Effects of Grade four learners' low reading levels on their academic performance in five selected primary schools of Chibombo district of Central Province

[1]Stanley Kalasa, [2]Anna Phiri, [3]Lufeyo Chitondo

Rockview University, Lusaka Zambia

Abstract: **The purpose of this study was to assess the effects of Grade four learners' low reading levels on their academic performance. The study employed both the qualitative and quantitative research methods to collect, integrate and analyze data. The study utilized descriptive research design. The target population of the study were all Head teachers, Senior teachers, teachers and learners in the selected five primary schools. The schools were coded with letter A, B, C, D and E in order to uphold confidentiality of schools where data was collected. The sample size for the study was 105 respondents. The purposive sampling was used to select the Head teachers, Senior teachers while simple random sampling was used to select, teachers and learners and cluster method was used to select zones and schools. The research instruments used in the study were questionnaires, interview and observation guide. Data was collected through the administration of questionnaire, interview and observation methods. Quantitative data was analyzed using excel to generate descriptive statistics in the form of frequency tables, bar graph and pie charts in order to give clear explanations, presentation and interpretation of the research results. Qualitative data was analyzed by using thematic method in order to generate themes. The study reviewed that there was low literacy levels among learners in schools of Chibombo district and the study also indicated that teachers face challenges in teaching learners with low literacy levels as low literacy levels affect the academic performance of learners in schools and various measures to improve literacy levels among learners were suggested such as procurement and distribution of reading materials in schools, procurement of desks for learners in the classrooms, establishment and stocking of libraries in schools, the increment of classroom space, deployment of teachers to rural schools, put in place retention policy for rural teachers and retrain teachers in literacy education.**

Keywords: **Effects, literacy, academic performance, reading levels, perceptions, low literacy.**

1. INTRODUCTION

1.1 Introduction

Literacy is defined as the ability to identify, understand, interpret, create, communicate as well as compute information using printed and written material which is associated with varying contexts. Therefore, low literacy levels pose a great challenge on learners' academic performance and advancement. Globally, investment in education is done at three levels: primary, secondary and tertiary and Schultz (2002) states that investing in education leads to faster growth for developed and newly industrialized countries. That is the reason why; developing countries especially in Sub-Saharan Africa are now paying attention to invest in education from primary, secondary and tertiary levels by increasing enrolment and improving education quality. From the time Zambia adopted 'the straight for English' policy after independence, it was evident that

learning to read and write proved to be a challenge for most of the pupils in government schools. This is reflected in the various educational reforms that sought to address the issue of language policy and language of instruction at the lower levels of the Zambian educational system.

The provision of quality education is the responsibility of every government. The core mandate of the Ministry of Education is to provide education to all Zambians. Ministries of Education in the region share similar experiences in improving educational delivery. This has made the participation of Zambia in the SACMEQ project particularly meaningful. The SACMEQ surveys provide Zambia, and other countries, with a useful platform for using evidence-based research to address concerns in their education systems. Reading is a crucial form of communication through which we get most of the information required in teaching and learning situations and in everyday life. The importance of introducing reading and writing in a learner's most familiar language cannot be over emphasized. The process of developing literacy and learning skills and the transition to English as a second language and as a language of instruction needs to be accompanied by appropriate methods and sufficient time.

The fundamental role of the Curriculum as emphasised in Educating our future (1996) is to enable pupils to read and write. Unfortunately, many pupils, especially from rural areas are unable to read as expected. The survey conducted by the National Reading Committee (1997) discovered that, sixty percent of the pupils leaving school at grade seven had extremely poor reading skills in English. The government has been implementing literacy programs in order to curb the situation. To this Matafwali (2005) observed that, despite learners being exposed to rich literacy, only one third of learners acquire basic reading skills. Most of these fortunate learners come from urban schools. Their counterparts from rural schools leave the grade seven levels as illiterate as they entered school.

The Examinations Council of Zambia evaluation report (ECZ, 2006) showed that learning achievement levels among grade 5 pupils in reading both in Zambian languages and English were still low across all levels leading to the low literacy levels among secondary school pupils as at Mufumbwe district. Matafwali (2005; 2010) also observed that children experiencing significant difficulties acquiring reading skills by first grade are likely to have reading difficulties by third grade and beyond in both L1 and L2. It, therefore, becomes crucial that pupils attain desirable reading and writing levels after grades one and two in both L1 and L2. Reading disabilities are still a big challenge to the nation and one wonders what would be the future of the nation if the trend continued. The challenge of reading has not only affected the pupils at the primary education level of the Zambian Schools but also, to the great extent, pupils at the secondary education level. From this background, the research sort to critically, examine the factors contributing to low reading levels in rural secondary schools of Zambia and the effects that they have on learner performance.

