

**EFFECTS OF TEACHERS' ATTITUDES ON THE ACADEMIC PERFORMANCE OF PUPILS WITH LEARNING DIFFICULTIES IN SELECTED HIGH SCHOOLS OF NOTHERN PROVINCE OF ZAMBIA**

**BY**

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OF MASTER OF EDUCATION**



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## **DEDICATION**

This study is dedicated to my father, the late Mr Joseph Makasa Chishimba who through his very meagre resources, sacrificed for my education.

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## AUTHOR'S DECLARATION

I, Fredrick Chishimba do declare that this dissertation represents my own work and that it has neither in any part nor in whole been presented as substance for award of any degree at this or any other university. Where other people's work has been drawn upon, acknowledgement has been made.

Signature of Author.....

Date.....

# APPROVAL

The University of Zambia approves this dissertation of Fredrick Chishimba as fulfilling part of the requirements for the award of the Degree of Master of Education in Special Education.

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Date.....

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## ABSTRACT

Learners with special educational needs are found at all levels of education delivery. Between ten and fifteen percent of all learners in ordinary schools have special educational needs. This therefore means that these learners must be catered for within the ordinary school by ordinary schoolteachers. Teachers' attitudes towards this category of learners may have a significant impact on their academic performance.

This study analysed effects of teachers' attitudes on the academic performance of pupils with learning difficulties in selected mainstream high schools of Northern Province. This study addressed itself to three major questions. These were: (i) what were teachers attitudes towards pupils with learning difficulties? (ii) What effects did these attitudes have on the academic performance of pupils with learning difficulties? (iii) What factors influenced teachers' attitudes towards pupils with learning difficulties?

A survey method was used to collect data from respondents. The sample population came from six high schools in four districts of the Northern Province of Zambia. Sixty grade eleven and twelve pupil respondents were selected by purposeful sampling to participate in the study. A total of thirty six teachers were selected using a stratified proportionate random sampling procedure in order to ensure equal gender representation. All together the total sample population was ninety six.

The following research instruments were used to collect data from respondents; a self administered questionnaire, semi-structured interview and focus group discussion schedules.

Data was analysed using both qualitative and quantitative methods. Frequency distributions, percentages, and tables were obtained using the statistical package for social sciences (SPSS). Non-structured questions were analysed through categorisation of themes.

The general findings of the study were:

- that both male and female teachers held negative attitudes towards pupils with learning difficulties.
- It was also established that teachers attitudes towards pupils with learning difficulties negatively affected the academic performance of these pupils.
- Further, the study established that large classes and lack of training in special education were contributing factors for teachers' negative attitudes towards pupils with learning difficulties.

The study recommended that:

- In view of the government policy of inclusive schooling, it will be incumbent upon every ordinary high school teacher to cater for pupils with disabilities. This being the case, government should consider expanding the training of teachers in special /inclusive education as a way of equipping them with skills to deal with learning difficulties.
- The curriculum of teacher training colleges should include a full course in special / inclusive education (not only as a segment of the educational courses as the case is at the moment) so that every trainee teacher is equipped adequately with special education methodologies as a way of preparing them for the task of dealing with pupils with learning difficulties in ordinary high schools.
- The office of special education coordinator should be set up in high schools so as to provide a resource centre where pupils with learning difficulties can receive counsel, assessment of their specific learning problems and eventually the drawing up of individualised education programmes aimed at meeting their special educational needs.

- Head teachers should come up with human resource development programmes that would allow teachers access to training so as to keep up with current trends of teaching and learning.

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## CHAPTER ONE

### INTRODUCTION

#### ***BACKGROUND TO THE PROBLEM***

It is estimated that one in five children in any education system experiences learning difficulties (Warnock Report, 1978). In Zambia the prevalence rate of learning difficulties as documented by the Ministry of Education policy document stands at ten percent (Educating Our Future, 1996). Pupils with special educational needs are not only found in the primary schools, but also in the high schools. It is not uncommon for at least one child in five to go on to high school without having reached the generally accepted level of minimal effective literacy. For such children learning difficulties would persist through life, causing problems in every day life and professional training (Gillham, 1974).

According to Siame (1986), pupil academic achievement can be influenced by many factors. Some of these factors may be pupil-based, teacher-based, home-based or school-based. Teacher based factors can be due to cultural orientation and personal perceptions or attitudes about pupils.

When teachers exhibit uncaring attitudes towards pupils with learning difficulties, or respond to them without due thought and patience, pupils are likely to have self confidence adversely affected and continue experiencing academic failure. Teachers' reactions towards pupils can either build pupils' self-confidence or destroy it. According to Burns (1982) and Martin (1986), teachers are amongst the people potentially most influential in determining a

pupil's self-confidence as a learner. Self-confidence is important for learning in all pupils. The self-concept is both a consequence and determinant of the learning process.

Generally, pupils with special educational needs are not only stigmatised by the general public, but also by teachers as well. These pupils are vulnerable to criticism and teachers' perceptions of them may have a bearing on their academic performance. Children are affected by, and concerned with, the human qualities and teachers' attitudes towards them as individuals, not with technical competence, which is taken for granted. Just as the rate of convalescence is affected by the relations between nurses and patients, so is the rate of learning affected by the relations between teachers and pupils (Oscar, 1965).

In order to promote the education of pupils with learning difficulties, there is need to elicit for positive teacher attitudes towards pupils' learning needs. Further, teachers ought to be equipped with skills that would enable them appreciate the causes of and psychological implications of learning difficulties and also adopt attitudes that promote learning for this category of learners.

Most high school teachers however have no professional knowledge on how to deal with pupils with learning difficulties. In Zambia, high school teachers are not targeted for special education training that deal with learning difficulties of high school pupils. For this reason, these teachers cannot be expected to be conversant with appropriate ways of managing pupils with learning difficulties. It is feared that this category of pupils may not be receiving the kind of education that caters for their individual educational needs.

Teachers' lack of knowledge in dealing with learning difficulties, large class sizes, lack of incentives or frustrations arising from pupils' failure to reach set objectives in specific lessons and so on and so forth can at times affect teachers' attitudes towards pupils with learning difficulties.

### ***STATEMENT OF THE PROBLEM.***

Many high school pupils are struggling with learning difficulties and it seems teachers have uncaring attitudes towards this category of pupils. Since teachers' attitudes can have significant impact on pupils' academic performance, it is imperative to examine teachers' attitudes and their effects on the academic performance of high school pupils with learning difficulties.

### ***PURPOSE OF THE STUDY***

The study sought to find out whether or not teachers' attitudes towards pupils with learning difficulties affected these pupils' academic performance.

### ***GENERAL OBJECTIVE***

The study's general objective was to investigate effects of teachers' attitudes on the academic performance of pupils with learning difficulties.

### ***SPECIFIC OBJECTIVES:***

1. Determine teachers' attitudes towards pupils with learning difficulties.
2. Establish whether or not teachers' attitudes have an effect on the academic performance of pupils with learning difficulties.

3. Assess factors that influence teachers' attitudes towards pupils with learning difficulties.

### **RESEARCH QUESTIONS:**

1. What are teachers' attitudes towards pupils with learning difficulties?
2. What are the effects of teachers' attitudes on the academic performance of pupils with learning difficulties?
3. What influences teachers' attitudes towards pupils with learning difficulties?

### **SIGNIFICANCE OF THE STUDY**

Findings of the study may enlighten teachers on the effects of their attitudes on the academic performance of pupils with learning difficulties. Once enlightened, it is hoped that class and subject teachers would adopt attitudes that may contribute towards enhancing the academic performance of pupils with learning difficulties.

The data collected may give a new phase in the Zambian curriculum development process by making provisions for the remediation of high school pupils with learning difficulties so that they can fully be taken care of in the learning process by ordinary subject teachers in Zambian High Schools.

In the light of the government's desire for inclusive schooling, educational authorities may find the study useful in coming up with a policy on how pupils with learning difficulties can best be handled by teachers in the learning/teaching environment. The current Ministry of Education policy document (Educating Our Future, 1996) has a section on special education that takes into consideration the learning needs of basic education pupils and not those of

high school pupils. It is hoped that the study will highlight the learning needs of pupils with learning difficulties in high schools, which may prompt policy change with regard to the education of pupils with learning difficulties in high schools.

The findings of the study could stimulate further research into factors related to developing positive attitudes that may be in the best interest of pupils with learning difficulties. The development of teacher attitudes that promote enhanced academic performance for pupils with learning difficulties would help in meeting the aspirations of the Ministry of Education's policy of inclusive schooling and that of the United Nations' millennium goal of Education for All declaration.

### ***CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK***

This study will be guided by the ecological or preventative theory (Graden, Casey, and Christenson, 1985; Wilson and Silverman, 1991; Ysseldyke and Thurlow, 1984). This theory looks at a teacher as a major factor in enhancing learners' academic performance. It views pupils' problems as resulting from the interaction of the student with the environment. In this belief system, the teacher believes that most pupils can profit from instruction in the regular classroom if appropriate instruction is implemented. Therefore, intervention methods resulting from this view point focus primarily on the instructional environment to solve pupils' learning problems. When a student presents a problem, the teacher accepts the responsibility to try to solve the problem by modifying his/ her instructional strategies.

## **OPERATIONAL DEFINITIONS OF TERMS**

The following terms are defined as follows:

**Academic performance:** Ability to attain certain competences or skills in school subjects usually measured by test scores or by marks assigned by teachers in certain class exercises.

**Attitude:** This is a learned, emotionally toned predisposition of an individual to react in a consistent way, favourable or unfavourable, towards a person, object or idea. In this study, this definition is applied to the attitudes of teachers towards pupils with learning difficulties.

**Special Education:** Education designed to cater for the learning needs of children with different disabilities or learning difficulties.

**Special educational needs:** In this study special educational needs include special academic and learning problems that may negatively affect the academic performance of learners. Children with special educational needs may have problems in mathematics, language, writing and reading. This category of learners may also show signs of memory and attention disorders.

**Learning Difficulties:** In this study, learning difficulties mean a failure by a pupil to perform academically at a level expected of him/ her commensurate with his/ her age. It further means difficulties that pupils encounter in learning, resulting in their failure to attain levels of acceptable academic performance. It

is also used to describe pupils whose class attainment is failing markedly behind their apparent levels of ability.

### **ORGANISATION OF THE STUDY.**

Chapter one has given a synopsis of the background to the present study. Further, an attempt has been made to explain certain concepts that are used in the study in order to make them clear to the reader.

The second chapter reviews related literature on teachers' attitudes towards pupils with learning difficulties. It has attempted to analyse some of the existing literature on the subject of teachers' attitudes towards pupils with learning difficulties from countries in Europe, and Africa.

Chapter three discusses the methods of data collection used in the study. The chapter is divided into ten sections subsumed under the following headings: the research design, study population, the sample and sampling procedures, characteristics of the sample, data collection procedures, research instruments, the pilot study, the main study, data analysis and limitations of the study.

Chapter four presents the findings of the study while chapter five discusses the findings. Chapter six deals with the summary, conclusion and recommendations. This chapter ends with suggestions for further research. The subsequent pages consist of the bibliography and appendices.

## CHAPTER TWO

### LITERATURE REVIEW

Attitudes of teachers towards their pupils are crucial in the learning process. Research has shown that for pupils with learning problems to profit from education in an integrated school set up, there is need to elicit willing attitudes from teachers in these schools (Wendy, 1986).

Research findings by some researchers like Haggis (1995), have however revealed that teachers have unfavourable attitudes towards pupils with special educational needs and are not so much willing to teach them. Kalabula (1991) observes that teachers all over the world and Zambia in particular hold negative and misguided attitudes towards pupils with handicaps. He further notes that teachers' attitudes are vital and should not be overlooked in the struggle for the handicapped child to live and rise above his/ her handicap. Even though his observations do not include the effects of these attitudes on the academic performance of pupils with learning difficulties, they support the fact that teachers' attitudes are vital in the education of pupils with special educational needs.

