degree	1
	Secondary Diploma	1
	Secondary Degree	2
<b>Special Training in Literacy Teaching</b>	Unlock Literacy	4
	Catch-up and THRASS	2
	PLP	1
	Let's Read and Unlock Literacy	1

### **Document Analysis**

The researcher always started with document analysis whenever she visited a class. The purpose of analysing the planning and teaching documents was to make an observation in the consistence of the planned content and its suitability to the teaching of initial literacy in English. Planning and teaching documents for eight (8) teachers were analysed using the following parameters: schemes of work, weekly planning/forecast and lesson plans.

### **Schemes of work**

The first item was to find out whether a teacher had the scheme of work for Literacy in English. The finding on this item was that all the eight (8) teachers had prepared the schemes of work for Literacy in English for that term. The next item was finding out if the planned schemes of work contained suitable work to develop learners' initial literacy skills in English. All the schemes of work that were analysed had very few isolated areas with content suitable to develop learners' initial literacy skills in English. The other observation across the schemes of work was that the planned content was more suitable for learners who already had the skills to decode, blend graphemes and phonemes into words, and read fluently, rather than for learners who needed to learn initial literacy skills in English.

## SAMPLE OF A SCHEME OF WORK

UNIT	TOPIC	CONTENT	GENERAL OUTCOMES	REFERENCE
5	LISTENING AND SPEAKING READING WRITING	- drama - word formation - sequencing	- Acquire listening and speaking skills. - Acquire reading and writing skills.	- English syllabus grade 2-7 - PLP English grade 3 learners book
6	LISTENING AND SPEAKING READING WRITING	- OCCUPATIONS - sentence formation - conjunctions	- Acquire listening and speaking skills. - Acquire reading and writing skills.	- English syllabus grade 2-7. - PLP English grade 3 learners book.
7	LISTENING AND SPEAKING READING WRITING	- Objects found in school - intensive reading - singular and plural	- Acquire listening and speaking skills. - Acquire reading and writing skills.	- English syllabus grade 2-7. - PLP English grade 3 learners book.
8	LISTENING AND SPEAKING READING WRITING	- colours - reading aloud - dictation	- Acquire listening and speaking skills. - Acquire reading and writing skills.	- English syllabus grade 2-7. - PLP English grade 2-7
9	LISTENING AND SPEAKING READING WRITING	- Antonyms and synonyms - stories - sentence and paragraph construction	- Acquire listening and speaking skills. - Acquire reading and writing skills.	- English syllabus grade 2-7. PLP English grade 2-7

### Weekly plans/forecasts

The first question to the teachers was asking whether they had prepared weekly forecasts. It was found that all the eight (8) teachers had done the weekly plans/forecast for Literacy in English for that term. It was followed by an item finding out whether the planned content was suitable to develop learners' initial literacy skills in English. The planned work in the weekly plans/forecasts was generally not suitable for the learners who were learning initial literacy in English except in very few areas. The instrument further asked about teaching methods/approaches indicated in the weekly plan/forecast. The following methods/ approaches were commonly found in the weekly plans/ forecasts:



WEEKLY FORECAST



GRADE: 3

TERM: TWO

SUBJECT: ENGLISH

YEAR: 2023

DATE/WEEK	UNIT	TOPIC/CONTENT	OUTCOMES	LTR	REF	REMARKS
3 22.05.2023	24	Mr Mubita's farm knowing words	- learners know; - read simple words with 2 or 3 syllables - form simple words with 2 or 3 syllables - listen to and tell stories	- pictures - flash cards - word cards	- English syllables grade 2-7 - PLP English grade 3 - teachers and pupils book.	


  
 REPUBLIC OF ZAMBIA  
 MINISTRY OF EDUCATION  
 22 MAY 2023  


Checked  
 At'santa  
 ADH

visit to a farm

## **Lesson Plans**

The researcher's first finding was to learn of whether the teachers had past lesson plans for literacy in English. All the teachers had many past lesson plans except for one who had very few of them. This was followed by finding out if the expected outcomes in the lesson plans indicated the enhancement of learners' initial literacy skills in English. The learning outcomes in lesson plans for six (6) teachers out of eight (8) never indicated any enhancement of learners' initial literacy skills but were for the learners who were already at an advanced level in terms of literacy. Examples of such outcomes are: learners are expected to write a story based on given pictures; use past simple tense to write a story; arrange sentences in logical order; and read the title and understand the text.

The remaining two (2) teachers had learning outcomes indicating enhancement of initial literacy skills in English in very few lessons. Examples of outcomes indicating enhancement of initial literacy skills in English are: name and sound out the letters of the alphabet; and read and write the given words. One of the other observations in the lesson plans was that the planned work in most cases was not suitable for the learners learning initial literacy in English. It was appropriate for the learners who already had initial literacy skills. This was because such lessons required learners to perform tasks such as story writing, reading and answering questions, writing stories and punctuating sentences. The given examples of tasks could only be performed effectively by learners who were already fluent readers and not those who were just learning how to read the English Language. Another observation was that the planned activities, methods, and teaching and learning materials were limited.



	Mango, apple, lemon banana, beans, carrot cabbage, maize, beans animals, crops, farm tilling, harvesting planting		
DEVELOPMENT	<p>- demonstrate how to read the elicited words. (tilling, harvesting, planting weeding, farm, family)</p> <p><u>Activity 1</u></p> <p>- Ask learners to read the elicited words.</p> <p><u>Activity 2</u></p> <p>- Read the passage in the learner's book with the learners</p> <p>- put learners in groups to read the story.</p> <p>- Ask some groups to read to the class.</p> <p>- Ask learners the following questions.</p> <p>1. Who has a farm?</p> <p>2. What is Mrs. Mubita planting?</p> <p>3. What are the boy and girl doing?</p> <p>4. What is the family doing?</p>	<p>- Read the passage with the learners in groups.</p>	<p>- Were the learners able to read the words?</p>
CONCLUSION	- Go through the answers given by the learners.	- Go through the answers with the learners	

	<p><u>HOME WORK</u></p> <p>- Write the following words neatly and legibly on the chalkboard and ask the learners to copy them and read at home:</p> <p>planting planting harvesting</p>	<p>- copy the words and read them at home.</p>	
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**EVALUATION**

**LEARNERS:**

Most learners were able to read the simple words

**TEACHERS:**

The lesson was taught as planned.