Children who are given appropriate instructions and provided with environments that foster early reading practices learn to read with relative ease. For most children, however, learning to read and write is a formidable challenge they have to encounter throughout their education. Regarding to writing, Campbell (2006) notes that learning to write involves two basic aspects: learning the mechanics of writing and becoming a competent writer by understanding what one writes about. Literacy can be regarded as one of the most important abilities students acquire as they progress through early school years and that is at primary level. As a foundation for learning to read and write in Zambian languages, literacy can be used for recreation personal growth, while simultaneously providing young learners with the ability to participate more extensively in their communities and societies. There have however been problems faced in some learners in understanding reading at tender ages as expected, this is at primary level of education in Zambia.

1.2. Statement of the Problem

The problem of low reading levels in rural primary schools in Zambia creates a great challenge to the education system and has the worst hindrance to pupils' academic performance (MOE, 2017). Low literacy levels hinder a learner's ability to understand and use the written language. According to a study conducted by the Southern and Eastern Africa Consortium for Monitoring Education Quality (SACMEQ) aimed at testing mathematics and reading achievements in 15 countries in Eastern and Southern Africa, Zambia was ranked as one of the worst with a decline in its performance alongside Malawi, Namibia, Lesotho and Uganda with difficulties in mathematics (SACMEQ, 2017). This shows that the performance of learners in schools in Zambia has remained poor. Despite the important role that literacy programs initiated by government plays in schools, there has always been poor performance in the subjects at public examinations. The cause of this is attributed to low reading levels among learners in schools MOE, (2018); ECZ, (2017).

1.3. Purpose of the study

The purpose of the study was to assess the effects of Grade four learners' low reading levels on their academic performance of learners in selected primary schools of Chibombo district.

1.4 Research objectives

1. To find out the suitability of teaching methods used in teaching literacy in rural schools of Chibombo District on literacy skills acquisition.

2. To find out the impact of literacy materials on the acquisition of literacy skills in rural schools of Chibombo district.

3. To assess the suitability and impact of literacy materials used in teaching schools on literacy skills acquisition.

1.5 Theoretical Framework

The study was guided by second language acquisition theory by James Cummis and according to the common underlying proficiency model (Cumminis, 1981), as children acquire academic knowledge and skills in their first language, they also acquire language-independent information about those skills that can be applied when learning a second language.

1.6 Significance of the study

It is hoped that the findings of the study would contribute to the knowledge gap amongst all the stake holders interested in effects of Grade four learners' low reading levels on their academic performance such as Curriculum development specialists, education administrators, teachers, parents and pupils in the sense that only when proficiency is attained will performance be improved in language learning through the four learning skills namely; listening, speaking, reading and writing.

2. LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1. The school environment

The school environment has a hand in contributing to low reading levels. Prothorough (2009) dwelling much on the real books states further by saying that it is necessary to be aware that the ability to respond to the stories is important functionally because of the evidence that reading grows on reading, that it enables children to handle non-spoken language and it helps to make them better language users and developmentally because story making and story hearing are unique human activities, tools of thinking, that aid our understanding of what it means to be human, socialize us into a particular culture and help us to judge between different courses of action. Christopher, Carr and Burnham (2009) argued that if the standard of the school were to improve, it was essential to improve the quality of teaching

Protherough (2009) carried out a study and discovered that almost all children prefer reading at school, prefer reading aloud and prefer the books they choose for themselves to those given to them in school. Catherine Wallace (2012) also discovered early reading skills are exemplified by for example performance on certain kinds of motor skills, the ability to discriminate shapes and patterns, phonics and word recognition skills. 'Phonics' as the method is popularly called involves the ability to match up letter (or graphemes) to some kind of some representation. It tends to be assumed that phonics skills is displayed by the ability to read aloud with a good that is a native like Standard English pronunciation. Word recognition skills, often associated with 'look and say' methods involve the ability to name whole words whether presented in a textual or situational context or not. William (2017) argued that guided to teach a new structural pattern or a new word orally before the children read or write it would help improve their literacy abilities. Feldman (2003) also states that how teachers teach is as effective as what they teach. The action they take directly affects what students learn. Williams (2017) indicated that lack of familiarity with the language of teaching is blamed for illiteracy rates beyond 40% among people who live in areas where dozens of languages are spoken.

2.2 Truancy, absenteeism and poverty

Habitual truancy can be defined as unexcused absences from school by a minor that exceed the number of such absences allowed. While truancy is widely acknowledged to be a problem nationwide, it is very difficult to find data that delineate the full extent of the problem due to data collection and reporting issues at the school, local and State levels (Heilbrunn, 2007).

Truancy can start early and is associated with poor academic achievement both in the short term and in later years. The chronic absence in schools has immediate consequences for academic performance in first grade, (Chang and Romero, 2008). Additionally, the majority of students who suffer from chronic absence come from families who do not possess the resources to help the children make up for lost learning. These early patterns have long-term costs for both the individual and society at large. Balfanz (2008) stated that absenteeism harms more than the individual and his or her prospects. High truancy and absence rates affect the achievement of the school overall, slowing the rate of instruction, which harms all students.