On the other hand Hergety et al (1981) found that there were favourable teacher attitudes and willingness to teach pupils with special educational needs. This therefore shows that teachers' attitudes towards pupils with special educational needs differ from person to person.

#### ***Teachers' attitudes and the education of pupils with learning difficulties.***

One factor that has been identified as being of great importance in the education of pupils with learning difficulties is the teachers' attitudes towards

these pupils. When teachers perceive positively pupils with special educational needs in their classes, they are more likely to use effective teaching behaviours (Stanovich and Jordan,1998). Moberg, (2000) points out that teachers' attitudes can facilitate or hinder the learning of pupils with special educational needs. Haggis (1995) states that people with disabilities are sometimes denied access to education because of teachers' negative attitudes towards them. Haggis' observations also tally with those of Abosi (2003) , whose thoughts on an action plan for the development of inclusive education took into consideration the factor of teachers' attitudes and stated that African superstitious beliefs about the cause of disabilities have resulted in negative attitudes which, in turn, have affected inclusive education in Africa.

Abosi further observes that teachers are unwilling to have children with disabilities in their classes. Although Abosi does not discuss teachers' attitudes in relation to the academic performance of pupils with learning difficulties which is the focus of this study, he makes a significant observation that teachers' negative attitudes towards the disabled are a cause for their unwillingness to have children with disabilities in their classes. If teachers are unwilling to accept pupils with learning difficulties in their classes, then it is feared that their attention towards these pupils' learning needs would not be guaranteed.

### ***Academic self-concept***

According to Burns (1982), and Martin (1986), teachers are amongst the people potentially influential in determining pupils' self confidence as learners. Self-confidence is important for learning in all pupils. The self-concept is both a consequence and determinant of the learning process. Teachers need to help

pupils shape a healthy, realistic self-concept in which pupils accept their personal strengths and weaknesses. Strategies that may help pupils overcome their learning difficulties must be introduced to pupils so that they can compensate for their learning disabilities. They need to develop alternative ways for thinking and communication so that they can learn according to their strengths (Reis, Neu, & McGuire, 1995).

In the learning environment, teachers' attitudes towards particular pupils can either motivate them to desire to achieve or make pupils put no effort at all in their studies. Child (1993:32) argues that:

As well as attitudes to the subject of study and school learning, we develop attitudes' to ourselves as learners. We are ever watchful of what other people think of our performance, and the image we create of our selves is dependant on this feedback. It is our own perception of how others see us, which provide the foundation stones for our academic self-image. Positive correlations have been found between measures of self-concept and academic achievement. Some studies have shown self-concept to be more strongly linked with achievement than other affection variables.

This view is also espoused by Benton (1967) although he does not elaborate it further. He points out that teachers often fail to realise how their criticism may affect a child's concept of himself/herself. He seems to be suggesting a vital fact which teachers must be cognisant of as they interact with pupils in their classes. The construction of self concept is dependent on the social environment, that is, the experiences one gets in his/ her environment can in the long run determine how one perceives himself/ herself.

Other studies have established that adequate self-concept and motivation are essential for later school learning (Klausmeier, and Goodwin, 1966). One can hasten to add that self-concept acts as a building block for pupils' learning. A pupil's academic self-concept can however be impaired by

the way teachers regard him/ her in the learning environment. Once the academic self-concept is impaired, a pupil's academic performance will also be negatively affected.

Dreyer (1994) shows the important role teachers play in the life of pupils. He states that the life world of children in the current era is characterised by parents who are both working and by a very large extra- curricular school programme. He further observes that this drastically limits the contact between family members with the result that teachers often spend much more time with them than the children's parents do. This being the case, teachers are the ideal people to promote the potential of children. However, it has sadly been observed over the years that, it appears these roles of a teacher are not sufficiently emphasised in university courses and in teachers' colleges, and as a result, many teachers entering the teaching profession are ill equipped theoretically and practically to provide adequate support and guidance with regard to improving academic achievement of their pupils. Because of this, many teachers fail to adequately respond to pupils with different types of learning difficulties.

### ***Teacher's personality and attitudes***

Children are affected by the human qualities and teachers' attitudes towards them as individuals. There is a relationship between the rate of learning and the kind of relationship existing between the teacher and the pupil (Oscar, 1965).

Majasan (1995) argues that a teacher must have the right kind of personality traits, attitudes and background characteristics which would enable him/ her to provide the right kind of learning experiences for his/her pupils. Nicino-Brown, Oke and Brown (1982) have also shown that in the opinion of pupils, the most highly ranked personal characteristics of a teacher are sympathy, kindness, helpfulness, patience, a pleasing personal appearance and manners. He/she needs tolerance and understanding and should be able to prepare for the moment when the child manifests difficulties in learning or else he/ she may contribute to the child's permanent detest of school and learning if he/ she fails to respond with knowledge to the pupil's learning difficulties. Good teachers, in most cases, are those who exhibit these qualities in their classes.

Further, Cope and Anderson (1977) state that without wholehearted commitment by teachers to the reception of children with disabilities, the most careful planning is unlikely to be successful. An understanding by teachers of what will be involved in the learning and teaching of pupils with learning difficulties is essential. Understanding, does not however, go the whole way, it must be combined with helpful ways and constructive attitudes, which encourage, but do not patronise. These teacher attributes, it is believed, facilitate pupils' academic success. Klausmeier and Godwin (1966) hold this view as well, though they do not address specifically pupils with learning difficulties who are the focus of this study. They address the education of another category of special needs students- the culturally disadvantaged. They thus state:

"The culturally disadvantaged student will be reasonably well educated only if school personnel commit themselves to the task. At high school level, this

means securing a vast number of teachers who will work as cheerfully with the culturally disadvantaged as with the other children more nearly like themselves” (Klausmeir and Godwin, 1966: 34 ).

The Department of Education and Science (1969) revealed that short comings in the school themselves can lead to learning problems and that there are many pupils who could have achieved more were conditions more favourable (Benton, 1967). Holz and Lessing (2002) recognize that when teachers have a negative view of the learner, it may lead to learners being labelled, and this label may perpetuate poor academic performance.

Other researchers (Rothbart; Dalfen and Barret, 1971 and Cronbeth, Davis and Burton,1974) found correlations between high school teachers’ expectations and behaviours. They discovered that teachers spent more time and interacted verbally in more positive and supportive ways with high achievers than low achievers.

The Educational Leadership Journal (1982) records a study that was carried out in one school in the United States of America and aimed at counteracting teachers’ negative attitudes towards pupils they felt could not learn. In this school, teachers’ talk in their staff room was often negative because they were frustrated about pupils’ lack of ability and behaviour problems. The study stressed that message that teachers were to take collective responsibility for what happened within the school and not to blame the children or their parents for low achievement. The study’s first task, was to address the level of teacher expectations. To convert teachers’ talk into a more positive vein, a “climate’s watcher’s” process that monitored against negative or stereotypical comments and increasing emphasis on positive discussions on all children’s abilities to learn was instituted. This strategy helped to change

teachers' attitudes with the result that their staff room talk now was more positive and emphasised on improving achievement for all the pupils. The study found that there was a strong correlation between teachers' attitudes and the academic performance of pupils. Where as before, teachers were not concerned about the learning problems of their pupils with the result that they paid very little attention to them, after the climate watchers' programme, teachers adopted positive attitudes towards all pupils with the result that those who had been struggling began to improve on their academic performance.

It should be noted that teachers play multifaceted roles apart from that of teaching. They are, by nature of their interaction with pupils on a daily basis, conveniently placed as counsellors, parents, and learning needs support helpers. Nacino-Brown (1982) states that successful pupils tend to enjoy school more than those who are not. It is generally those who appear to be failures who need the most attention and it is to them that the class teacher must direct himself/ herself. Teachers can only realise the importance of these roles and effectively carry them out if they are adequately prepared through training. Donal (1995) shows that teaching presupposes an involvement with the child in virtually every aspect of life, in order to guide and accompany him/her and thus ensure the optimal realisation of his/her potential. The implication of this is that teachers should not only guide pupils when things are going well, but also, and even so especially, when children are having problems. In a review of fifty one (51) studies carried out in Australia, Britain and the United States of America, Resenshine (1971) and Newbord (1997), found that teacher characteristics such as those related to classroom interaction affected academic achievement.

Investigations of the Comparative and International Education (1987) found also that the nature of the teacher's authority and relationship with students, the openness of the classroom decision making, the degree of formality and the cohesiveness of students cause small but statistically significant differences in subject-specific achievement. Research carried out by the Canadian Education Association also found that a good number of students found satisfaction in the sincere personal interest taken by those teachers who treated them as equals and who listened to their views and opinions with genuine interest. The Department of Education and Science (1969) discovered that most underachieving pupils are more often than not usually vulnerable to unsympathetic or inexperienced teachers and frequent changes of teachers.

A study done by Ryan (1982) on effective teaching came up with characteristics of effective teaching such as warmth, understanding, business-like attitude, ability to stimulate and imagination. Roseline and Hurst (1973) basically agree with Ryan even though they also include the use of a variety of instructional materials and procedure, and provision for pupils to learn the instructional content. It is incumbent upon teachers to constantly evaluate their pupils' learning progress as a means of informing parents about their children's academic progress and also for promotion of pupils to higher grades. It can as well be used for student motivation. The teaching process is not only a way of delivering information to the pupils but also a way of assessing their ability to comprehend their academic work. Success in tests, sports or other school activities can give great encouragement to pupils. Similarly failure to do well can make them work harder or strive to do better. A failure on the part of

teachers to monitor their pupils' learning progress, may result in them allowing some pupils with unresolved learning problems of lower grades to progress to higher school grades. This makes it very difficult for such pupils to perform well academically as they meet much more challenging work in later grades. It has further been observed that evaluation is a critical step in the education process because it helps determine programme modification for learners in order to meet their individual educational needs (Rena and Donald, 1987).

### ***Resultant effects of learning difficulties***

Where teachers have not paid attention to the learning needs of pupils with learning difficulties, these pupils tend to drop out of school and others turn to deviant behaviour in order to compensate for their learning needs. Strang (1970) reported that every year hundred thousands of pupils stop their high school studies before completion. These, he stated, are often learners with special educational needs (LSEN) who could not cope on their own in school and therefore took the easiest way out. Holz and Lessing (2002), Cohen and Manion (1981) also recognize that academic underachievement resulting from pupils' learning difficulties has far reaching consequences for secondary school learners, such as rejection by others and self rejection. They also go on to argue that learners' self-concept, as well as appropriate opportunities for the future are negatively influenced. Thus poor academic performance can affect every aspect of a child's world. The teacher will need to be involved in the school's programme for meeting the special educational needs of particular pupils in the school. This therefore implies that teachers have a very important role to play in the education of pupils with or without learning difficulties. They

need not only recognise this role, but also to carry it out as they perform their daily duties in the learning/ teaching environment. This would be the only way they could facilitate for the learning of pupils with special educational needs.

### ***Teachers' qualifications and attitudes towards pupils with learning difficulties***

It is suggested that teachers need to have necessary background as regards various types of problems that may occur among high school children in the education mainstream and which may lead to poor academic performance. It is further observed that if teachers' knowledge is limited, they may regard learners' poor academic performance as a result of laziness, stubbornness or lack of motivation and thus may not be addressing the pupils' underlying cause of his/ her learning problems (Gordon and Asher, 1994, and Gross,1997). This being the case, pupils with learning difficulties in classes manned by teachers without special education training may not be receiving help from teachers that would be addressing their learning needs.