### *Lesson Observation*

The researcher observed a lesson for literacy in English after analysing the documents for each teacher. The purpose of observing the lesson after document analysis was to establish the relationship between what was planned and what was being taught. The other reason was to observe how the different teachers were applying methodologies that would enhance learners' development of literacy skills in English.

The following was the specific content for the lessons that were observed: Two teachers out of eight were teaching punctuation marks (capital letters and full stop). One teacher out of the eight was teaching reading with understanding (reading comprehension). Another one out of the eight was teaching reading and handwriting. One teacher was teaching letters of the alphabet with their sounds and the other two were teaching writing sentences in order under the topic 'Careful Crossing'.

The researcher found out that some of the content that the teachers were teaching was suitable to develop initial literacy skills in English while other content was not. Two (2) out of eight (8) lessons on letters of the alphabet and reading and handwriting were suitable for learners in the initial stage of learning literacy. The six (6) lessons on punctuation marks, reading comprehension, writing sentences in order were not suitable for learners at the stage of learning initial literacy skills in English.

The following were the outcomes for the observed lessons: Read the title and understand the text, answer questions with less difficulty, punctuate given sentences correctly, read and arrange sentences in logical order, use past simple tense to write a story, write the given activity correctly, sound out the letters of the alphabet, name the letters of the alphabet, read and write the given words.

The explanation of whether the specific outcomes intended to build learners' initial literacy skills in English or not came out as follows. The activities were: read the title and understand the text, answer questions with less difficulty, punctuate given sentences correctly, read and arrange sentences in logical order, use past simple tense to write a story and write the given activity correctly. Such activities were not suitable for learners learning initial literacy in English. They have been categorised as not suitable because they required learners to already have writing and reading skills. A few activities such as

sound out the letters of the alphabet, name the letters of the alphabet, read and write the given words were suitable for learners learning initial literacy in English.

To the observation aimed at identifying the methods that were being used by the teacher in the lessons, the responses were: discussion, question and answer, group work, choral reading, demonstration, whole word approach, text approach, synthetic phonic and look and say. Some methods that were used were suitable to strengthen learners' initial literacy skills in English while others were not. For example, the text approach was not suitable because learners who are not yet equipped with the reading skills would find it a challenge to effectively read a text. In other words, the text approach made the learners approach the learning of reading from the complex level. Methods such as synthetic phonics and Look and Say were suitable because they exposed learners to the letter sounds, blended them and formed sentences providing a strong foundation to reading. Look and say strengthened the ability to recognise words, therefore the two methods promoted learning from simple to complex.

The learners were engaged in various activities: they arranged sentences in order, translated sentences from English to Zambian Language and vice versa, read in groups and individually, listened to teacher reading, answered questions, punctuated sentences, discussed meaning of new vocabulary, discussed pictures, said names of letters of the alphabet and sounded them out. Turning to whether the activities enhanced various literacy skills and competencies (phonemic awareness, phonic knowledge, fluency, vocabulary, comprehension, writing skill), there was some enhancement of fluency by learners reading words or sentences or a text or by a teacher reading to the class, in all the eight (8) lessons. The writing skill was enhanced in one way or the other in seven (7) out of eight (8) lessons. Vocabulary was enhanced in just two (2) out of eight (8) lessons. There was enhancement of phonic knowledge by learners decoding some letter sounds in one (1) out of eight (8) lessons. Comprehension was also enhanced by learners retelling a story in one lesson. Phonemic and phonological awareness were not developed in any of the eight (8) lessons.

To observe whether the teachers used teaching and learning materials that enhanced the development of initial literacy in English, the following came out: Teaching and learning materials that can enhance the development of initial literacy in English were used in two (2) lessons out of eight (8). Word cards were used during one of the two

lessons while pictures that were matched with words were also used during the other lesson. Examining whether the classroom environment was promoting the development of learners' literacy skills in English or not, the following was discovered: none of the classroom environments promoted the development of initial literacy skills in English because they were all in ZL.

Other observations during the lessons were that: learners had a challenge to understand, read and write the English Language in all the eight (8) lessons. Consequently, it was observed that learners participated actively and meaningfully whenever they were given an opportunity to do activities in Zambian Language. Another observation was that the groups formed in six (6) out of eight (8) lessons were too large, such that some learners remained passive during group work. It was also observed that the classroom environments in all the eight (8) classrooms were rich in Zambian Language text and the following pictures are examples of what was posted on the walls: Thus, the teachers who participated in the study did not prepare classroom environments that enhanced literacy skills in English.

#### EXAMPLES OF TALKING WALLS IN SOME GRADE 3 CLASSROOMS



SYLLABIC CHART					
	a	e	i	o	u
Ss	sa	se	si	so	su
Tt	ta	te	ti	to	tu
Vv	va	ve	vi	vo	vu
Ww	wa	we	wi	wo	wu
Yy	ya	ye	yi	yo	yu
Zz	za	ze	zi	zo	zu
Rr	ra	re	ri	ro	ru
Ny	na	ne	ni	no	nu
Nt	nta	nte	nti	nto	ntu
Nw	nwa	nwe	nwi		
Dd	da	de	di	do	du

### ***Teacher Interview***

The researcher conducted an interview with each teacher after analysing the documents and observing a lesson. The purpose of this was to triangulate the findings as well as finding out the consistencies among what the teacher planned to teach, what and how one taught and what s/he said when interviewed. The interview was partitioned in sub-headings: methods used to initial literacy in English, content sequencing in the teaching of initial literacy in English and activities to build learners' skills in initial literacy in English.