2.3 The Conducive home environment

The home environment affects the academic performance of students as educated parents can provide such an environment that suits best for academic success of their children, Marzano (2003). Many scholars pointed out that the academic performance of students heavily depends upon the parental involvement in their academic activities to attain the higher level of quality in academic success Barnard, (2004), Shumox and Lomax, (2001). Students with high level of socioeconomic status perform better than the middle-class students and the middle-class students perform better than the students with low level of socio-economic status due to their parents or family members involvements in their education Kahlenberg, (2006); Kirkup, (2008).

Edwards (2009) commented on the home environment surrounded by books and Discovered that, "children who are surrounded by books from birth arrive in school knowing about how they can talk about words such as title, pages, words, top, bottom, beginning, middle and etc." he further argued that, "children who are exposed to books use pictures as clue to what a book may be about and they may know some words already and be able to perceive the relationship between words and their component sound.

The study by Krashen (2005) revealed that students whose parents are educated score higher on standardized tests than those whose parents were not educated. Educated parents can better communicate with their children regarding the school work, activities and the information being taught at school. They can better assist their children in their homework and participate at school (Trusty, 2009). The literature on achievement consistently has shown that parent education is important in predicting children's achievement Klebanov, (2009), Haveman and Wolfe, (2005); Smith, (2007). The mechanisms for understanding this influence, however, have not been well studied. In general, family process models Linver, (2002), Yeung, (2002) have examined how parenting behaviours, such as the structure of the home environment influences children's achievement outcomes. Alexander (2004) found that parents of moderate to high income and educational background held beliefs and expectations that were closer than those of low-income families to the actual academic performance of their children, Low-income families instead had high expectations and performance beliefs that did not correlate well with their children's actual school performance.

Halle (2007) found out that mothers with higher education had higher expectations for their children's academic achievement and that these expectations were related to their children's subsequent achievement in Mathematics and Reading. They also found out that these more positive beliefs and expectations predicted higher amounts of achievement-related behaviour by mothers in the home as well as more positive perceptions of achievement by the children.

Otieno and Yara (2010) asserted that, learners from low socio-economic status families tend to value domestic activities more than schooling. Such children are subjected to child labour and have little time for studies. They indicated that in most developing countries, there are many families whose members despite their full days hard labour do not find it possible to make two ends meet. Children of tender age in such families have to work for their living. These coupled with little government financing of education sector makes many families unable to meet the requirements of their children's education thus contributing greatly to their poor academic performance.

Purcell (2006) laments that there are no public libraries to provide beginning readers with reading materials at home and hardly any initiatives by schools to stimulate parental involvement in their children are reading development. Poor academic performance is most commonly determined by combining demographic, socioeconomic and environmental factors such parents' educational level, occupational status and income level Jeynes, (2002). It is believed that low socio- economic status negatively affects academic achievement of students in secondary schools Hansen and Mastekaasa, (2003). Walters and Soyibo (2008) further elaborated that student performance is very much dependent on socio economic back ground

Food is important for any human being as well as students and is a part of education. The findings by Kaklamanou (2012) stated that students need food to actually make them study well and be attentive and manage the responsibility of class. It has been discovered that skipping breakfast can adversely affect problem-solving tasks such as mathematics grades which require problem solving skills. Lauglo and Maclean (2005) observed that education should develop moral aesthetic, physical and practical capacities not just cognitive knowledge organized in academic disciplines. They added that practical subjects can have the additional justification because they allow students to learn from more active doing than what is typical in academic subjects.

2.4 Teaching and learning materials

A textbook constitutes an important tool for academic achievement. Many writers Heyneman and Loxley (2002), Walberg (1984), Beeby (2006) have variously highlighted the contribution of textbooks to academic achievement. Studies have revealed in some instances, that textbooks provide the only source of information for students as well as the course of study for the subject. Exploring the effects of textbooks and other factors on student achievement gain. Earlier in his own contribution, Altbach (2003) had the opinion that; "Nothing has ever replaced the printed word as the key element in the educational process and, as a result, textbooks are central to schooling at all levels. Odulaja and Ogunwemimo (2009) argues that while the selection of a textbook has been adjudged to be of vital to academic achievement, it is sad to say that relevant textbooks are not always available for teaching and learning activities. Lack of textbooks could be identified with the high costs.

When books are expensive, students cannot afford to purchase them. The implication therefore is that the teachers will serve as the only source of information. Where the teacher is the only source of information his or her selection of textbooks may be biased. Biased in the sense that his or her selection may be based on reasonably unsatisfactory criteria such as its attractiveness in terms of color, print, photograph, the author's qualifications and the recognition he or she has been accorded in some other publications. In his study on resources and resources utilization as it correlates to academic achievement, Oni (2002) reported that there was a significant relationship between recommended textbooks and academic performance.