### ***Summary of literature.***

It appears from available research findings that it is possible to have favourable teachers' attitudes in one school and unfavourable and unwilling teacher attitudes in another school depending on the factors at play. Literature seems to emphasise that teachers' attitudes towards pupils with learning problems are crucial. The overall academic, social and psychological well being of pupils with learning difficulties depends, to a large extent, on the attitudes of

teachers because they have control of pupils in schools where these pupils are found (Cove and Madison; 1978 and Kalabula: 1991).

Despite differences of opinions by researchers on teachers' attitudes, they however agree about factors that may affect teachers' attitudes. Teacher's knowledge and experience of learning difficulties, teachers' ideological commitment to the concept of inclusive schooling, the size of the class, the demand on modification of teaching methods and accommodation of pupils with learning problems are some of the agreed upon factors (Wendy, 1996; and Kalabula, 1991).

Literature abounds about teachers' roles and their attitudes in the teaching/learning process and factors that may contribute to their acceptance of pupils with special educational needs in their classes. However, there seems to be very scanty information, more so from the Zambian perspective on effects of teachers' attitudes on the academic performance of pupils with learning difficulties in Zambian high schools. No known study has been done in this area up to this point in time hence the need for this study to fill this missing link.

## **CHAPTER THREE**

### **METHODOLOGY**

The study used both qualitative and quantitative methods and stressed the importance of context and the participant frame of reference. The study was not only interested in determining teachers' attitudes towards pupils with learning difficulties and their effects on the academic performance of this category of pupils, but also the factors responsible for teachers' attitudes. The qualitative aspect of the methodologies employed assisted in confirming quantitative data.

#### ***RESEARCH DESIGN***

A survey method was used to collect data from respondents. Surveys are useful in obtaining demographic data, information on people's behaviour, attitudes, opinions, beliefs, intentions, interests and future behaviour. They also enable respondents to provide information on self-report in their natural setting relationships (Treece, E.W. and Treece, J.W., 1986). It was for this reason that the design was chosen. The design provided a description of the prevailing conditions in high schools regarding teachers' attitudes and their effects on the academic performance of pupils with learning difficulties.

#### ***PILOT STUDY***

During the first week of May, 2004, the researcher wrote a letter to the Provincial Educational Officer for Northern Province seeking permission to carry out a study in selected schools under her jurisdiction. The letter introduced the researcher and the subject of the study. Permission was given the same day the letter was delivered to her.

During the third week of May, a pilot study was carried out at Ituna High School. The school was chosen because it had similar characteristics with other high schools in Northern Province. Furthermore, it is a co- education school hence it conveniently supplied both male and female pupil samples at one site.

Five male and five female grade eleven and twelve pupils as well as five male and five female teachers were sampled in order to determine the effectiveness of the research instruments. The purpose of the study was explained and instructions were also given. Further, subjects were assured of the confidentiality of their answers and that in no way would their participation in the study affect their schoolwork and as such they were at liberty to express themselves as freely as possible. The procedures employed in the pilot study were used in the final study as well.

The major instruments used in the pilot study were a self-administered questionnaire designed for teachers, an interview schedule for pupils and Focus Group Discussion schedules for both pupils and teachers.

Observations on the research instruments were as follows: The questionnaire was quite elaborate. Some questions in the questionnaire, interview schedule and focused group discussion schedules seemed to have been misunderstood by some respondents as such we rephrased them in order to make them clearer. These three instruments were finally used for the study in their modified form.

## ***THE MAIN STUDY***

The main study was carried out from the fourth week of May 2004 up to the end of July, 2004. The procedures used in the pilot study were employed to carry out the main study. Upon completion of data collection, we carried out the process of data cleaning and there after proceeded to analyse and compile it from August to December 2004.

### ***Study population***

The study population consisted of pupils in all the nineteen high schools of the Northern Province of Zambia. Pupils were selected as the study population because the study was aimed at investigating effects of teachers' attitudes on the academic performance of pupils with learning difficulties. Teachers were included in the study for cross validation purposes.

### ***Sample and sampling procedure***

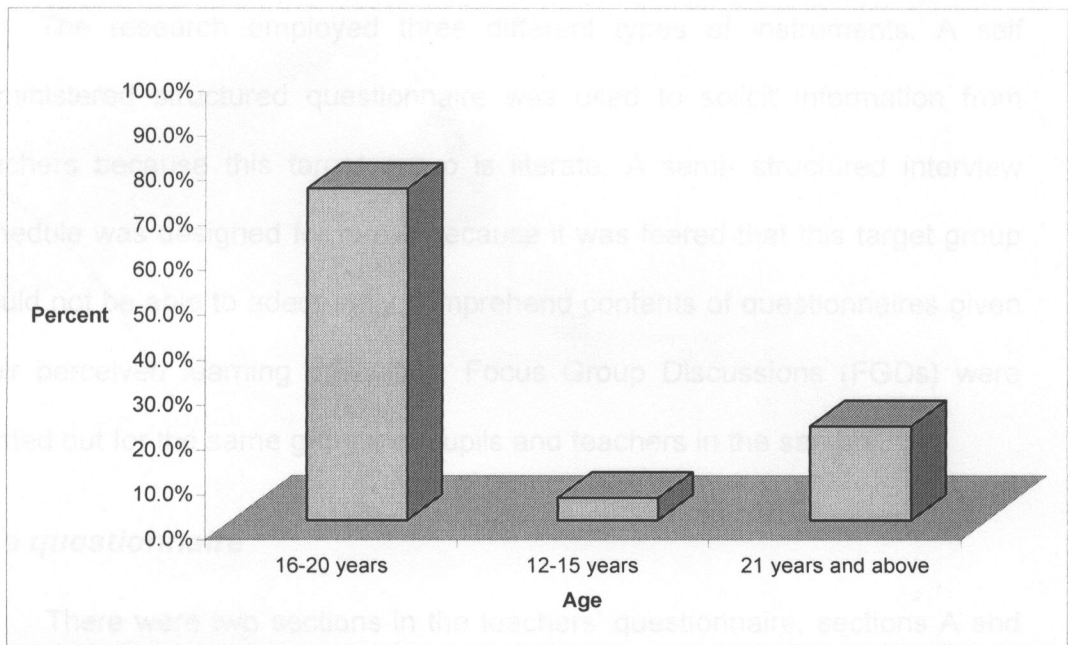
The sample population came from six High Schools in four districts of the Northern Province of Zambia, and it was as follows; one High School each from Mungwi and Nakonde districts and two High schools each from Kasama and Mbala districts respectively. The districts and schools included in the sample were selected purposefully as the researcher was interested in looking at pupils and teachers from different types of schools which included; co-education, technical, single sex, and those run by missionaries. High schools and districts selected were within the accessible population. Accessible population refers to those cases that conform to the eligibility criteria and which are

accessible to the researcher as a pool of subjects for the study (Polity and Hungler, 1997). The total sample population in the study was ninety-six.

High schools have only three streams of senior classes. Each school covered provided ten pupil respondents; five each from grades eleven and twelve classes. Grade ten pupils were not covered because these pupils had been in school for only a short time at the time the study was carried out. A total of sixty grade eleven and twelve pupil respondents were selected by purposeful sampling with the help of their teachers. These pupils were chosen on purpose taking into consideration their performance levels. The determination of pupils' performance levels was done by examining some summative and formative assessment tests of pupils from randomly picked classes. The documents from which this data was gathered included, pupils' exercise books, report forms, weekly and monthly tests. Only five least achievers in each of the chosen streams were selected to take part in the study.

The majority of pupils who participated in the study were between the ages of 16 and 20 and represented 74% of the sample population. Out of this number, twenty were grade twelve pupils while twenty-one were in grade eleven. The lowest category was in the age range of between 12 and 15 years representing 5% of the total pupil respondents. Elements of this subset were all grade eleven pupils. Six grade eleven and five grade twelve pupils were aged above 21 years and represented 21% of the sample population as in fig.1 below.

**Figure 1: Age distribution of pupils**



Six teacher respondents were sampled from each school using a stratified proportionate random sampling procedure in order to ensure equal gender representation. To determine teachers to participate in the study, a simple random sampling procedure was used by assigning numbers to all teachers in each school. These numbers were then put in two separate boxes. One box contained numbers that represented male teachers while the other one contained those that represented female teachers. The researcher then picked, at random, numbers from each box. This technique provided for each teacher an equal chance of being selected for the study. It is also considered a better way of obtaining a more representative sample for a study of this nature (Lay, 1976).

## ***Research Instruments***

The research employed three different types of instruments. A self administered structured questionnaire was used to solicit information from teachers because this target group is literate. A semi- structured interview schedule was designed for pupils because it was feared that this target group would not be able to adequately comprehend contents of questionnaires given their perceived learning difficulties. Focus Group Discussions (FGDs) were carried out for the same groups of pupils and teachers in the sample.

### ***The questionnaire***

There were two sections in the teachers' questionnaire, sections A and B. Section A gathered general information about the subjects in the sample such as age, length of service, whether they were grade teachers or not and the size of the classes these teachers managed. Fill-ins and a checklist response mode was provided for respondents to use when answering questions in this section of the questionnaire ( Appendix C).

Section B sought to establish consensus of teachers' understanding of the term learning difficulties with a view to establishing the firmly held description of this term by the targeted teachers. It was hoped that clearing ourselves on this would help the research to be focused on what it was intended to investigate. In this section of the questionnaire, questions elicited teachers' attitudes towards pupils with learning difficulties. It also sought to explore what other roles teachers thought they had in the education process of pupils with learning difficulties.

This section also tried to evaluate teachers' responses towards pupils with learning difficulties. It also included an investigation of teachers' attitudes and their perceptions of pupils with learning difficulties. To determine these variables, the Likert scale was used and the respondents were expected to pick out any one of the following responses; *Strongly Agree, Agree, Disagree, Strongly disagree* and *Not sure*.

These answers were used to measure respondents' attitudes in general (Yuker, Block and Young, 1996).

### ***The semi-structured interview schedule***

The semi- structured interview schedule was administered to pupils. It had two sections. Section A sought to gather some personal details about the pupils such as grade, age, sex, year he/ she began school.

Section B solicited information on the effects of teachers' attitudes on the academic performance of pupils with learning difficulties. It also sought to explore pupils' perceptions of their teachers' attitudes towards them. It further examined pupils' expectations of teachers' responses to them when they experienced learning difficulties (Appendix D).

### ***Focus group discussion schedules***

Two different focus group discussion schedules were used to collect data from teachers and pupils (see appendices A and B). Teachers' FGD schedule sought to determine teachers' understanding of the term special education, whether teachers liked the idea of teaching pupils with learning

difficulties, if teachers met pupils' individual needs and how academically beneficial were some of the comments they made on individual pupils' work.

Pupils' FGDs tried to find out how helpful teachers' report form comments had been on pupil's academic work, what effects teachers' attitudes had on pupils' academic performance, what pupils considered to be significant teacher attitudes towards them, and what attitudes teachers displayed towards pupils when they failed to perform according to teachers' expectations.

### ***Data collection procedures***

Pupils were interviewed individually at their own schools in departmental or career guidance counsellors' rooms. Each interview averaged about forty five minutes.

Interviews moved from broad, general questions to carefully targeted questions that sought specific information on pupils' perceptions of their teachers' attitudes towards them, and the effects these attitudes had on their academic performance.

Focus group discussions were conducted in departmental rooms and comprised about ten members for each group where possible. They took about one hour. They were tape recorded and the interviewer also noted down discussants responses.

Teachers were allowed to answer the questionnaires at their own time and these were collected a few days later from them when they had completed filling them in.