### **Methods used to teach initial literacy in English**

*Theme 1:* Teachers answered the question about the methods/approaches that they were using as follows: Demonstration/modelling, teacher expository, class and group discussion, role play, synthetic phonics, look and say, question and answer, group work, pair work and individual work are the methods/approaches that the teacher mentioned. They also offered explanations for using the mentioned methods/ approaches in the following manner: three (3) out of eight (8) teachers gave a reason of effectiveness for the mentioned methods. Two (2) out of eight (8) teachers gave a reason of enhancing understanding of concepts and skills. One (1) teacher of eight (8) gave a reason of learner

engagement and the remaining two (2) mentioned that the mentioned methods facilitated the assessment of learners' ability. One of the teachers explained as follows:

*I use demonstrations, explanations, discussions and role play to help me be an effective teacher although there is a language barrier because learners are more exposed to their mother tongue than the English Language.*

### **Content sequencing in the teaching of initial literacy in English**

*Theme 2:* To answer the question about the documents that guided the teachers on the content to teach initial literacy in English, all the eight (8) teachers mentioned that they used Teacher's Guide and Learners' Books. In addition, six (6) of them mentioned that they also used the syllabus while the other two (2) indicated that they did not have any syllabus.

One (1) out of the eight (8) teachers explained, *"I also use the National Literacy Framework because that is the document that guides on how to teach initial illiteracy although the content it has is only for Literacy in Zambian Languages."*

One teacher indicated that she also used story books; while another mentioned that she used a personal book with the title 'Sound and Read.' When the researcher asked a follow up question as to why this teacher was using her personal book which was not prescribed by the MoE, this is what she shared,

*I use 'Sound and Read' because I have realised that it has sequenced graphemes that represent the forty four speech sounds in English. These are the sounds I teach to the learners in order for them to blend and form words which they eventually connect into meaningful sentences.*

The following is the content that the teachers said that they teach in initial literacy in English: oral literacy, vocabulary, punctuations, letter sounds, sentence formation, ordering sentences, reading and reading comprehension. One teacher explained:

*I teach letter sounds although very few times because I follow the syllabus where such content appears not for more than three times.*

The teachers were also asked about how they sequenced the content to teach initial literacy in English. Two (2) out of eight (8) teachers said that they were following the sequence in the syllabus. One (1) mentioned that he was using the syllabus but re-

arranging the sequence in order to teach simple to complex content. Three (3) out of eight (8) of them were following the sequence in the Teacher's Guide while one (1) of them was following the sequence in the Learners' Book. One (1) teacher stood out as she gave the following response:

*I follow the order for the letters of the alphabet to teach the letter sounds. I am teaching off the syllabus and Teacher's Guide.*

The researcher asked why the teacher came up with her own sequence and not what was provided by the MoE. The teacher provided the following response:

*Teaching learners using the phonic method seems to be making my learners read and I can testify that I am already seeing the fruits.*

The following are the activities that teachers indicated that they engaged the learners in to develop their initial literacy skills in English: playing cards with words, blending graphemes and phonemes, Teaching Handwriting, Reading and Spelling skills (THRASS) raps, alphabetical play games, writing letters and words, translation, role play, games such as word ladder game and basket game and reading stories and rhymes.

*Theme 3:* Teachers suggested the following various interventions in order to make the teaching of initial literacy in English better: provision of teaching and learning materials that are in line with the introduction of initial literacy in English such as pictures, word cards, sentence strips, THRASS charts, phoneme-grapheme cards, story books and other interactive materials. Apart from teaching and learning materials, the teachers also suggested CPD's and trainings in form of refresher courses in the area of literacy. One of the teachers explained,

*The reason for wanting more CPD's and trainings in form of refresher courses in the area of literacy is that we are usually lacking knowledge on new trends as far as teaching literacy is concerned.*

To answer the question about other things that they would have to say about the teaching of initial literacy in English, all the eight (8) teachers generally expressed three (3) things. The first one was changing of the Zambian Language Policy such that the Language of Instruction (LoI) becomes English from Grade one (1). They advanced a

reason of finding difficulties in teaching Literacy in English to learners who could not understand the English Language. One teacher had this to say:

*The earlier the learners are exposed to a language that easier it is to teach them skills and competences in that language.*

The second topic that teachers discussed was the need for the provision of a sequence of content that was directly related to the introduction of initial literacy in English as what had been done for ZL. In addition, the teachers also suggested a common methodology that could be used in this area throughout the nation.

### **Summary**

The study focussed on ascertaining how teachers were teaching initial literacy in English in the absence of a prescribed approach by the MoE. It paid attention to methods used to teach initial literacy in English, content sequencing in the teaching of initial literacy in English and the activities that could build learners' initial literacy skills in English.

Data was collected by analysing planning and teaching documents for the eight (8) teachers and observed them teaching literacy in English. Each was finally interviewed. Data collected through document analysis, lesson observation and interviews was compiled and compared in order to get the most accurate results. The collected data pointed to the fact that teachers seemed not to have a clear direction of how to teach initial literacy in English; the Syllabus and Teacher's Guide they were using seemed to contain concepts beyond a learner who needed early literacy skills in English. It was also noticed that the teachers who participated in the study were wishing that learners could get exposed to the English Language as soon as they entered primary school unlike waiting until they were in Grade two (2) (oral English) and three (3) (print in English). The participants also expressed the need for a national prescribed methodology and sequence of content to guide them as it was the case for the initial literacy in ZL.