2.5 School library and teaching materials

The educational process functions in a world of books. The chief purpose of a school library is to make available to the pupil, at his easy convenience, all books, periodicals and other reproduced materials which are of interest and value to him but which are not provided or assigned to him as basic or supplementary textbooks. As a resource, it occupies a central and primary place in any school system. It supports all functions of school-teaching and provides service and guidance to its readers. Fowowe (2008) clarifies that a library must be up-to-date and at the same time have older materials. It must be properly supported financially to fund materials and services among others. A well-equipped library is a major facility which enhances good learning and achievement of high educational standards. In his words, Farombi (2008) reiterated that school libraries may not be effective if the books therein are not adequate and up-to-date. Its impact may only be meaningful if the library could always be opened to the students for a considerable length of time in a school day. With all the above mentioned facts, it is sad to know that many schools operate without libraries Shodimu, (2008). Ogunseye (2006) had earlier noted that the total absence of an organized school library would continue to spell a doom for thousands of school children as many schools operate without libraries and this has affected the academic performance of their students.

Moreover, Fuller (2005) identified a school library as an instructional resource which may significantly influence pupils' achievement after controlling for pupils' family background. He found out that one effect of library size and its activity have been positive in 15 out of 18 analyses. Those schools with well-equipped library normally maintain high academic performance. In another study on raising school quality in developing countries, Fuller (2005) found out that collection of books kept for reading in the library is related to performance.

2.6 Teacher pupil ratio

The other consequence is low number of teachers to students' ratio especially in most of the public schools. The pupil to teacher ratio stands at an average of 52:1 and is as high as 100:1 in some regions, especially in rural areas. The few teachers in the government payrolls are poorly remunerated as a result most of them take up part time employment or private business

enterprise in order to make ends meet. Corcoran (2018) found out that; the problems of poor working conditions to teachers result in higher absenteeism, reduced levels of effort, and lower effectiveness in the classroom, low morale, and reduced job satisfaction. Where working conditions are good, they result in enthusiasm, high morale, cooperation, and acceptance of responsibility. Teachers have been shown to have an important influence on students' academic achievement.

Teachers play a crucial role in educational attainment because they are ultimately responsible for translating education policy into action and principles based on practice during their interaction with the students Afe, (2001). Both teaching and learning depends on teachers. Uchefuna (2001) clarifies that no wonder an effective teacher has been conceptualized as one who produces desired results in the course of his duty as a teacher. However, private secondary schools tend to have significantly lower-class sizes than government schools. Data on teacher qualifications show that 2% of all primary school teachers had degrees, 85% had diplomas (8%) had certificates (53%) and about 8% of teachers were trained but not on Government payroll (URT, 2011b).

2.7 Reading culture and teaching methods in literacy

On the reading culture, Kelly (2002) commented that getting worried with the situation of illiteracy many parents visit the book shops to at least get a book for their children. There is a poor reading culture in the country, generally people do not read for pleasure, MOE (2001) and that, parents who are not educated, or may not have gone far in their education, often do not see the need for formal education for their children. In many families, education is not viewed as an investment in the children's future livelihood or in preparing them to develop the appropriate skills and life styles necessary in life.

On the teaching methods in literacy, it was proposed that the Language Experience Approach be added as this course uses other essential approaches to teaching reading and writing, MOE (2001). It uses Phonics-teaching letter sound from which learners can sound new words they need. Syllabic-teaching learners to read words by recognizing the shape of the whole word. Look and say-teaching learners to read words by recognizing the shape of the whole word about reading. Real books-teaching learners by letting them read books alone and with other readers such as teachers, parent other older learners.

Matafwali (2005) points out the concept of shift from a local language to English as another challenge. Some children may not understand the concept of the alphabet phonetic principle or they may find the shift to English in the second grade to be too complicated as they may lack necessary language proficiency. To this she suggests a panacea that oral language abilities stimulate phoneme awareness which lay a foundation for emergent literacy and a strong predict of reading skills at second grade.

Kashoki and Mann (1996) argued that it is assumed that children may easily acquire the Zambian language of instruction considering that Zambian languages have commonalities in vocabulary and grammar. It is easier for pupils to acquire the first language through a local language, because, according to Banda (2008) geographically proximate languages tend to have similarities.

3. METHODOLOGY

3.1 Study Design

The purpose of the study was to assess the effects of Grade four learners' low reading levels on their academic performance in selected five schools of Chibombo district. The study adopted a mixed methods approach which is a combination of quantitative and qualitative data. Exploratory and descriptive designs were as well considered appropriate as they also allowed for more flexible strategies of data collection in order to answer the research questions, (Best and Kahn, 2006). The research design was a descriptive survey, as Khan, (2006) pointed out that a descriptive study may often result in the formation of important principles of knowledge and solutions to significant problems.

The study incorporated both qualitative and quantitative aspects of research. It was aimed at collecting information from respondents on the effects of learners' low reading levels as well as learners' academic performance in primary schools, highlighted factors affecting teaching and learning materials, manager-teacher and teacher-pupils engagement in classroom activities, Shields and Rangarajan (2013). Structured open-ended interviews were conducted, observation schedules and questionnaires were used to respondents. The internet also supplemented data for the study.