## ***DATA ANALYSIS***

Descriptive statistics such as numerical summaries using frequency distribution, percentages and graphic representations in form of tables were employed to analyse the data. Statistics consisting of figures and corresponding percentages were obtained using the statistical package for social sciences (SPSS). Non-Structured questions were analysed through categorisation and coding of themes.

Structured questions were analysed using the statistical package for social sciences (SPSS). Non -structured questions were manually analysed through categorization and coding of themes. Data was summarized using descriptive statistics such as percentages and frequency distributions. The views of subjects were presented in form of tables using percentages, bar charts, pie charts and histograms on a wide range of variables used in investigating effects of teachers' attitudes on the academic performance of pupils with learning difficulties in High Schools of Northern Province.

## ***LIMITATIONS***

One of the limitations of the study was the lack of adequate literature on the effects of teachers' attitudes on the academic performance of pupils with learning difficulties. There seem to have been no studies carried out in Zambia particularly on the effects of teacher's attitudes on the academic performance of pupils with learning difficulties.

Since an attitude of an individual is inferred from his/ her behaviour and cannot be measured as directly as skills, facts, and concepts, the task of assessing teachers' attitudes and their impact on the academic performance of

pupils with learning difficulties was not an easy one. In order to assess teachers' attitudes, we relied more on clues from teachers' responses in the questionnaires administered on them. Further, pupils' responses to certain questions during the interviews and focus group discussions were taken as a measure of teachers' attitudes towards them. This method of assessing attitudes could not guarantee an absolutely accurate disposition of teachers towards pupils with learning difficulties.

Organising Focus Group Discussions proved difficult, as most teachers were not willing to participate in the discussions. In some cases it took the researcher a lot of persuasion and patience to gather a group for discussions.

## CHAPTER FOUR

### *PRESENTATION OF RESULTS*

This chapter presents findings of the study on the effects of teachers' attitudes on the academic performance of pupils with learning difficulties in selected high schools of Northern Province of Zambia. The findings are presented in three major sections according to the three instruments used in this study. It will be remembered that the study's general objective was to investigate effects of teachers' attitudes on the academic performance of pupils with learning difficulties. In addition, the study investigated teachers' attitudes and the factors that influenced their attitudes towards pupils with learning difficulties.

As a way of determining teachers' attitudes, we investigated their reactions towards pupils with learning difficulties in their classes, roles they played in the teaching of pupils learning difficulties, constraints they faced in teaching these pupils and their perceptions of such pupils. Effects of teachers attitudes were assessed by asking pupils what bearing teachers' reactions to them had on their academic performance. Further, the study tried to assess factors that contributed to teachers attitudes towards pupils with learning difficulties. In order to do this, the study considered whether class size, special education qualifications or lack of it and one's period of service as a teacher had a bearing on their attitudes towards pupils with learning difficulties in their classes.

## **FINDINGS OF THE STUDY**

The first section of our presentation brings findings from interviews with pupils. The second deals with responses from teachers' questionnaires and the third present results from both pupils and teachers' focus group discussions.

### ***Results from interviews with pupils***

Pupils were interviewed individually on the effects of teachers' attitudes on the academic performance of pupils with learning difficulties. The following were the findings:

#### ***Pupils' perceptions of teachers' attitudes towards them***

It will be borne in mind that one of the objectives of the study was to determine teachers' attitudes towards pupils with learning difficulties. Pupils were asked to describe teachers' attitudes towards them. Table 1 below shows their responses.

**Table 1: Teachers' attitudes towards pupils with learning difficulties**

Responses	Number of Respondents	Percent
Hostile	33	56
Concerned	26	43
No response	1	1
Total	60	100

Over half of the respondents (56%) described their teachers' attitudes towards them as being hostile, while (43 %) said their teachers displayed attitudes of concern about their learning difficulties. One percent did not give us any response at all.

***Effects of teachers' attitudes on the academic performance of pupils with learning difficulties***

It should be borne in mind that the study's main objective was to find out effects of teachers' attitudes on the academic performance of pupils with learning difficulties. In order to do this, pupils were asked to describe the effects teachers' hostile attitudes had on them. Table 2 summarises their responses.

**Table 2: Effects of teachers' hostile attitudes on academic Performance**

**Effects of hostile attitudes**

Response	Number of respondents	Percent
Poor academic performance	51	85.0
Enhanced performance	2	3.3
No effect	4	6.7
Not sure	3	5.0
Total	60	100.0

The majority of the pupils (85%) stated that hostile teacher attitudes towards them contributed significantly to their poor academic performance.

Two or 3.3% said it led to enhanced performance, while four or 6.7% said it had no effect on them at all and three or 5.0 % were not sure.

Asked whether, with increased teacher attention to their learning needs, pupils could overcome their learning difficulties, pupils' responses were as shown in table 3 below.

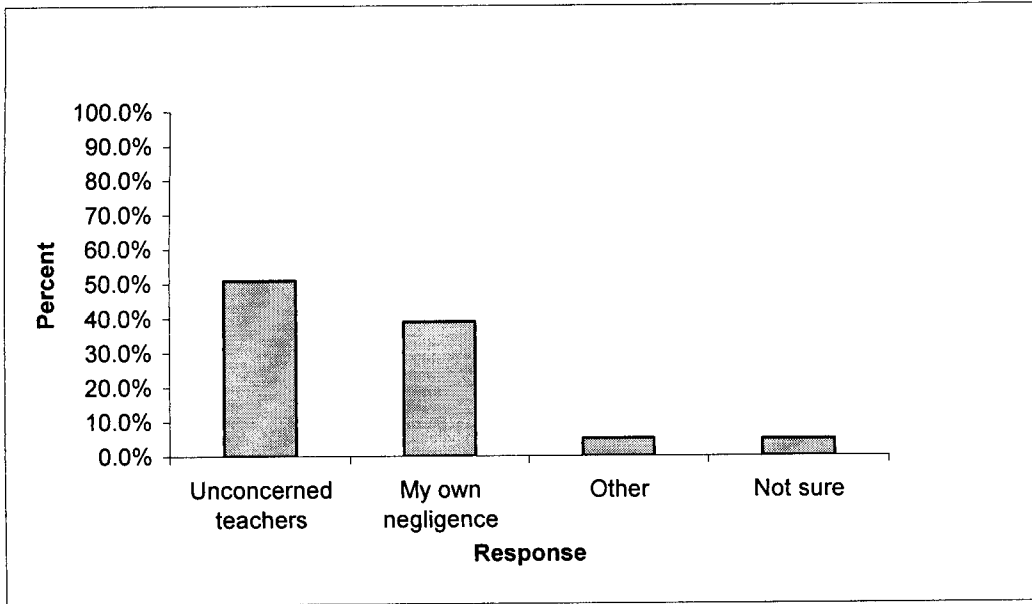
**Table 3 Increased teacher attention to my learning needs can help me overcome learning difficulties.**

Responses	Respondents	Percent
Yes	54	91
No	5	8
No response	1	1
Total	60	100

The study found that fifty four (91%) of pupils believed that with increased teachers' personal attention to their learning needs, they could overcome some of their learning difficulties and their performance could thus be enhanced. Five pupils (5%) did not think so, while one pupil (1%) took no position at all.

When asked to state what they thought was the major contributing factor to their continued learning difficulties in school work, 50% of the pupils cited lack of teacher interest in their learning needs. Forty (40%) attributed it to their own negligence of school work. Pupils' responses to this question are shown below:

**Figure 2: Major contributing factor to learning difficulties**



It is interesting to note that 51% of the respondents cited lack of teachers' interest (unconcerned teachers) in their learning needs as having contributed to their continued learning difficulties in school work. Thirty nine (39%) of them attributed it to their own negligence of schoolwork, while 5.1% gave other reasons and 4.9% were not sure.

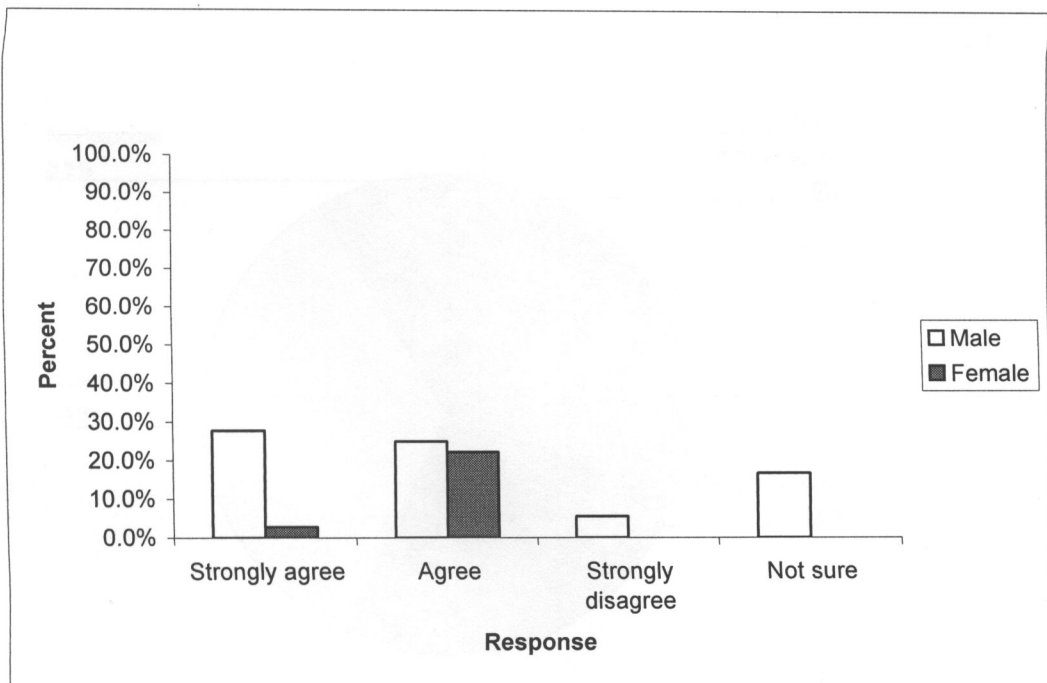
### ***Responses from teachers' questionnaires***

This part of the chapter presents findings from teachers. We tried to assess teachers' attitudes and factors that may be the underlying causes for their attitudes towards pupils with learning difficulties.

## Teachers' attitudes towards pupils with learning difficulties

Teachers were asked to state what they felt about spending a lot of time on pupils with learning difficulties. It was envisaged that their responses would give us a clue about their attitudes towards pupils with learning difficulties. Their responses are shown in figure 3 below.

**Figure 3: Working too much with pupils with learning difficulties robs other pupils of valuable time**

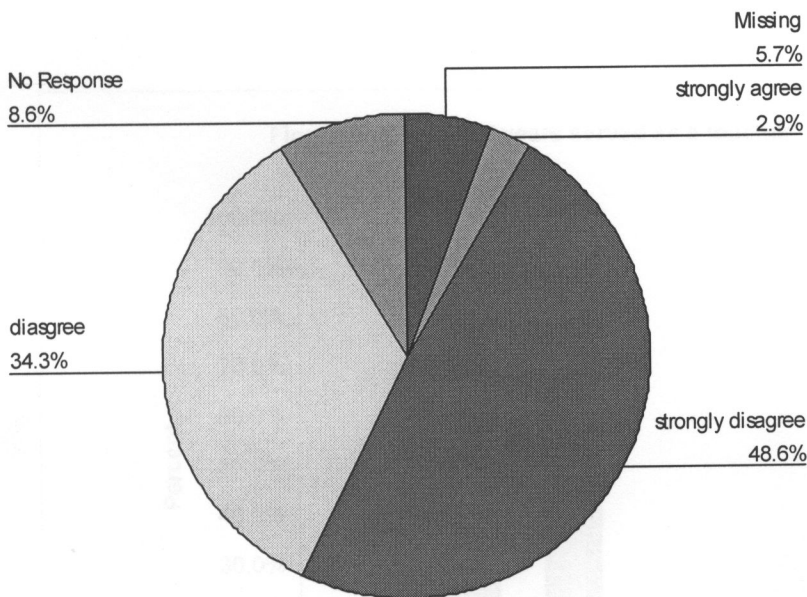


Ten (27.8%) male teacher respondents strongly agreed, nine (25.0%) agreed while two (5.5%) strongly disagreed with the assertion that working too much with pupils with learning difficulties robed other pupils of valuable time. Eight (22.2%) female teachers agreed and one (2.8%) strongly agreed with

the assertion. No female teacher disagreed with the assertion stated above. The rest of the respondents (6) or 16.7% were not sure. It seems from the findings that both male and female teachers do not like the idea of working too much with pupils that have learning difficulties.

