

## **DEDICATION**

Psalm 23:1- 6 had been my inspiration throughout my struggles. I dedicate this work to my family who always gave me encouragement to keep on marching forward, even when distractions of life were abound. This is what really kept me going.

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**AUTHORS DECLARATION**

I, Joan M. Mwenya Kasanda 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 used, acknowledgement has been made.

Signature of Author .....

Signature of the Supervisor .....

Date .....

**APPROVAL**

The University of Zambia approves the dissertation of Joan M. Mwenya Kasanda as fulfilling part of the requirements for the award of the degree of Master of Education in Adult Education.

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## ABSTRACT

Two types of learning systems have been used at the University of Zambia (UNZA) since its founding in 1966. These were the annual system in the first 30 years, and the semester system that was introduced later in the academic year 1995/96. The semester system is the one being followed up to now.

The purpose of this study was to investigate the challenges that the semester system imposed on the learning/teaching process at the University of Zambia, and the resolutions. The sample consisted of students, lecturers, and Deans of Schools. The information on the study was gathered by using questionnaires and interview guide. The study revealed that the fast pace of the semester system brought about several challenges that affected the learning/teaching process at UNZA. The major challenge that emerged was the lack of adequate funding to UNZA, that consequently, brought other associated challenges. The study revealed that as a result of inadequate funding, UNZA experienced shortages of teaching staff in most departments, and the institution was unable to motivate teaching staff adequately. In the fast paced semester system, the shortage of lecturers gave rise to heavy workload for the lecturers resulting in lecturers not being able to give lectures regularly, lecturers not always being available for students outside class hours, lecturers not always being able to mark tests/assignments on time, marking and grading were not always consistent and transparent, course content was not always covered in the semester system, some departments were not able to conduct tutorials for students, lecturers were not always able to make up for lost time when they missed classes, and that led to semester results not always being released on time. The late release of results tended to disrupt the university academic calendar year.

The study also revealed that the shortage of funding brought about the lack of infrastructure facilities such as class rooms, library space and computer facilities. In the fast paced semester system, the shortage of infrastructure affected the learning/teaching process at UNZA.

Other findings of the study were that the semester system as it is administered at UNZA had in fact about eight (8) weeks of teaching period when other activities are subtracted from the approximately sixteen (16) weeks duration of a semester. The other activities that were identified as encroaching on teaching time were registration of students, (3) three weeks, mid-

term break one (1) week, study break before commencement of final examinations one (1) week, and examination period (3) three weeks. The study showed that the (8) weeks available for teaching in the semester system at UNZA was not enough for covering the course content adequately.

Other challenges that emerged were that lecturers spent more time on marking tests/assignments than on research due to limited teaching time in the semester system, 40% lecturer respondents said that they were not always able to conduct tutorials, 40% said they were not able to give feedback on tests/assignments on time. The study attributed this to the lack of adequate teaching staff in most departments, resulting in lecturers having a heavy workload. In the fast paced semester system, this brought about challenges.

Most Deans of Schools respondents showed that they were not able to cope with the workload in the fast paced semester system with its constrained teaching time of about (8) weeks. The responses from the Deans also revealed that facilities such as lecture rooms were not adequate at UNZA. All Dean respondents were of the view that funding to UNZA was not adequate, that UNZA did not have adequate number of lecturers, 70% of the respondents were of the view that lecturers were not always able to mark tests/assignments, the same number said that pay incentives at UNZA were not adequate to motivate lecturers. It also emerged that most lecturers were not able to conduct tutorials at UNZA.

It is recommended that funding to UNZA be increased so that more lecturers can be engaged to cope with fast paced semester system. Engage more teaching assistants and tutors, and improve their remuneration to retain them, engage middle aged teaching staff, young ones tend to run away for greener pastures and improve library facilities to improve e-learning. Other recommendation were that teaching staff work stoppages should be minimised by introducing two year salary agreements, so as to avoid yearly salary negotiations, and finally the period for registration of students should be reduced as much as possible to release more time for teaching purposes.

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