3.2 Research sites

The study was carried out in the five selected schools in Chibombo district of Central Province from which respondents were also sampled.

3.3 Population, Sample and Sampling procedure

The population for the study was purposefully drawn from the five schools. Purposive sampling procedure was used to select Head teachers (5), Senior teachers (10) while the simple random sampling procedure was used to select the teachers (20) and learner (70), Clark, (2011). The sample size comprised of 105 respondents. Head teacher (1 from each school), Senior teachers (2 from each school), teachers (4 from each school) and learners (10 from each of the three Grade 4 Schools while 20 each from 2 of the Grade 1 schools) as schools are graded according to the number of streams and learners. Also, the primary data was complimented by the secondary data which was derived from government policy documents, ministerial reports and relevant literature on the teaching and learning of initial literacy.

In the sampling of institutions, the study adopted the stratified cluster random sampling technique. Sampling was done zone by zone. Schools were clustered by zones. One zone was purposively selected based on highest number of schools. The sampling was done at three levels: Sampling zones and schools- level 1, Sampling teachers and learners-level 2, Sampling Head teachers and Senior teachers -level 3.

3.4 Data Analysis

In this research, data was analysed qualitatively as the semi structured interviews and observation schedules were used as data collection instruments. Thematic approach was used, where data analysis started with the categorization of themes from the semi structured interviews and observation schedules Kombo and Tromp (2006). Charts and graphs were used to analyse data. The data gathered was analysed according to the themes of the study, the order of the research objectives. Data generated from the interview guide was analysed manually and also, a combination of software MS Access, SPSS and MS Excel was used to analyse data. Analysis was mainly descriptive, that is, mean, median, mode, range, and standard deviation. Related statistics were applied where possible. Statistical testing took the form of Analysis of Variance (ANOVA), correlation and regression both simple and multiple.

3.5 Ethical Issues

The researcher avoided pressuring respondents to take part in the research. Alternatively, permission consents, assents were obtained from respondents involved in the research and the research topic was strategically selected to ensure that there was no harm whatsoever to the research respondents. In this research, the researcher was fully conscious of the need to abide by the ethical rule of respecting the privacy of individuals taking part in the research. In the same way, all the respondents of the research were to remain unidentified to the public as all their valuable views, opinions and perceptions were only known by the researcher for use only in the research and participant's identities will forever remain hidden.

The Researcher got permission from the Head teachers to interview senior teachers, class teachers and learners in the five selected schools. The names of respondents would remain anonymous for the sake of confidentiality, Bryman (2001) and Diener and Crandall (2008). However, the identity of respondents was concealed in the thesis but for identification in the thesis, seventy learners were allocated numbers 1 to 70, teachers were allocated ordinal numbers 1st to 20th, senior teachers were allocated names of classroom teaching and learning materials of chalkboard, ruler, duster, chalk, manilla, felt pen, pen, book, file and book while Head teachers were allocated primay colours- Blue, Black, Green, Orange and Red.
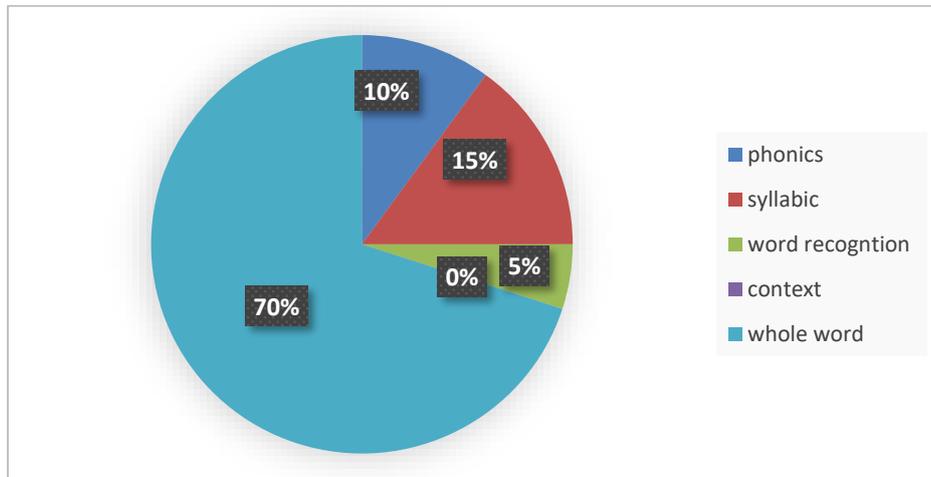
4. FINDINGS AND DISCUSSIONS

The following findings and discussions were presented according to set research objectives:

4.1 Teaching methods

According to study results, teachers in all the five schools used phonics, syllabic, word recognition and other methods but the content whole word method was not used by all the teachers in the five schools and this was evidenced by the responses of all the twenty teachers who were asked about the methods used to teach reading and the highly used method was whole word at 70%, syllabic at 15%, phonics at 10%, word recognition at 5% and context method at 0% Their responses were recorded as shown in Figure 1 below.