Figure 4 below shows teachers' views on whether pupils with learning difficulties could be helped by ordinary high school teachers.

**Fig 4: Ordinary high school teachers are capable of helping High school pupils with Learning difficulties**



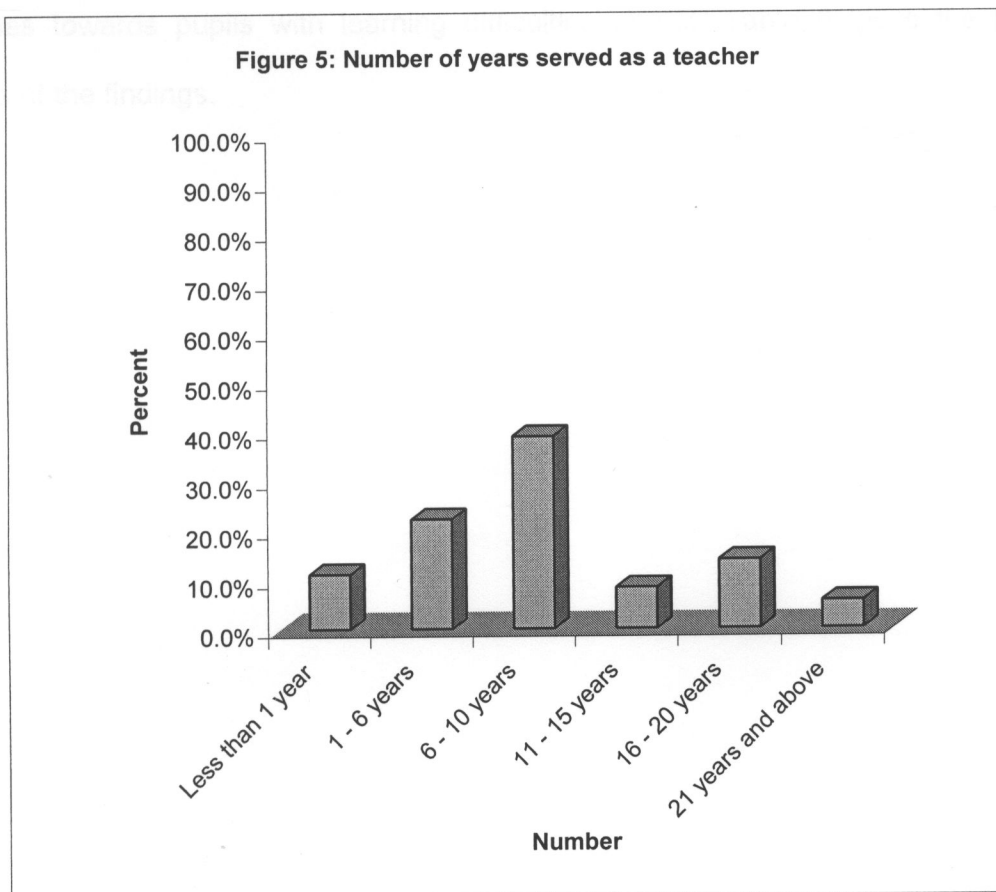
Over half of the teachers in the study either strongly disagreed or merely disagreed with the statement that pupils with learning difficulties in a high school could be helped by ordinary high school teachers. Only a small segment of the total respondents were of the view that ordinary high school teachers could help pupils with learning difficulties in a high school.

## ***Factors influencing teachers' attitudes towards pupils with learning difficulties***

It will be recalled that the third objective of the study sought "to determine factors that influenced teachers' attitudes towards pupils with learning difficulties".

The issue of the number of years a teacher had been teaching in a high school was considered in order to establish whether one's experience affected his or her attitudes towards pupils with learning difficulties.

**Fig 5: Number of years served as a teacher**



The majority of the teachers (38.9%) who participated in the study had been teaching for about six to ten years. The second highest number (22.2%) was of those who had been teaching for about one to five years while the third category (13.9%) was that of teachers who had taught for sixteen to twenty years. It was also found out that a sizeable number of teachers (11.1%) had taught for less than a year. Those who had taught for over twenty-one years and above (5.6%) represented a very small percentage of the sample population. Almost all the teachers who had been teaching for longer periods of time exhibited uncaring attitudes towards pupils with learning difficulties while those who had taught for only a few years showed attitudes of care.

Teachers were asked to indicate whether class size affected one's attitudes towards pupils with learning difficulties or not. Table 6 gives the results of the findings.

✓ **Table 4: Large classes affect teachers' attitudes towards pupils with learning difficulties**

Large classes affect teachers attitudes towards pupils with learning difficulties	GENDER	
	Male	Female
Strongly Agree	14	6
Agree	8	3
Strongly Disagree	Nil	Nil
Disagree	Nil	Nil
No response	2	2
Total	24	11

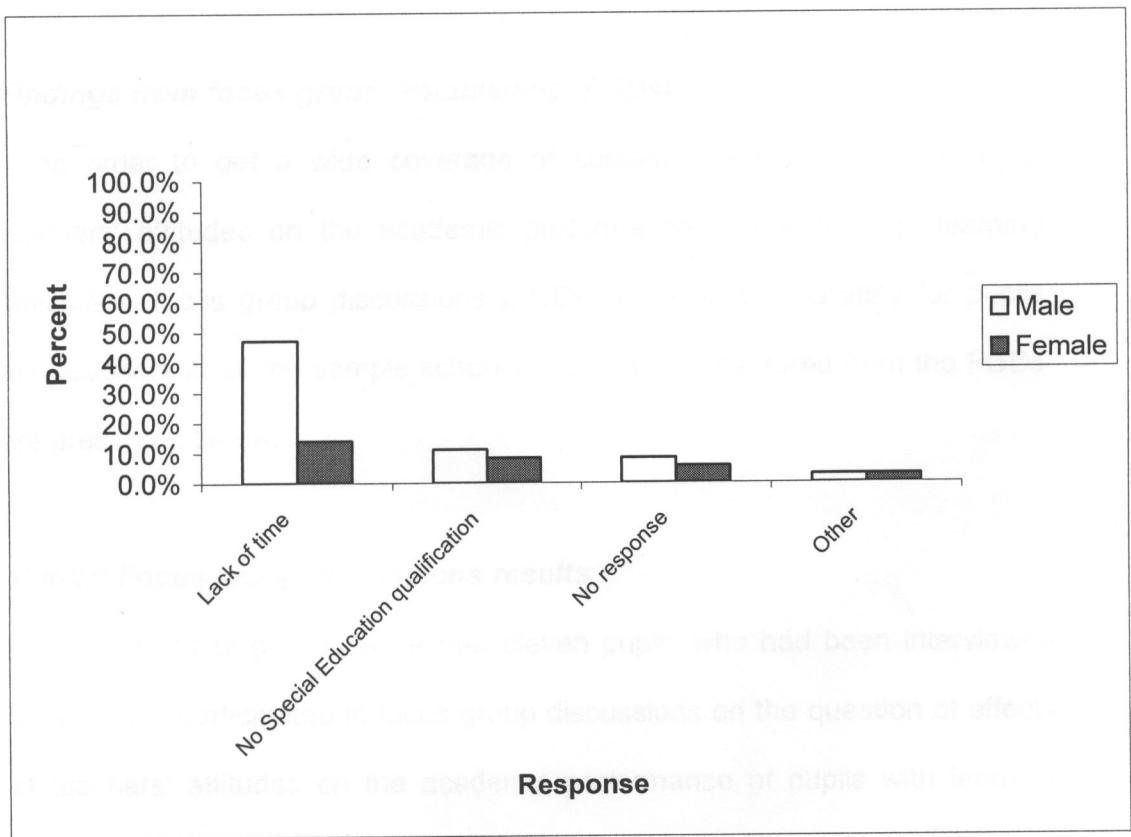
Both male and female teachers either strongly agreed or agreed that large classes made it difficult for them to give individualised attention to pupils with learning difficulties. The results have shown that all the teachers in the study believed that large classes had a significant influence on their attitudes towards pupils with learning difficulties.

An assessment was made on whether teachers with special education qualifications held different attitudes towards pupils with learning difficulties compared with teachers who did not have special education qualifications. Most of the teachers with special education qualifications readily accepted pupils with learning difficulties in the learning environment than those without these qualifications.

The study further revealed that lack of special education knowledge contributed to teachers' negative attitudes towards pupils with learning difficulties.

As to what constraints teachers faced when dealing with pupils with learning difficulties, the following were the findings:

Figure 6: Constraints teachers face in dealing with pupils with learning difficulties



Seventeen male (47.7%) and five female (13.9%) respondents said the greatest constraint they faced in dealing with pupils with learning difficulties was lack of time. Four male (11.1%) and three female (8.3%) respondents said that they did not have special education skills to deal with learning difficulties. Two respondents, one male and one female (2.8%) respectively, gave other reasons. Five respondents, three males (8.3%) and two females (5.6%) were not sure. The study established that teachers failed to find time to help pupils with learning difficulties and this partly accounted for their negative attitudes towards pupils with learning difficulties.

### ***Findings from focus group discussions (FGDs)***

In order to get a wide coverage of subjects' views on the effects of teachers' attitudes on the academic performance of pupils with learning difficulties, focus group discussions (FGDs) were held separately for pupils and teachers in all the sample schools. Some views captured from the FGDs are presented below.

#### ***Pupils' Focus group discussions results***

Groups of grade twelve and eleven pupils who had been interviewed earlier, also participated in focus group discussions on the question of effects of teachers' attitudes on the academic performance of pupils with learning difficulties.

On the question of how helpful teachers' report form comments had been on pupil's academic work, the following responses were noted; comments such as, "put in more effort," "can improve," "can do better," "study

hard", were psychologically beneficial as they spurred pupils into working hard. Pupils believed that these comments helped to enhance their academic performance. On the other hand, comments like "very poor", "very lazy", "useless", "too playful" were said to be demoralizing and they had the effect of causing pupils to relax and accept themselves as good for nothing hence accepting the label of a failure and as such these pupils tended to function in accord with this label. Further, pupils tended to develop resentment for teachers who used these comments to them.

When asked if at all the displaying of pupils' poorly done work by teachers affected pupils' academic work, respondents came up with the following responses; the gesture was not helpful as it put pupils concerned to public ridicule. They also stated that pupils embarrassed this way tended to develop low self-esteem which may lead to poor academic performance. Some pupils, discussants further argued, reacted by dropping out of school. It was also felt that, pupils who were treated this way by their teachers tended to stop taking their books for marking. It was further pointed out that pupils so embarrassed, tended to function with stressed minds and as a result their performance got negatively affected.

On the question of how teachers reacted to them when they failed to perform according to their expectations, discussants revealed that teachers tended to display hostile attitudes towards them. Further, they said that very few teachers offered them assistance when they experienced learning difficulties.