## Chapter 5: Discussions of Findings

### 5.0 Overview

The previous chapter presented the findings of the study. The current chapter discusses the findings. The discussion is following themes.

The focus of the study was to determine how teachers were teaching initial literacy in English in the absence of a recommended approach by the MoE. The researcher observed lessons, conducted a semi-structured interview, and examined the planning and teaching documents (schemes of work for that term, five weekly forecasts for the previous weeks, and ten recent lesson plans up to the day of observation) in order to collect data. The study had the following objectives: a) Ascertain the methods that were being applied to teach initial literacy in English. b) Establish how the teachers were sequencing the content to teach initial literacy in English. c) Find out the interventions that the grade three (3) teachers would need in order to effectively teach initial literacy in English.

#### *Theme 1: Methods to teach initial literacy in English:*

To address the objective about the methods that the teachers applied to teach initial literacy in English, it was found that the teachers were using the following methods: demonstration/modelling, teacher expository, class and group discussion, role play, synthetic phonics, look and say, question and answer, group work, pair work and individual work. This finding clearly shows that the teachers who were teaching initial literacy in English had no guidance by the MoE, hence each teacher taught in the manner he/she thought was effective, and yet the teaching of initial literacy in English requires the knowledge on the alphabetic principles, core literacy skills such as phonemic awareness, phonics, fluency, vocabulary, comprehension and skills like writing and spelling skills.

The alphabetic principle is the knowledge that would enable learners to learn names for the letters of the alphabet which would also empower them to decode the letters. According to Shanahan and Lonigan, (2013), one strategy for teaching early English literacy is to teach letter names and sounds. Shanahan and Lonigan (2013) made it clearer by indicating that children who learn the names of the letters make use of the sound clues in the names to aid in their learning of the letter sounds.

They added on to say that another strategy for teaching English first-year literacy includes using mnemonics and multisensory learning. This clearly brought out a signal that

teachers of initial literacy in English at grade three (3), for the Zambian case needed proper guidance of when to teach the various letters of the alphabet as well as their sounds. It even became more critical with the realisation that letters of the alphabet manifested themselves in various forms, such as graphs, digraphs, trigraphs and quadgraphs, to form the 44 phonemes that learners were expected to learn in the English Language. However, teachers of initial literacy in English would only have the ability to effectively expose the learners to the alphabetic principles if they had a clear roadmap of how to proceed by the MoE.

Literature revealed that the phonic method becomes more effective if texts in form of sentences and books are incorporated in order to teach it in a context. Naning, Hikmat and Fauziati (2016) showed that Story reading is often significant and inspiring to learners since it addresses interesting topics and also concern to child's developmental needs. Learner's books which light up some moral aspects such as friendship, bravery, loyalty, happiness, sadness, exclusion, courage empower them to make meaningful connections. Book reading also enables learners to make sense of their world and to expand their understanding of life and the human condition. Story narratives strengthen learner's understanding of human character and present models for their own interactions (Appleyard, 1990 in Naning, Hikmat and Fauziati, 2016). In addition, In a second and foreign language class, book reading will be also valuable for learners to explore the ethics and criteria of the target language culture and compare them to those in their own environment. Thus this can help them in comprehension skills. Conversely, teachers of initial literacy in English would find it a challenge to select suitable books for their learners if they are lacking direction in what to teach and when to teach it. Shmidman & Ehri (2010) also showed the benefits to children's letter – sound knowledge via the use of pictorial representations in which letter shapes and sounds were embedded.

Another reason why the MoE is expected to provide a uniform methodology/approach to be applied in the process of introducing initial literacy in English is the teaching of literacy becomes effective when the five core literacy skills are taught to the learners. Therefore, teachers must receive guidance on when and how to teach each core literacy skill unlike the variety of teaching methods/approaches that the researcher observed the teachers applying. Each core literacy skill is a building block towards attaining literacy skills.

Hence, teachers must be aware that for beginning readers, they should provide auditory examples to display how sounds are combined to form words which expose learners to PA.

PA supports reading comprehension, spelling, and decoding. For beginning readers, teachers should provide auditory examples to display how sounds are combined to form words. Importantly, Hanover Research and Unlead, 2019 finds that targeting phonemic awareness is most effective when learners manipulate one or two phoneme types at a time and when students learn in small groups. Nevertheless, if teachers are not guided, they will not have knowledge of how to combine certain phonemes and when to combine them.

Phonics is another core literacy skill that the learners must learn as it supports word recognition, reading, and spelling by facilitating knowledge of the alphabetic principle, which is the connection between written letters and sounds. Particularly, in delivering phonics instruction, the primary element that drives learner success is encountering decodable words in context following more explicit instruction. Instructors can also teach phonics in two ways: methodically, by organising a particular order of phonics themes to direct instruction, or incidentally, by pointing out patterns as they arise throughout the lesson. Students can use the outline of letter-sound correspondences learned in the first part of phonics education to decipher words (Hanover Research and Unlead, 2019; NLF, 2013).

Initial readers are also expected to develop fluency in order that reading comprehension is facilitated. Hanover Research and Unlead, 2019; NLF, 2013 emphasise that gaining fluency makes reading comprehension easier, and learners who have trouble decoding words are also likely to have trouble comprehending what they read. Teachers should therefore provide students the chance to practise oral reading aloud often in order to improve fluency. Some of the oral reading strategies that a teacher can apply are choral reading, partner reading, echo reading and repeated reading. These can only be achieved if a teacher is provided with a systematically planned outline of decodable texts.