ISSN 2394-9686

International Journal of Novel Research in Education and Learning
Vol. 10, Issue 5, pp: (61-75), Month: September - October 2023, Available at: www.noveltyjournals.com

Figure 1: Methods of teaching

The study showed that 98% of the respondent agreed that, the methods used in schools to teach learners reading were wrong and inappropriate. They indicated that, such trend disadvantaged the leaners and was against the literacy policy guidelines, which states that, "teaching methods should be appropriate so that right materials are given at the right time, manner and quality" ZECFW (2013:4). The study further revealed that, teachers were not well vested in the teaching methods suitable for teaching reading. These teachers used methods that were appropriate in other subjects like numeracy and others hence failing to address the five pillars of literacy being, phonemic awareness, phonics, oral fluency, comprehension and contextual. Time use of wrong and inappropriate methods is against the report of MOGE, (2015) which states in part that, teachers should be well vested with appropriate methods in order to bring about effective learning. The study also revealed that, because of teachers using inappropriate methods, teachers ended up teaching letters and not sounds which are the main building blocks in literacy in order to help build the arsenal of a learner.

4.2 Reading teaching materials

The highly rated was literacy teaching guide at 50%, followed by learning activity book at 12.5% and then flip charts at 2% while the other materials scored 0% from all the teachers in the five schools as shown in Table 2 below.

The responses from respondents on teaching and learning materials were that the materials mostly available in the five schools were teachers' guides at 50%, learners' activity books at 12% and flip charts at 2% while the other learning materials were not being used in all the five schools. On availability, the study found that the most available teaching and learning materials were teachers' guides at 50%, learners' activity book at 13%, flip charts at 2% while the other materials were not available in schools as shown below in Figure 2.

Figure 2: Learning materials
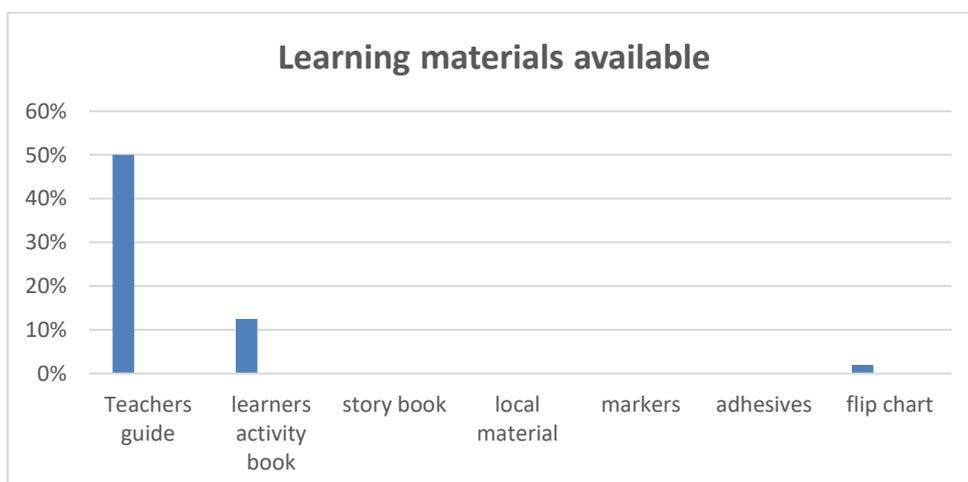
The study revealed that reading teaching were readily available in all the five sampled schools and the ratio was at 100% for literacy teaching guides, for flip charts it was at 8% and for learning activity book it was at 4% while with all the other four learning materials it was at 0%.

The study reviewed that, the teaching and learning materials in reading were not available in the desired quantity. The study reviewed that only 15% of teaching and learning materials were available, and that has really hampered learning of reading. The study reviewed that, this deficit has been caused by non-procurement of literacy materials by schools and also by improved access to education through the popular policy of free education from Grades 1 – 7. Lack of teaching and learning materials had really negatively impacted the teaching of reading as Rodgers observed, "Instructional, materials and facilities are important part of the process of the learners as they provide practices and feed back in the learning process. Rodgers, (1981).

The study also reviewed that, teaching and learning material deficit rate is 85% where a class of 154 learners only have 20 text books. The deficit has compromised the quality of teaching and learning. It is worth nothing that the supply of teaching and learning materials has a bearing of the quality of educational service delivery which also relates to availability of text books" MOGE, (2010). Hence the unavailability of teaching materials in reading sharply contradicts this observation learning cannot be improved without the availability of teaching and learning materials as noted by UNESCO (2010). On the same, Mohamed, (1998) without teaching and learning materials such as textbooks, work sheets or readers, non-print materials such as audio materials, reading in schools is far from being a reality. Materials should be supplied as they supply concrete basis for conceptual thinking and hence reduce meaningless word responses from pupils Nyamubi, (2003).