Asked to describe teacher attitudes that had helped them to improve on their academic performance, discussants believed that when teachers were

friendly, appeared concerned about their learning problems, discussed or counselled them, offered them remediation, checked their work, encouraged them; pupils tended to put in more effort in their work for fear of letting down such good teachers

Pupils suggested that teachers should use good language to them, avoid silly and embarrassing comments that had the effect of only dampening their spirits. Teachers, they suggested should show empathy, be receptive, and wear a friendly smile even at poorly performing pupils' so that such pupils were not put off in the learning process.

### ***Teachers' Focus Group discussions results***

The same teachers who had answered questionnaires on the effects of teachers' attitudes on the academic performance of pupils with learning difficulties also participated in focus group discussions over the same question.

Teachers defined special education qualifications as the qualifications that teachers acquired to enable them handle learners with special educational needs. Teachers also showed a deep understanding of the concept of learning difficulties. They stated that these were different difficulties pupils encountered in the process of learning compared with peers of the same grade level and as such they may need a modified curriculum in order for them to ably cope with given tasks and realize their full academic potential.

As a way of determining teachers' attitudes towards pupils with learning difficulties, we asked them if they were in favour of having these pupils in their classes. Teachers had varying views. Some said that as teachers, they were under obligation to cater for these pupils in ordinary

teachers' main roles as those of marking the register and punishing them when they erred.

When asked if it was teachers' responsibility to give remediation and monitoring learning outcomes of pupils with learning difficulties, most teachers in answering the question either strongly agreed or merely agreed that it was their responsibility. However, when asked during the focus group discussions, pupils reported that they were never given any remedial work by their teachers but only challenged to register for fee paying tuition offered after classes by the same teachers.

In order to assess the level of remediation given to pupils with learning difficulties, it was necessary to physically check on different class records kept by teachers for pupils with learning difficulties. Items assessed under pupils' records included exercise books, registers, and assessment records. The purpose of looking at these records was not only to establish the availability of these records but also to determine whether or not the records contained relevant and useful information for the remediation of learning difficulties.

Asked as to whether teachers met pupils' individual educational needs, ninety percent of the teachers during the FGDs said that they did not offer individual attention to pupils with learning difficulties. The same teachers further stated that it was not possible for them to give individualised education programmes (IEPs) to individual pupils with learning difficulties because of the large numbers of pupils found in their classes. Others observed that time was a constraining factor, as they could not meet these pupils at individual levels within the school timetable. Some complained that they lacked special education skills to help them manage pupils with learning difficulties.

Even though teachers were generally agreeable that it was their responsibility to give remediation and to monitor learning outcomes of pupils with learning difficulties, an assessment of exercise books and interviews with pupils revealed that pupils did not get any remedial work.

On how academically beneficial were teachers' report form comments like; "very poor", "lazy", "useless" "dull" and so on and so forth, most teacher discussants were of the view that these comments were not helpful to pupils in any way. Others said these comments only dampened the learners' spirit and curtailed their enthusiasm to learn. Asked as to why they used them when they knew that they might have negative effects on the learners, most of them confessed that they did so out of frustration; some said it was as way of rebuking poorly performing pupils. Others further added that this was meant at times to be a means of jerking and spurring up these pupils towards working harder. However, there was general consensus among the discussants that using these words was a wrong way of encouraging pupils to work hard. The discussants were also cognizant of the fact that pupils could be affected psychologically by such torturous comments and, this could at times result in pupils developing hatred towards teachers who made these comments.

The study found that teachers were able to recall some instances when previously poorly performing pupils improved academically. Among the factors they attributed to having led to these improvements were: re-establishing good relationships with pupils, counselling, giving individual help, lending books, change of methodology (modifying teaching approach) praising pupils when they performed well in an exercise.

The study found that teachers' attitudes towards pupils with learning difficulties were hostile irrespective of one's gender. Further, the study has established that there was a strong correlation between teachers' attitudes and pupils' academic performance.

The findings have also revealed that lack of special education qualifications, lack of time and large classes made it difficult for teachers to help pupils with learning difficulties in their academic work.

## CHAPTER FIVE

### DISCUSSION OF RESULTS

This chapter discusses the findings of the study. The study sought to determine whether or not teachers' attitudes had an effect on the academic performance of pupils with learning difficulties.

The chapter is divided into two parts. The first part discusses views of pupils and the second part looks at teachers' responses.

#### ***PUPILS RESPONSES***

##### ***Pupils' perceptions of teachers' attitudes towards them***

It should be remembered that two of the objectives of the study sought to find out teachers' attitudes towards pupils with learning difficulties and the effects these attitudes had on the academic performance of this category of learners.

Pupils generally perceived their teachers as having negative attitudes towards them and that these attitudes were not academically beneficial to them. These findings correlate with those by Horn (1979) who found that teachers had unfavourable attitudes towards pupils with special educational needs and were not so much willing to teach them. When teachers have negative attitudes towards pupils with learning difficulties and are not willing to teach them, these pupils will not receive teachers' personal attention which is so essential in the learning process of pupils with learning difficulties.

Pupils felt that teachers had negative attitudes towards them because of the comments they made on their' poor work and the way they reacted towards them when they failed to perform according to teachers' expectations. Teachers, they said displayed their poor work to the class or the whole school on windowpanes. This kind of teacher response to pupils' poor academic performance does not in any way enhance pupils' academic performance; rather it has a negative psychological effect that can unsettle the learner. Pupils subjected to negative comments or disgraced by having their work displayed to the rest of the school, tend to function with stressed minds and consequently develop low self-esteem. Further, some of these pupils may stop participating in class activities such as taking their books for marking, or volunteering to answer questions. Others become truant or completely drop out of school. Some tend to develop resentment for teachers who treat them unkindly. When pupils resent their teachers, they also most often than not, lose interest in these teachers' subjects with the result that their academic performance gets negatively affected. Vygotsky, in Berliner et al. (1988), stated that learners learn better when they interact and co operate with their teachers. Pupils who shan their teachers can not be expected to get learner support from these teachers when they meet difficulties in their academic work. Such pupils will continue to struggle with their learning difficulties on their own. This in the long run may have a bearing on their academic performance. These findings are consistent with those of the Report on the Task Force on the New York State Drop out Problem (1982).

Pupils' academic performance can be enhanced, when they get positive and encouraging feedback from their teachers. According to Nacino-Brown

(1982), teachers should try to give their pupils feedback on the evaluation of all aspects of their learning and behaviour so that both those who do well and those who do not will be motivated to improve on their academic performance. Majasan (1995) also states that a teacher must have the right kind of attitudes and background characteristics which would enable him/ her to provide the right kind of learning experiences for his/her pupils. However, our study findings seem to show that this may not be the case in the teaching/learning environment of our sample schools. This being the case, it is feared that pupils with learning difficulties may not be receiving the kind of feedback from their teachers that may enhance their academic performance.

The study found that teachers were able to recall some instances when previously poorly performing pupils improved academically. Among the factors they attributed to having led to these improvements were: re-establishing good relationships with pupils, counselling, giving individual help, lending books, change of methodology (modifying teaching approach) praising pupils when they performed well in an exercise. This goes to show that some pupils with learning difficulties can improve on their academic performance when teachers create a conducive learning environment for them. This position is consistent with the Ministry of Education Guidance teachers' manual's (2004) which states that learners who find problems in progressing in school, need to be assisted to overcome their learning problems so that they can succeed in school .

Teachers' negative attitudes towards learners can create a hostile learning environment. Teacher pupil relationship is one of the most important factors in the motivation or demotivation of pupils in the learning process.

Teachers often fail to realise how their criticism may affect a child's concept of himself/herself and inhibit clear thinking (Encyclopaedia Britannica: 1967). This position is further supported by Ganter and Yeakel (1980) who state that individuals' can be constrained from reaching their fullest potential by their interaction with significant others. Teachers are in the category of significant others as they play a crucial role in the formation of self-concept in pupils in the learning/teaching environment. Self concept is not an inborn trait but people acquire it through the process of learning (Bandura,1989). Self-concept is important for learning in all pupils. The self-concept is both a consequence and determinant of the learning process. Oscar, (1965) also observes that children are affected by and concerned with, the human qualities and teachers' attitudes towards them as individuals, not with technical competence. He further states that pupils' rate of learning can be affected by the relations between the teacher and the pupil.

There was a significant relationship between increased teacher attention to pupils with learning difficulties and these pupils' academic performance. The fact that the majority of pupils believed that teachers had a role to play in the enhancement of their academic performance shows that pupils with learning difficulties can benefit from teachers' personal attention to them in the learning and teaching process. This finding is consonant with the principal behind the use of individualised educational programmes in the education of pupils with learning difficulties which presupposes that:

Each student has unique needs that must be recognized and planned for in the academic program so that he or she will be able to function as effectively as possible in the school environment; this is where the IEP comes into play. An IEP is a written plan that identifies the learning needs of a child. It

outlines a continuing plan of action to meet these needs, and states what resources are needed in the teaching and learning of such a child. It is a way of establishing educational goals, recognising that children have highly specific learning needs (Watson: 2005).

The study, however found that teachers were not taking care of pupils with learning difficulties by way of giving them remediation or designing for them individualised educational programmes (IEPs) that would be useful in meeting their special educational needs. This being the case, pupils' special educational needs can not adequately be met. This entails therefore that pupils are not getting that personal attention that may help in addressing their learning difficulties and as such their success in class can not be guaranteed.

The role of a teacher in the education of school children is very critical and it is even more so for those children who appear to fail in class. Such children need the supportive concern of a friendly, caring and accommodating teacher in order to be able to persevere through the frustrations that may accompany failure. It seems teachers' personal attention to pupils with learning difficulties is a crucial aspect in the provision of education to these pupils. As long as pupils with learning difficulties do not get individualised attention from their teachers, their performance may continue to be poor. This assertion is supported by Holz and Lessing (2002) who contend that when teachers have a negative view of the learners, this may lead to learners being labelled, and this label may perpetuate poor academic performance. When some pupils realise that teachers are not concerned about their academic performance, they tend to put in very little effort in their academic work with the result that their overall academic performance gets negatively affected.

## ***Teachers' attitudes and pupils' Self confidence***

The study found those teachers' negative reactions towards pupils with learning difficulties was a factor in destroying these pupils' self-confidence and this could be the cause for the pupils' poor academic performance. Self confidence leads to enhanced academic performance. Once destroyed, the learners' in-put in the learning process may be very low and this may lead to poor academic performance. This observation is in agreement with Burns (1982), and Martin (1986), who advance that teachers are amongst the people potentially most influential in determining the pupil's self confidence as a learner. Since pupils with learning difficulties sometimes develop low self esteem, it is important that teachers should be conversant with pupils' processes of learning and when these pupils face learning problems they should feel free to approach their teachers for help. Nacino-Brown (1982) argues that it is generally pupils who appear to be failures who need the most attention and it is to them that the class teacher must direct himself/ herself. If teachers behaved this way, most pupils would be motivated to work harder.

Pupils believed that they could overcome their learning difficulties if teachers were friendly, appeared concerned about their learning difficulties, counselled them, offered remediation, checked their work, and encouraged them to persevere when they met difficulties. Further, they suggested that teachers should use good language to them and avoid embarrassing comments that have the effect of only dampening their spirits. They also stated that teachers should show empathy, be receptive, and friendly even to poorly performing pupils' so that such pupils were not put off in the learning environment. A teacher's disposition towards his or her pupils can either act as

an external reward which “pulls” the pupils towards cooperation or a negative reinforcer which repels them away from cooperating.

### ***Reasons for poor attitudes***

Teachers in the sample schools neglected some aspects of teaching that may be essential in the teaching of pupils with special educational needs. There could be many reasons to explain this neglect. Some of which could be due to teachers' failure to appreciate the difficulties that pupils with special educational needs experience. Others could be due to the fact that many teachers in the teaching profession these days are not so devoted to their career because they consider it as a way of earning a living and not a profession where they ought to give in their whole for the sake of the child. Lack of incentives and poor salaries, laissez faire attitudes towards work and poor conditions of service could yet explain the inertia teachers have in assisting pupils with learning difficulties.