Vocabulary is also an important segment which beginning readers must build. While there no single optimum way to teach vocabulary, general education teachers can improve their learners' literacy skills by combining direct and indirect vocabulary instruction. Indirect vocabulary can be learned through autonomous reading and regular conversation. Instructors must constantly introduce pupils to new and intriguing words, read aloud to them, and support their independent reading. For direct Vocabulary Instruction teachers intentionally focus on certain words and use a variety of methods to support student learning. Teachers can utilise a combination of direct and indirect vocabulary education to help learners develop their vocabulary skills. Teachers that use direct vocabulary instruction intentionally focus on

a few words at a time and use a variety of strategies to help their learners learn more (Hanover Research and Unlead, 2019; NLF, 2013). This shows the importance of not leaving out vocabulary in the teaching of literacy. When teachers are not guided, they are likely to leave out such an important competence in the teaching of initial literacy in English.

Comprehension is yet another core literacy skill that must be taught to initial readers, as such, learners in early primary grades should have comprehension strategies presented to them in simple terms to facilitate growth in their cognitive abilities to examine and analyse texts with increasing depth as their education advances (Hanover Research and Unlead, 2019; NLF, 2013). Learners need plenty of practice to become proficient in reading comprehension methods since they usually need three or more lessons to become proficient in a particular strategy before they can use it on their own. Therefore, in order to guarantee that learners can implement methods independently, teachers should provide initial instruction that is consistent and differentiated accompanied by follow-up lessons as necessary. This instruction may consist of explicit modeling of strategies, summarizing, generating and answering questions, and making inferences, in addition to many other strategies (Hanover Research and Unlead, 2019; NLF, 2013). There is a high likelihood that teachers would find it a challenge to execute their lessons in the described manner without a clear outline.

*Theme 2: Sequencing content to teach initial literacy in English:*

In the quest to address the second objective which was to establish how the teachers were sequencing the content to teach initial literacy in English, the teachers mentioned that they followed the sequencing of the topics in the following: Teacher's Guide, Learners' Book, syllabus (although two teachers indicated that they had no syllabus available), National Literacy Framework (guide to teach initial literacy in Zambian Languages), story books, order for the letters of the alphabet and one teacher indicated that she was using a book with the title 'Sound and Read'. Teachers indicating that they followed various sequences of content depending on what were available and what one thought worked is evidence enough that the MoE had a duty to sequence the content for initial literacy in English at grade three (3) for Zambian Schools.

It is also important to note that literacy instruction needs to be organised systematically and in context (Wyse & Goswami, 2010; Wyse & Styles, 2007 in Mills and Unsworth, 2016). Systematic literacy can be supported by a repertoire of methods and aligned to varying educational philosophies. Skills-based literacy curricula are often identifiable by a

‘performance model’ of curriculum, the discourse of transmission characterized by strong sequencing of literacy skills, predefined rates of student progression, and teacher control over the social action in the classroom, which enables this transmission to take place (Bernstein, 2000 in Mills and Unsworth, 2016).

This is clear that the backbone of well-structured primary literacy instruction is a comprehensive and rationally sequenced curriculum; commonly mentioned as a quality of successful early childhood programs (Snow & Matthews, 2016; Iversen & Mkandawire, 2020). Similarly, the Finnish National Agency for Education (2016) confirmed that teachers of initial literacy in English needed curriculum outlines that were prepared centrally by the Ministry, by stating that basic topic objectives and age-specific goals for reading teaching were laid forth in the national core curriculum.

*Theme 3: Interventions to teach initial literacy in English:*

The third objective was to find out the interventions that the grade three (3) teachers would need in order to effectively teach initial literacy in English. The teachers recommended the following interventions: provision of teaching and learning materials which are in line with the introduction of initial literacy in English. Such materials are pictures, word cards, sentence strips, grapheme-phoneme cards, story books and other interactive. The researcher observed that the suggestion about provision of teaching and learning materials that are relevant for teaching Literacy in English to the beginners was genuine. This is so because it was like the only teaching and learning materials the teachers had and they could make were for ZL, as shown in the pictures above (in Chapter 4).

As much as the teaching and learning materials in ZL were important, those for English were also needed, especially in literacy in English classes. Such materials would increase learners’ exposure to print and literacy which has implications for their overall literacy development (Mol & Bus, 2011 in Barone & Mallete 2013). A rich print environment and facilitating learning through play contributes to achievement in literacy. Besides, a rich print environment and the physical presence of literacy objects and tools in play areas would stimulate impulsive literacy interactions among children. In addition, involving early grade learners of literacy in social activities that would include modelling and supporting reading and writing enhances the quality of literacy interactions in play settings.

To show agreement with the recommendation on interventions to do with teaching and learning materials, one of the studies found out the following. Given that many Zambian parents may not be aware of the importance of exposing children to print and other such situations, the issue of teaching and learning resources in the teaching of literacy becomes even more crucial. Because many Zambian families themselves live in impoverished conditions and lack the necessary skills to provide their children with the stimulation they need, they are unable to offer their children such an enriching and exciting environment. Therefore, in the early stages of learning to read and write, the more experience a child gets, the more sophisticated his or her reading skills will be later in life. These experiences are thus the result of a school having appropriate administration, adequate room for movement, and appropriate teaching and learning resources (Mkandawire, and Daka, 2018 in Malunga, 2012).

The findings by Simui and others were supported by other previous publications such as Mkandawire (2010), Mwanza (2012) and Mkandawire (2015) in Malunga, (2020) who observed that the absence or presence of teaching and learning materials may determine the success or challenge of any education system. This justifies the need and importance of interventions on producing teaching and learning materials in the teaching of initial literacy in English. This finding is in agreement with the teachers' concern in the processing of suggesting the needed interventions.

In their study tagged 'Distance Learner's Perspective on User-Friendly Instructional Materials at the University of Zambia,' Simui, etal (2017)'s study in Malunga, 2020 revealed that the shortage of teaching and learning materials in schools may not just slow down the progress of students in higher education but they may also make the learning process unfriendly. The findings by Simui and others were supported by other previous publications such as Mkandawire (2010), Mwanza (2012) and Mkandawire (2015) in Malunga, (2020) who observed that the absence or presence of teaching and learning materials may determine the success or challenge of any education system. This justifies the need and importance of interventions on producing teaching and learning materials in the teaching of initial literacy in English.