4.3. Factors for low reading levels.

Factors affecting low reading levels were reviewed by the Head teachers, senior teachers and teachers in schools in all the selected five schools. Factors reviewed range from lack of infrastructure at 8.5%, lack of teaching and learning materials at 14.2%, weak education foundations at 25.7%, early entry into school at 11.4%, lack of school libraries at 8.5%, lack of study time at 5.7%, long distances to and from school at 5.7%, lack of trained teachers at 2.8%, inadequate reading books at 11.4% and poor family background at 5.7%. All the findings are as illustrated in Table 1 below.

Table 1: Factors affecting low reading levels

Responses	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Lack of enough infrastructure	*3*	*8.5*
Lack of teaching and learning materials	*5*	*14.2*
Weak educational foundation	*9*	*25.7*
Early entry into school	*4*	*11.4*
Lack of school libraries	*3*	*8.5*
Lack of time to study	*2*	*5.7*
Long distance to and from school	*2*	*5.7*
Lack of trained teachers in languages	*1*	*2.8*
Inadequate books for reading	*4*	*11.4*
Poor family background	*2*	*5.7*
Total	**35**	**100**

Table 1 above shows that three (3) out of thirty five (35) representing 8.5 % of the respondents reported lack of enough infrastructure, five (5) out of thirty five (35) representing 14.2 % of the respondents revealed lack of enough teaching and learning materials, nine (9) out of thirty five (35) representing 25.7 % indicated weak education background of the learners, four (4) out of thirty five (35) representing 11.1 % of the respondents revealed early entry into school when children are still young, three (3) out of thirty five (35) representing 8.5 % lamented lack of school libraries, two (2) out of thirty five (35) representing 5.7 % of the respondents reported lack of study time and another two (2) out of thirty five (35) representing 5.7 % of the respondents indicated long distance to and from school, one (1) out of thirty five (35) representing 2.8 % of the respondents revealed lack of trained teachers in languages, four (4) out of thirty five (35) representing 11.4 % indicated inadequate books for reading and two (2) out of thirty five (35) representing 5.7 % of the respondents revealed poor family educational background of learners causes low literacy levels among learners in schools.

The study revealed that lack of enough infrastructure, weak of teaching and learning materials, weak educational foundation, low age entry into school, lack of school libraries, lack of time to study, long distance to and from school, lack of trained teachers in languages, inadequate books for reading, poor family background. The decline in the reading culture is low because of the weak early education background of some learners. The learners are not exposed much too elementary education like nursery and pre-school. The lack of school libraries where they can spend time studying contribute to the low literacy levels among ourselves. Besides this, teachers contribute to low literacy levels among ourselves. Teachers do not pay attention to learners who not know how to read and write in an effective way.

There is a strong correlation between literacy levels and academic performance. If the literacy level is low, the academic performance for a learner no doubt that it should be low as well. Edwards (2009) commented on the home environment surrounded by books and Discovered that, children who are surrounded by books from birth arrive in school Knowing about how they can talk about words such as title, pages, words, top, bottom, beginning, middle and etc. He further argued that children who are exposed to books use pictures as clue to what a book may be about and they may know some words already and be able to perceive the relationship between words and their component sound. The reading levels outputs is highly dependent of some possible factor necessary for enhanced learner performance. These factors included positive attitude, introduction of school libraries, provision of relevant and suitable teaching and learning methodologies. Additionally, the premise for having positive attitude, introduction of school libraries, provision of relevant and suitable teaching and learning methodologies is to provide a direction on learner's enhanced performance.

Purcell (2006) talks of lack of public libraries to provide beginning readers with reading materials at home and hardly any initiatives by schools to stimulate parental involvement in their children are reading development. It is of great importance to note that low literacy level is most commonly determined by combining demographic, socioeconomic and environmental factors such parents' educational level, occupational status and income level. It is believed that low socio- economic status negatively affects academic achievement of students in secondary schools. This study supported Walters and Soyibo (2008) who elaborated that student performance is very much dependent on socio economic background

4.4. Measures on low reading levels among learners

The Head teachers, senior teachers and teachers in all the five selected schools brought out the measures to be used in schools to improve on learners' low reading levels and information is as illustrated in Table 2 below.

Table 2: Measures put in place to improve reading levels among learners in schools

Responses	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Establishment of libraries in schools	*6*	*17.1*
Strengthening of pre-school education	*8*	*22.8*
Close supervision of teachers	*4*	*11.4*
Mobile teaching of learners in schools	*2*	*5.7*
Change the enrolment policy on age	*1*	*2.8*
Increase infrastructures in schools	*2*	*5.7*
Strengthening PRP in schools	*7*	*20.0*
Procurement of PRP books in schools	*3*	*8.5*
Increase furniture in classrooms	*2*	*5.7*
Total	**35**	**100**

Table 2 above shows that six (6) out of thirty five (35) representing 17.1 % of the respondents suggested the establishment of libraries in schools, eight (8) out of thirty five (35) representing 22.8 % of the respondents indicated strengthening pre-school education, four (4) out of thirty five (35) representing 11.4 % indicated close supervision of teachers, two (2) out of thirty (35) representing 5.7 % suggested mobile teaching of learners in schools, one (1) out of thirty (35) representing 2.8 % suggested change of the enrolment policy on age, two (2) out of thirty five (35) representing 5.7 % suggested an increase of infrastructures in schools, seven (7) out of thirty five (35) representing 20.7 % suggested strengthening of PRP in schools, three (3) out of thirty five (35) representing 8.5 % suggested the procurement of PRP books in schools and two (2) out of thirty five (35) representing 5.7% suggested increase furniture in classrooms.