Our findings imply that pupils in our education set up do not get the individualised attention they need when facing learning difficulties. This being the case, we fear that pupils with learning difficulties will continue lagging behind in their academic endeavours and as such will not be benefiting from the education on offer. High school education in Zambia is quite expensive, it is a big waste of resources on the part of the government and parents for a pupil to go through high school education and graduate without having reached an optimal level of functional literacy.

On the question of how they felt when teachers expressed interest in their learning needs, an overwhelming number of respondents said that they

felt overjoyed when teachers gave them individualised attention with a view to addressing their learning needs. The fact that the majority of pupils felt overjoyed when teachers paid individual attention to them shows that teachers' personal interest in learners' academic welfare can lead to pupil motivation. A motivated pupil tends to concentrate on learning and this may lead to his/ her improved academic performance. It may also be said that the opposite could be true when teachers ignore pupils with learning difficulties.

### ***TEACHERS' RESPONSES***

Teachers defined the concept of special education qualifications as qualifications acquired by teachers to enable them handle learners with special educational needs. Teachers also showed deep understanding of the concept of learning difficulties. The understanding of these terms gave us confidence and assurance that teachers understood these concepts well enough and as such we were working within the scope of the general objective of the study which was to investigate effects of teachers' attitudes on the academic performance of pupils with learning difficulties. These questions were included in the Focus Group Discussion (FGD) schedule for cross validation purposes. Teachers' answers were in agreement with those provided in our definition of terms and therefore in a way enhanced the validity of our research instruments.

An understanding of what learning difficulties is in the provision of special education or support services to pupils with learning difficulties is essential. It is however, interesting to note that even though teachers showed a deep understanding of the concept of learning difficulties, they did not adopt

attitudes that would enhance the academic performance of pupils with special educational needs. They also did not seem to know how to go about helping pupils with learning difficulties. For effective learning to take place for pupils with learning difficulties, teachers should understand strategies that can be used to help these pupils overcome their learning difficulties.

Teachers had varying views on the placement of pupils with learning difficulties in their classes. Their views were however not in full support of educating these pupils according to their levels of individual needs. These views helped us to assess teachers' attitudes towards pupils with learning difficulties. From this, we learnt that most teachers held negative attitudes towards pupils with learning difficulties and were not willing to have these pupils in their classes. This stance by teachers is not in the best interest of pupils. Pupils benefit a lot from teachers who are interested in teaching them. Such teachers will go to greater lengths in order to provide learning opportunities that would compensate for their learning difficulties. When teachers are not so keen on teaching a particular category of pupils, these pupils will not receive that personal attention which is so vital in the provision of quality education.

The study established that ordinary subject teachers and grade teachers alike held negative attitudes towards pupils with learning difficulties. It was also apparent that teachers, irrespective of their gender did not readily accept pupils with learning difficulties. Those teachers who were in favour of having such pupils in their classes did not however own the responsibility of giving these pupils individual attention in order to assist them overcome their learning needs. It is interesting to note that these teachers instead suggested

that bright pupils could perform this role. This entails that their acceptance of these pupils was not out of a desire to help them learn but a mere formality.

These findings are in agreement with those by Horn (1979), who found that teachers had unfavourable attitudes towards pupils with special educational needs and were not so much willing to teach them. If teachers hold unfavourable attitudes towards pupils and are not interested in teaching them or offering them remedial help, then these pupils will continue struggling on their own with their learning difficulties. Pupils left to themselves can not be expected to overcome their special educational needs and as such their academic performance would continue being poor.

The study has shown that even though an overwhelming number of teachers believed case study records were a necessary ingredient in the teaching of pupils with learning difficulties, however, none of them kept these records. The discrepancy therefore between these teachers' knowledge and their failure to practice what they actually knew to be the best way of helping pupils with learning difficulties revealed to us that teachers do not pay special attention to pupils struggling to learn in their classes. It also revealed that teachers had uncaring attitudes towards pupils with learning difficulties. Without proper case records, it would be difficult to draw up coherent remedial programmes that would be targeted at isolating pupils' learning difficulties with a view to addressing them. This position is in agreement with that of The Department of Science and Education (1969), which hold that when dealing with learners with learning difficulties, it is imperative that teachers locate the cause of the learning difficulties. For remediation to be sustained and yield positive results, it is needful that accurate case records for pupils with learning

difficulties are kept. Teachers need these records as a basis for their lesson planning and secondly, any that may be involved in providing support services to the pupil may need a case record to refer to as they interact with the pupil. Case records also offer guidelines to new teachers that may take up the responsibility of teaching the pupil when his /her permanent teacher is not around. A failure to keep case records of pupils with learning difficulties is more of a question of uncaring attitudes than a lack of skills in assisting these learners.

Teachers were able to recall instances when previously poorly performing pupils were able to improve academically. Among the factors they attributed to having led to these improvements were, reestablishing good relationships with pupils, counseling, giving individual help, lending books, change of methodology (modifying teaching approach ) and praising them when they tried their best. These attitudes towards pupils with learning difficulties as perceived by teachers were capable of enhancing pupils' performance levels. These findings are in agreement with a study done by Ryan (1982) on effective teaching, which came up with characteristics of effective teaching such as warmth, understanding, business-like attitude, ability to stimulate and imagination. Roseline and Hurst (1973) basically agree with Ryan even though they also include the use of a variety of instructional materials and procedure, and provision for pupils to learn the instructional content.

The study has shown that very few teachers took time to counsel pupils with learning difficulties. Psycho - social counseling is imperative to pupils with learning difficulties. These pupils need psycho - social support in order for

them to overcome the shame that may accompany failure to learn at the same pace as their peers. Teachers are best placed to offer this vital service to their pupils since they already have established a teacher - pupil relationship which gives them a basis for offering this kind of support. These findings are interesting in the sense that it seems grade teachers do not perform one of their main roles in class management and administration namely, providing psychosocial counselling to pupils with learning difficulties. These findings are inconsistent with what pupils consider to be a significant teacher as Howes (1999) discovered. He found that among the attributes that pupils felt should be found in a significant teacher were that he/she should be an individual on whom the child can rely and who provides a sense of security and self-value.

Pupils' revelation that that they were never given any remedial work by their teachers but only challenged to register for fee paying tuition offered after classes by the same teachers is a matter of concern. This attitude as perceived by pupils is not in the best interest of pupils with learning difficulties. Pupils who cannot afford to pay tuition fees are deprived of teachers' personal attention, which is so vital in the provision of education for pupils with learning difficulties. Pupils with learning difficulties need modified curriculum, a variation of teaching methods and individualised education programmes (IEPs) for them to be able to overcome their learning difficulties.

A physical check on different class records kept by teachers for pupils in their classes revealed that there were no specific records kept by most teachers for their pupils. The purpose of looking at these records was not only to establish the availability of these records but also to determine whether or not the records contained relevant and useful information for the remediation

of learning difficulties. Marking of pupils' books is a form of record keeping. Robinson (1980) states that regular marks and grades in pupils' books give a record of their performance. He goes on to state that marking enables the teacher to compare pupils' progress at different times and to compare performance of one pupil with another. Teachers observed in the sample schools in Northern Province were rated unsatisfactory in terms of marking pupils' books. Almost all teacher participants in this study were rated unsatisfactory in keeping remedial and assessment records. This being the case, it means that pupils with learning difficulties are not getting the attention that can meet their learning needs and as a result they may continue facing learning difficulties with the result that their performance may continue being below acceptable standards.

It is amazing that ninety percent of the teachers sampled did not offer individual attention to pupils with learning difficulties due lack of time, overenrolled classes and lack of special education skills. It is however interesting to note that the same teachers found time to provide private tuition to pupils who paid for their services. It seems that teachers have no heart for pupils with special educational needs. This is evidenced by their negligence in offering these pupils remediation that might assist in meeting their individual learning needs.

On the question of large classes being a factor in dealing with learners with special educational needs, it has been observed in the Journal of Educational Policy and Practice (1997) that, in America, class size is a factor that contributes to quality of education. It was further observed that student performance in most classes was not affected by class size in standard form of

fifteen to forty. However, classes which were above the enrolment figure of forty posed challenges to teachers. A study by Leyser, Kapperman and Keller (1994), explored teachers' attitudes towards pupils with disabilities in six countries and found differences which suggested that overcrowding in schools might be related to teachers' attitudes. The present study confirms these findings.

There was general consensus among the teachers that using diminutive comments to pupils was a wrong way of encouraging them to work hard. The teachers were also cognizant of the fact that pupils could be affected negatively by some of these comments and, this could lead to strained relationships between the pupil and the teacher. When a teacher's relationship with his or her pupils is sour, pupils tend to lose interest in anything to do with that teacher. This reaction by pupils in the long run could have a negative impact on their academic performance.

The study has also shown that teachers who had been teaching for over twenty years had very poor attitudes towards pupils with learning difficulties. These findings are similar with those by the research undertaken by Center and Ward (1987) and O.Neil and Linfoot (1989) who found that as teachers gained experience in teaching, their willingness to accept a child with disability decreased significantly, with the most experienced teachers demonstrating the lowest levels of acceptance of these pupils. This probably could be explained by the fact that these teachers maybe disgruntled as a result of poor working conditions. These teachers have been teaching for a long time and it seems the career has not been that rewarding to them (Kelly, 1996).

This chapter has tried to discuss both pupils' and teachers' views on teachers attitudes towards pupils with learning difficulties and the effects these attitudes have on the academic performance of pupils with learning difficulties. It is evident from the results that teachers' attitudes regardless of gender were negative towards pupils with learning difficulties. The study has also established that teachers were not committed to the cause of teaching pupils with learning difficulties. According to the study, pupils attributed the major cause of their learning difficulties as being due to lack of teacher interest in their learning needs.

Teachers' attitudes towards pupils with learning difficulties were found to be negative and therefore did not promote proper learning for this category of learners. This being the case, it is feared that pupils with learning difficulties in Northern Province will continue to perform below their expected levels as long as teachers do not take kin interest in their learning needs.

## **CHAPTER SIX**

### ***SUMMARY, CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS***

This chapter presents a summary, conclusion and recommendations of the study based on the findings and discussions on the question of the effects of teachers' attitudes on the academic performance of pupils with learning difficulties in selected high schools of Northern Province.

#### ***Summary***

The study revealed that teachers were not able to cater for the individual needs of pupils with learning difficulties due to lack of time, overenrolled classes and lack of special education qualifications.

The general picture from this study was that high schools were generally not equipped with teachers who were specialised in teaching pupils with learning difficulties since only nine out of thirty three teachers possessed special education qualifications.

The results of this study further revealed that while teachers appreciated the need for learners with special educational needs to be educated, they however were not making efforts that would facilitate proper learning for these pupils. The study has also shown that teachers were not very committed to the provision of individualised education to pupils with learning difficulties. It was quite clear that teachers were not actually willing to devote their time to the cause of pupils with learning difficulties, and as a

result, most pupils with learning difficulties have continued to perform below their expected abilities.

Most pupils with learning difficulties reported that their teachers often ignored them. From this we were able to deduce that generally teachers did not treat the issue of learning difficulties with the seriousness it deserved.

Pupils described teachers' attitudes towards pupils with learning difficulties as being hostile. They further lamented that this attitude made it difficult for them to seek help from teachers on aspects of their learning difficulties. Most pupils indicated that very few teachers offered them assistance when they had problems with their work. Pupils generally agreed that this attitude had some significant effect on their academic performance since they had no one to turn to for help in overcoming their learning needs.