Another intervention that the teachers advocated was the need for CPD's and trainings that would be more like refresher courses in the area of literacy. The reason for this was that they needed knowledge on the new trends in the teaching of initial literacy in English.

Facilitating professional growth motivates teachers to practice and blend the new knowledge with what they already have resulting into effective literacy lessons. Hanover Research and Unlead (2019) made a recommendation to district leaders to be providing professional learning opportunities to teachers to further develop their ability to implement best practices in literacy instruction.

Teachers further proposed a change in the Zambian Language Policy such that learners get exposed to the English Language as soon as they start school. The explanation was that they were finding it a challenge to teach Literacy and Language in English to learners who had challenges in speaking and understanding the English Language. The wish was to start teaching oral English at an earlier grade level than two because oral skills set the beginning of acquiring literacy skills in a given language. Thus, it can also be argued that while change of language policy in terms of teaching in the familiar language is concerned, it is also necessary that the policy recognises classroom language practices such as translanguaging owing to several academic benefits of translanguaging as established by several studies ((Nyimbili and Mwanza, 2021; Mashinja and Mwanza, 2021; Mwanza, 2020; Kafusha et al., 2021; Mubita and Mwanza, 2020; Banda and Mwanza, 2020; Chella et al., 2023; Mwanza and Bwalya, 2019; Mkandawire et al., 2023; Banda and Mwanza, 2020)

Above all, grade three teachers in the selected schools where the researcher visited expressed a high need for a uniform scope and sequence that is directly related to the introduction of initial literacy in English as what had been done in ZL. They further mentioned that the scope and sequence should be accompanied by a common methodology/ approach for all the primary schools in the nation.

## **Chapter 6: Conclusion and Recommendations**

By finding out how grade three (3) teachers in some Pemba Schools were introducing initial literacy in English without a common outline of content by the MoE, the study has shown how challenging the teaching of literacy was currently. While the syllabus was provided, it contained very few areas that would effectively enable teachers to introduce initial literacy in English. The NLF was also provided as a guide to teach literacy but it only explained the teaching of literacy in general. When to introduce the teaching of initial literacy in English was mentioned in the NLF and yet the details of what to be taught and how to teach was not provided. The opposite was done for the Zambian Languages where what to teach and when to teach was made available for each Zambian Language.

The researcher presented a problem of the MoE not providing a clear guidance of how to facilitate the transition from learning initial literacy in Zambian Languages to learning initial literacy in English by grade three learners in the Zambian schools. The research has attempted to address the gap by revealing awareness that grade three teachers needed a uniform and clear guidance on how to teach initial literacy in English as it was being introduced. Consequently, teachers who participated in the study were found applying any method they thought would yield positive results.

The gap that was being researched on was addressed by literature review in that it showed some efficient methods that can be uniformly used to teach initial literacy in English. One method which came out prominently was the Phonics Method which relies on the Alphabetic Principles. The literature reviewed also recommended a national scope and sequence for the content to be taught to beginner learners of literacy in English. It emphasised on the content being sequenced from simple to complex. Besides, some authors brought to light the need for interventions in the process of teaching initial literacy in English.

### **Implications of the study on practice**

The implication of the study was that the teachers needed a clear guide on how to instruct initial literacy in the English Language at grade three. As the situation was then, there was a likelihood that the learners would become fluent in literacy skills in Zambian Languages because of the prescribed PLP at Grade One; and fail to develop adequate literacy skills in the English Language.

Based on the findings, some recommendations were made for related research and for practitioners. The following recommendations are offered for related research in the field of initial literacy:

1. Given the context that teachers always need a guide to teach initial literacy, there would be need to find out how much they modify or adjust the provided teaching materials (in various forms) to meet learners' diverse needs.
2. While one of the teachers' recommendations in this study was to provide them with opportunities to get exposed to CPD's or refresher courses to acquaint themselves with new trends in literacy instruction, it would be appropriate to carry out a research on how the acquired knowledge and skills are applied in a classroom in order to benefit learners.

The following recommendations are presented for practitioners in the teaching of initial literacy:

1. One of the findings is that the teachers who participated in the study were observed and indicated that they were using whatever methods, books and documents they thought would be effective in the teaching of initial literacy in English. It is therefore recommended that curriculum developers and other relevant stakeholders develop a clear guide on instruction of initial literacy in English for the Zambian schools.
2. The findings revealed that individual teachers did not vary the methods, strategies and activities used in the classroom; thus the application of varied and multisensory methods, strategies and classroom activities is being recommended in order to accommodate learners with diverse learning styles.

The study aimed at finding out how grade three teachers in Zambia were teaching initial literacy in English without the provision of a guide by the MoE. Initial literacy being a cornerstone to acquiring advanced literacy which enables to learn effectively across the curriculum, literature review recommended a national uniform sequence and methodology/approach to teach it. It also revealed methods that have proved to be effective in various places. One method that came out prominently was phonics which relies on the alphabetic principles. Not only that, literature also brought to light the importance of interventions such as differentiated instruction and CPDs.

Having found out that the respondent teachers were applying any method they thought was effective; it clearly showed the importance of a national guide. The nation was at risk of not having the literacy levels rise as the teachers experimented with the methods that they thought would work. It was also important to always expose teacher to new trends in the teaching of literacy through CPDs. Since the study has shown that a uniform guide is a necessity, the biggest recommendation is the MoE to provide a uniform national sequence accompanied by a methodology/approach.

