

**Declaration**

I, Kambi Manda, do hereby declare that this piece of work is my own, and that all the work of other persons have been duly acknowledged, and that this work has not been previously presented at this University and indeed any other university for similar purposes.

Signed.....

Date.....

## Approval

This thesis of Kambi Manda is approved as fulfilling the requirements for the award of the degree of Master of Education in Science Education by the University of Zambia.

Signed..... Date.....

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## **Abstract**

Although the general view is that biology is the easiest science subject to learn, examination results have shown that many pupils fail biology at end of grade 12. The purpose of the study was therefore to investigate the nature and causes of learning difficulties pupils experience in biology in high schools of Samfya district.

This study was guided by the following questions: 1. What learning difficulties do pupils experience in high school biology? 2. Why do pupils experience these learning difficulties? 3. How can these learning difficulties be minimized?

A descriptive survey design was used and data were obtained from eighty grade 12 pupils and ten biology teachers using Interview Schedules and Self completion questionnaires. Simple random sampling was used to select the sample from the target population. Data collected were analysed using the content analysis approach.

The study found that pupils experienced difficulties in the following aspects such as biological terms, biological diagrams, plotting and interpreting graphs, calculations involving magnification and practical activities.

Factors identified to have caused learning difficulties in biology included; non-availability of some reagents to be used in practical lessons, poor English background by some pupils, failure by teachers to explain clearly to pupils biological concepts, belief by some pupils that biology was difficult to learn, lack of appropriate learning aids and inadequate time allocated to the wide biology syllabus.

It was recommended among others that chemicals for various practical activities be bought by schools in adequate amounts so that teachers can use them during lessons and that pupils be given assignments involving both drawings and written tasks. Biology teachers should teach learners the various meanings and interpretations of words and phrases that occur in the biology vocabulary. Teacher training institutions must prepare biology teachers effectively. Adequate time must be allocated to the teaching of biology. There is need to review the biology syllabus and reduce the content so that more time is given to experimental work.

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## **Acronyms**

CDC- Curriculum Development Centre.

CPD – Continuous Professional Development.

DEBS- District Education Board Secretary.

ECZ- Examinations Council of Zambia.

ESO- Education Standards Officer.

MoE – Ministry of Education.

PEO- Provincial Education Officer.

ZASE- Zambia Association for Science Education.