On the other hand pupils reported that when teachers showed genuine concern in their work, they got motivated to work extra harder. Further pupils believed that they could overcome some of their learning difficulties if teachers gave them individualised attention. A good number of pupils reported that the *major contributing factor to their poor academic performance was teacher negligence of their learning needs.*

## **Conclusion**

The findings of this study showed that teachers had inertia in dealing with pupils with learning difficulties. Though they claimed that it was their responsibility to offer remediation and monitoring pupils' learning outcomes, none of them had however, put up remediation programmes for pupils with learning difficulties. Pupils claimed that teachers never gave them any meaningful attention whenever they faced difficulties in their work.

Though the concept of teacher attitudes and their effects on the academic performance of pupils with learning difficulties can be elusive and complex, an attempt was made to examine teachers' attitudes as perceived by pupils with learning difficulties. Further, an assessment was made on the effects of these attitudes on the academic performance of pupils with learning difficulties. The study found that teachers' attitudes towards pupils with learning difficulties were hostile and that these attitudes had a negative effect on the academic performance of pupils.

If the problem of teachers' attitudes towards pupils with learning difficulties does not get serious attention from education policy makers, school administrators, and class teachers, then these pupils will proceed to higher grade levels with unresolved learning difficulties which will hinder their academic life. Pupils who find no help in their academic struggles cannot be expected to enjoy learning. Academic underachievement has far reaching consequences for secondary school learners, such as rejection by others and self rejection. The learners' self-concept, as well as appropriate opportunities for the future are also adversely affected. Thus poor academic performance can affect every aspect of a child's world. Nothing can be as frustrating to a pupil as finding himself/ herself doing something that he/she constantly fails to progress in. For this reason pupil who experience constant academic failure tend to lose interest in learning and at times opt to drop out of school. Once out of school, these pupils are most likely to end up on the street as street kids where they may become a menace to society and fail to contribute positively not only to the betterment of their lives, but also to that of the general Zambian society as a whole.

In the school, some of these pupils tend to pose problems of discipline. If pupils sense that their teacher does not really care about whether they succeed or not, they will become discouraged and even cause a discipline problem for the concerned teacher. If teachers looked at pupils' disruptive behaviour as one of the ways in which they tell them about their needs, then teachers would be able to understand their problems better.

It seems from our findings that teachers do not take it upon themselves as their responsibility to put up intervening measures that may be aimed at arresting the impeding effects of learning difficulties of their pupils. Without these measures in place, the teaching and learning of pupils with learning difficulties would not be effective.

The findings of the study call for concern of all educationists in general and the teacher in particular who potentially can intervene to prevent the root cause of these pupils' learning difficulties. If interventions are instituted once a teacher observes a pupil struggling with learning problems, such a pupil, may be on the way to recovery from a potential academic failure, school drop out and tendency towards delinquency. As a nation we cannot afford to have pupils dropping out of school due to learning difficulties when we are at the moment grappling with the problem of street kids and unemployment.

The negative attitudes, which were exhibited by teachers towards pupils with learning difficulties, do not augur well for a strong commitment to the millennium goal of Education for All. Such negativity towards this category of pupils requires urgent address if a move towards reaching this UN goal is to proceed effectively. Education is a perhaps the most important social service whose promotion is absolutely essential to the development of a country like

Zambia. It is also a critical ingredient for cutting down on poverty levels and lifting the majority of citizens to an acceptable standard of living. For this reason, every Zambian citizen should be afforded a chance to be educated to a level where they can meaningfully contribute to their personal development and that of the nation at large.

## **Recommendations**

### **Policy recommendations**

In the light of the findings of the study, we recommend the following:

- Attitudes are very difficult to change. However, with constant exposure to *new methods in teaching, it may help to correct wrong perceptions teachers might have towards pupils with learning difficulties.* Head teachers should come up with human resource development programmes that would allow teachers access training so as to keep up with current trends in teaching and learning.
- In view of the government policy of inclusive schooling, it will be incumbent upon every ordinary high school teacher to cater for pupils with disabilities. This being the case, government should consider expanding the training of teachers in special /inclusive education as a way of equipping them with skills to deal with learning difficulties.
- The curriculum of teacher training colleges should include a full course in special/ inclusive education (not only as a segment of the educational courses as the case is at the moment) so that every trainee teacher is equipped adequately with special education methodologies as a way of preparing them for the task of dealing with pupils with learning difficulties in ordinary high schools.
- The office of special education coordinator should be set up in high schools so as to provide a resource centre where pupils with learning difficulties can receive counsel, assessment of their specific learning problems and eventually the drawing up of individualised education programmes aimed at meeting their special educational needs.

### ***Recommendations for further study***

- The present study recommends that in future, a comparative research should be carried out on this phenomenon. It would be interesting to compare effects of teachers' attitudes on pupils with learning difficulties and those perceived to have no learning difficulties.
- A study on factors that lead to learning difficulties and recommendations on how to overcome them would also be beneficial for the education of pupils with learning difficulties.
- The Ministry of Education should carry out an investigation into why teachers have uncaring attitudes towards learners. It is hoped the findings could be used to address the underlying causes of teachers' attitudes with a view to correcting them.

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## APPENDIX A

### ***PUPILS' F G D SCHEDULE***

1. How helpful to you have been teachers' report form comments like "very poor", "useless work", "good for nothing pupil", "lazy", "put in more effort" "can do better", "study hard", "can improve etc."?
2. (a) Does the displaying of pupils' poorly done work to the class affect pupils' academic performance?  
  
(b) Why do teachers display pupils' poorly done work to the rest of the class?
3. What are teachers' attitudes to you when you face problems in their respective subjects?
4. What do you consider to be significant teacher attitudes that have helped you to improve on your academic performance?

## APPENDIX B

### ***TEACHERS' FGD SCHEDULE***

The following questions were reflected in the focus group discussion schedule for teachers:

1. What do you understand by the term special education qualification?
2. Do you like the idea of having pupils with learning difficulties in your class?
3. Do you keep case study records for pupils with learning difficulties?
4. Do you meet pupil's individual educational needs as you teach in your class? Give reasons for your answer.
5. How academically beneficial to the pupils are such report form comments as ; " very poor, lazy, useless, weak etc?
6. (a) Can you recall instances when previously poorly performing pupils were able to improve academically?  
(b) What do you think could have been the reason for this improvement?

## APPENDIX C

### QUESTIONNAIRE.

Dear Respondent,

Please fill in the following questionnaire as carefully and as honestly as possible. Tick where applicable and answer briefly where appropriate by filling in the gaps. The information to be gathered is for academic purposes and will be treated with the uttermost confidence. Thanking you in anticipation.

### **SECTION A**

#### **Personal Details**

1. How old are you?

(a) 20-25 years [ ] (b) 26 – 30 [ ] (c) 31 – 35 [ ]

(d) 36-40 years [ ] (f) 46 – 50 [ ] (g) 51 – 60 [ ]

2. (a) Sex (a) Male [ ] (b) Female [ ]

(b) Marital status. (a) Single [ ] (b) Married [ ] (c) Divorced [ ]

### **SECTION B**

#### **Educational attainment:**

3. (a) College certificate [ ] (b) Diploma [ ] (c) Degree [ ]

(d) Other .....

4. How long have you been teaching?

(a) Less than 1 Year [ ] (b) 1- 5 Years [ ] (c) 6 - 10 Years [ ]

(d) 11 - 15 Years [ ] (e) 16 - 20 Years [ ] (f) 21 Years and above [ ]

5. Do you have any special education qualifications?  
 (a) Yes [ ] (b) No [ ]
6. Are you a class teacher (Grade teacher)?  
 (a) Yes [ ] (b) No [ ]
7. If yes above, what is the size of your class?  
 (a) 15-20 [ ] (b) 21-35 [ ] (c) 36-40 [ ] (d) 41 and above [ ]
8. Do you have pupils with learning difficulties in your class?  
 (a) Yes [ ] (b) No [ ]
9. If yes above, what difficulties do they display?  
 (a) reading difficulties [ ] (b) writing difficulties [ ]  
 (c) spelling difficulties [ ] (d) Other ( specify).....
10. When a teacher identifies pupils with learning difficulties in his/her class, what should he/her do? :  
 (a) Keep a case study of such pupils (b) Refer them to a special school  
 (c) Advise the head teacher to send them away from school.
11. What role/s do you have in the teaching of pupils with learning difficulties in your class as a grade/ subject teacher?  
 (a) Offer counsel [ ] (b) refer them for expert advice to special education teachers [ ] (c) Seek help from other teachers [ ]  
 (d) give remedial work (e) nothing [ ] ( f) Other (specify).....
12. What constraints do you face in dealing with pupils with learning difficulties?  
 (a) Hardly can find time to offer them individual help [ ] (b) lack of skills in dealing with learning Problems [ ] (c) Other (specify).....

13. A large class affects teachers' efforts in helping out on children with learning difficulties: (a) Strongly agree [ ] (b) agree [ ] (c) strongly disagree [ ] (d) disagree [ ] (e) unsure [ ]

14. What do you understand by the term learning difficulties?

- (a) A failure by a pupil to reach his/her full academic potential. [ ]
- (b) A failure to reach set objectives in a lesson [ ]
- (c) A failure to go to the next grade. [ ]
- (d) Other (specify).....

15. What effects do pupils with learning problems have on your teaching regimes?

- (a) Hold back my teaching progress [ ] (b) Using of different ways of teaching to help them learn [ ] (c) Giving me uncalled for extra work [ ]
- (d) Others (specify).....

16. A teacher has the responsibility of giving remedial work and monitoring pupils' learning outcomes

- (a) Strongly agree [ ] (b) agree [ ] (c) strongly disagree [ ]
- (d) disagree [ ] (e) Not sure [ ]

17. A teacher should study records of pupils with learning problems for him/ her to be able adequately help them:

- (a) strongly agree [ ] (b) agree [ ] (c) strongly disagree [ ]
- (d) disagree [ ] (e) Not sure [ ]

End of the questionnaire thank you for your cooperation.

**APPENDIX D**

**INTERVIEW SCHEDULE ON PUPIL PERCEPTIONS OF THE EFFECTS OF  
TEACHERS' ATTITUDES TOWARDS THEIR LEARNING DIFFICULTIES.**

**SECTION A**

1. How old are you? (a) 12-15 (b) 16-20 (c) 21 and above
2. Sex (a) male [ ] (b) female [ ]
3. When did you start grade one? 19.....

**SECTION B**

4. How do your teachers respond to you when you seem to be having problems in class academic performance (a) Ignore me [ ] (b) Try to assist me to overcome my difficulties [ ] (c) other .....
5. How can you describe the responses you have mentioned above?  
(a) demotivating [ ] (b) Motivating [ ] (c) Other.....
6. What effect do you think the above-mentioned response has had on you  
(a) Led to my poor academic performance [ ]  
(b) No effect on my academic performance [ ]  
(c) Other .....
7. What do you consider to be helpful ways of responding to pupils with learning difficulties?.....
8. (a) How do you feel when a teacher gives you personal attention in order to help you overcome your learning difficulties?  
(a) Overjoyed [ ] (b) troubled [ ] (c) sad [ ] (d) Other.....  
(b) Why do you feel this way?.....

9. How do you describe teachers' general attitudes towards you when you show signs of failing to do work to their expectations?

(a) Hostile [ ] (b) concerned [ ] (c) other.....

10. Do you think if teachers paid more personal attention to you, you would be able to overcome some of your learning difficulties? (a) Yes [ ] (b) No [ ]

(c) Other .....

11. What major factor has led to your learning problems/underachievement?

(a) Lack of teacher interest in my learning needs [ ]

(b) My own negligence of school work [ ]

(c) Other.....