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## Appendices

### Appendix 1

#### Lesson Observation Tool

BIO-DATA Background information

My name is Charity Chilufya Mbalamweshi pursuing a degree in Master of Education in Literacy, Language and Applied Linguistics at the University of Zambia. I am conducting a study entitled 'Investigating the methods being applied to teach initial literacy in English at selected schools of Pemba District'. This lesson observation tool has been prepared to be administered among grade three teachers to help appreciate how the teachers are teaching initial literacy in English. The lesson observation tool covers areas based on the methods being applied to teach initial literacy in English, the content being taught and how it is sequenced. Teachers will be observed individually. You are assured that the outcomes of this lesson observation will be treated as confidential and will be limited for academic purposes only. Identity of teachers being observed will not be required.

Bio-Data for the informants

Number of years in service: .....

Highest qualification: .....

Any special training in literacy: .....

- I. What specific content is being taught in the lesson?  
.....
- II. Is the content suitable to develop learners' initial literacy skills in English?  
.....
- III. What are the specific expected outcomes for the lesson?  
.....  
.....  
.....
- IV. Are the specific outcomes intended to build learners' initial literacy skills in English?  
.....
- V. What methods/ approaches are being used by the teacher in this lesson?

.....  
.....  
.....  
VI. Are the methods suitable to develop learners' initial literacy skills in English?

.....  
.....  
.....  
VII. What activities are the learners being engaged in?

.....  
.....  
.....  
VIII. Are the activities enhancing various literacy skills and competences such as phonic knowledge, vocabulary, phonological awareness, phonemic awareness, reading fluency, writing, comprehension and any others?

*Phonic knowledge*

.....  
.....  
*Vocabulary*

.....  
.....  
*Phonological awareness*

.....  
.....  
*Phonemic awareness*

.....  
.....  
*Fluency*

.....  
.....  
*Comprehension*

*Writing activity*

.....  
.....

IX. Is the teacher using teaching and learning materials that can enhance the development of initial literacy in English?

.....  
.....

X. Is the classroom environment promoting the development of learners' literacy skills in English?

.....  
.....

XI. Other observation during the lesson:

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

The end

## Appendix 2

### Document Analysis Tool

#### BIO-DATA Background information

My name is Charity Chilufya Mbalamweshi pursuing a degree in Master of Education in Literacy, Language and Applied Linguistics at the University of Zambia. I am conducting a study entitled 'Investigating the methods being applied to teach initial literacy in English at selected schools in Pemba District'. This data analysis tool has been prepared to be administered among grade three teachers to help appreciate how the teachers are teaching initial literacy in English. The data analysis tool covers schemes of work, weekly forecasts and lesson plans to identify the methods being applied to teach initial literacy in grade three (3), the content being taught and how it is sequenced. Teachers' documents will be analysed individually. The documents will also be photocopied to allow possible review of the observations in the documents. You are assured that the outcomes of this document analysis will be treated as confidential and will be limited for academic purposes only. Identity of teachers whose documents will be analysed will not be required.

#### Bio-Data for the informants

Number of years in service: .....

Highest qualification: .....

Any special training in literacy: .....

- i. Does the teacher have a scheme of work for Literacy in English?  
.....
- ii. If s/he has, is the planned content suitable to develop learners' initial literacy skills in English?  
If s/he does not have, s/he should explain why.  
.....
- iii. Other observations on the scheme of work:  
.....  
.....

.....  
.....

iv. Does the teacher have a weekly plan/ forecast for literacy in English?

.....

v. If yes,

- does the planned work for the week suitable to develop learners' initial literacy skills in English?

.....  
.....

- what teaching methods/ approaches are indicated in the document?

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

vi. Other observations on the weekly forecast:

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

vii. Does the teacher have past lessons plans for literacy in English?

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

viii. If yes, what content has the teacher been planning to teach?

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

ix. If no, the teacher should explain why.

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

x. Are the expected outcomes in the lesson plans indicating the enhancement of learners' initial literacy skills in English?

.....  
.....

xi. Other observations on the lesson plan:

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

The end

### **Appendix 3**

#### **Interview Guide**

##### BIO-DATA Background information

My name is Charity Mbalamweshi pursuing a degree in Master of Education in Literacy, Language and Applied Linguistics at the University of Zambia. I am conducting a study entitled 'Investigating the methods being applied to teach initial literacy in English at selected schools in Pemba District'. This interview guide has been prepared to be administered among grade three teachers to help appreciate how the teachers are teaching initial literacy in English. The interview guide covers areas based on the methods being applied to teach initial literacy in English, the content being taught and the activities that the teachers engage the learners in. Teachers will be interviewed individually. The interview session will also be voice recorded to allow possible review of the responses from teachers after the interview session. You are assured that the outcomes of this interview will be treated as confidential and will be limited for academic purposes only. Identity of teachers being interviewed will not be required.

##### Bio-Data for the informants

Number of years in service: .....

Highest qualification: .....

Any special training in literacy: .....

*i) Methods used to teach initial literacy in English*

- a) Tell me about why you decided to become a teacher.
- b) What methods/ approaches do you use to teach initial literacy in English?
- c) Why do you use the mentioned methods?

*ii) Content sequencing in the teaching of initial literacy in English*

- a) What documents guide you on the content to teach initial literacy in English?
- b) What content do you teach in initial literacy in English?
- c) How do you sequence the content to teach initial literacy in English?

*iii) Activities to build learners' skill in initial literacy in English*

- (a) What activities do you engage the learners in to develop their initial literacy skills in English?
- (b) What interventions would you need in order to make the teaching of initial literacy in English better?
- (c) What else do you have to say about the teaching of initial literacy in English?

The end

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**Appendix E**  
**Estimated Budget**

No	BUDGET ACTIVITY	UNIT COST
1.	Transport	K5,000.00
2.	Bond paper (3 Ream paper)	K360.00
3.	Meals	K1500.00
4.	Photocopying Questionnaires	K1500.00
5.	Printing out, binding	K1,750.00
6.	Miscellaneous expenses	K2800.00
	<b>Total</b>	<b>K12,910</b>

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**Appendix F**

**Time plan**

<b>Date</b>	<b>Activity</b>	<b>Duration</b>
January-February, 2023	Submission of research topic and proposal writing	1 month
February – March, 2023	Submission of first draft proposal	1 month
March – April, 2023	Refining of the proposal	1 month
May, 2023	Submission of final proposal	1 week
June - July, 2023	Data collection and analysis	7 weeks
October - November, 2023	Report writing	3 weeks
November, 2023	Submission of first draft	2 weeks
December, 2023	Submission of second draft	2 weeks
January, 2024	Submission of final report	2 weeks

## Approval letter



# THE UNIVERSITY OF ZAMBIA DIRECTORATE OF RESEARCH AND GRADUATE STUDIES

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## APPROVAL OF STUDY

***IORG No. 0005376***

***HSSREC IRB No. 00006464***

**REF NO. HSSREC-2023-JUN-018**

Ms Charity Chilufya Mbalamweshi

The University of Zambia  
P. O. Box  
LUSAKA

Dear Ms Mbalamweshi

**RE: ANALYSIS OF THE METHODS BEING USED TO TEACH INITIAL LITERACY IN ENGLISH AT SELECTED SCHOOLS IN PEMBA DISTRICT, ZAMBIA**

Reference is made to your submission of the protocol captioned above. The HSSREC resolved to approve this study and your participation as Principal Investigator for a period of one year.

<b>REVIEW TYPE</b>	<b>ORDINARY REVIEW</b>	<b>APPROVAL NO. HSSREC:- 2023-JUN-018</b>
Approval and Expiry Date	Approval Date: 18 <sup>th</sup> June, 2023	Expiry Date: 18 <sup>th</sup> June, 2024
Protocol Version and Date	Version - Nil.	18 <sup>th</sup> June, 2024
Information Sheet, Consent Forms and Dates	<input type="checkbox"/> English.	To be provided
Consent form ID and Date	Version - Nil	To be provided
Recruitment Materials	Nil	Nil
Other Study Documents	Questionnaire.	
Number of Participants Approved for Study		

Specific conditions will apply to this approval. As Principal Investigator it is your responsibility to ensure that the contents of this letter are adhered to. If these are not adhered to, the approval may be suspended. Should the study be suspended, study sponsors and other regulatory authorities will be informed.

#### **CONDITIONS OF APPROVAL**

- No participant may be involved in any study procedure prior to the study approval or after the expiration date.
- All unanticipated or Serious Adverse Events (SAEs) must be reported to HSSREC within 5 days.
- All protocol modifications must be approved by HSSREC prior to implementation unless they are intended to reduce risk (but must still be reported for approval). Modifications will include any change of investigator/s or site address.
- All protocol deviations must be reported to HSSREC within 5 working days.
- All recruitment materials must be approved by HSSREC prior to being used.
- Principal investigators are responsible for initiating Continuing Review proceedings. HSSREC will only approve a study for a period of 12 months.
- It is the responsibility of the PI to renew his/her ethics approval through a renewal application to HSSREC.
- Where the PI desires to extend the study after expiry of the study period, documents for study extension must be received by HSSREC at least 30 days before the expiry date. This is for the purpose of facilitating the review process. Documents received within 30 days after expiry will be labelled “late submissions” and will incur a penalty fee of K500.00. No study shall be renewed whose documents are submitted for renewal 30 days after expiry of the certificate.

- Every 6 (six) months a progress report form supplied by The University of Zambia Humanities and Social Sciences Research Ethics Committee as an IRB must be filled in and submitted to us. There is a penalty of K500.00 for failure to submit the report.
- When closing a project, the PI is responsible for notifying, in writing or using the Research Ethics and Management Online (REMO), both HSSREC and the National Health Research Authority (NHRA) when ethics certification is no longer required for a project.
- In order to close an approved study, a Closing Report must be submitted in writing or through the REMO system. A Closing Report should be filed when data collection has ended and the study team will no longer be using human participants or animals or secondary data or have any direct or indirect contact with the research participants or animals for the study.
- Filing a closing report (rather than just letting your approval lapse) is important as it assists HSSREC in efficiently tracking and reporting on projects. Note that some funding agencies and sponsors require a notice of closure from the IRB which had approved the study and can only be generated after the Closing Report has been filed.
- A reprint of this letter shall be done at a fee.
- All protocol modifications must be approved by HSSREC by way of an application for an amendment prior to implementation unless they are intended to reduce risk (but must still be reported for approval). Modifications will include any change of investigator/s or site address or methodology and methods. Many modifications entail minimal risk adjustments to a protocol and/or consent form and can be made on an Expedited basis (via the IRB Chair). Some examples are: format changes, correcting spelling errors, adding key personnel, minor changes to questionnaires, recruiting and changes, and so forth. Other, more substantive changes, especially those that may alter the risk-benefit ratio, may require Full Board review. In all cases, except where noted above regarding subject safety, any changes to any protocol document or procedure must first be approved by HSSREC before they can be implemented.

Should you have any questions regarding anything indicated in this letter, please do not hesitate to get in touch with us at the above indicated address.

On behalf of HSSREC, we would like to wish you all the success as you carry out your study.

Yours faithfully,



*Dr. J. I. Ziwa*  
**DR. J. I. Ziwa**

**CHAIRPERSON THE UNIVERSITY OF ZAMBIA HUMANITIES AND SOCIAL SCIENCES RESEARCH ETHICS COMMITTEE - IRB**

CC: Director, Directorate of Research and Graduate Studies  
 Assistant Director (Research), Directorate of Research and Graduate Studies  
 Assistant Registrar (Research), Directorate of Research and Graduate Studies