ISSN 2394-9686

International Journal of Novel Research in Education and Learning
Vol. 10, Issue 5, pp: (61-75), Month: September - October 2023, Available at: www.noveltyjournals.com

The study suggested the **e**stablishment of libraries in schools, deployment of pre-school teachers, close supervision of teachers, mobile teaching of learners in schools, change the enrolment policy on age, increase infrastructures in schools, strengthening PRP in schools, procurement of PRP books in schools and increase furniture in schools as shown in the establishment of libraries in schools, deployment of pre-school teachers close supervision of teachers, suggested mobile teaching of learners in schools, suggested change of the enrolment policy on age, an increase of infrastructures in schools, strengthening of PRP in schools and the procurement of PRP books in schools, increase furniture in schools. It is important to make mention that if more reading materials can be provided in schools can motivate us to read and improve on our reading and writing skills which can eventually motivate and help improve our academic performance in schools.

Christopher, Carr and Burnham (2009) argued that if the standard of the school were to improve, it was essential to improve the quality of teaching. Therefore, if the literacy levels should improve among learners in schools many factors should be present which includes the establishment of the school libraries. This study supported the findings of Catherine Wallace (2012) who discovered that early reading skills are exemplified by for example performance on certain kinds of motor skills, the ability to discriminate shapes and patterns, phonics and word recognition skills. 'Phonics' as the method is popularly called involves the ability to match up letter (graphemes) to some kind of some representation. It tends to be assumed that phonics skills is displayed by the ability to read aloud with a good that is a native like Standard English pronunciation. Word recognition skills, often associated with the so called 'look and say' methods involve the ability to name whole words whether presented in a textual or situational context or not.

Felman (2003) argued that guided to teach a new structural pattern or a new word orally before the children read or write it would help improve their literacy abilities and also, how teachers teach is as effective as what they teach. The action they take directly affects what students learn. Williams (2017) indicated that lack of familiarity with the language of teaching is blamed for illiteracy rates among people who live in areas in which dozens of languages are spoken. Considering the advantages of using the local language in acquiring literacy. It is important to suggest teaching in the language learners are familiar with in that particular region for literacy to improve, a learner has to be comfortably seated, and this can help improve the writing and reading skills.

5. CONCLUSION

The low reading level is as a result of lack of enough infrastructure, lack of teaching and learning materials, weak educational foundation, low age entry into school, lack of school libraries, lack of time to study, long distance to and from school, lack of trained teachers in languages, inadequate books for reading, poor family background. Teachers face various challenges in the teaching and learning process which included difficulty in applying constructivist approach of teaching, failure by learners to understand questions in assessment because they are unable to read and write properly, learners tend to be passive in class, learners are unable to comprehend concepts learnt fails to understand instructions given to guide them in the academic process. Low literacy levels contribute to low academic performance and an increase of fail rate among learners. Many measures on low literacy levels in schools were suggested which includes the establishment of libraries in schools, deployment of pre-school teachers, mobile teaching of learners in schools and change the enrolment policy on age.

6. RECOMMENDATIONS

➢ The Ministry of Education to procure and distribute reading materials in schools

➢ The Ministry of Education to procurement of desks for learners in the classroom

➢ Head teachers to establish libraries in schools

➢ The Ministry of Education to construct more classrooms in schools

➢ Head teachers to orient teachers in literacy education during CPD meetings.

➢ Close monitoring of teachers by both the internal and external monitors

➢ The Head teachers schools to stock variety of teaching and learning materials in schools mobilise local resources to procure learning and teaching resources as well as encourage improvisation among teachers.

➢ Ministry of Education to procure and distribute the teaching and learning resources in schools.

➢ Ministry of Education to deploy trained teachers to rural schools and give them retention insentives.

REFERENCES

[1] Adu, G. (2014). Improvisation as a tool for improving the teachers' knowledge in basic technology-journal of research and method in education V4-www.iorsjournals.org

[2] Alberto, R. etal (2015). Issues and Challenges in Teaching Grade ii and iii Mother Tongue Based Multilingual Education in Grades ii and iii; The Philippine Experince. Available online at http//ssm.com/abstract

[3] Antene, G and Ado, D. (2011). Towards a practical approach to the challenges of multilingualism in Africa. California linguistic notes.

[4] Ary, D. (2006). Introduction to Research in Education. Wadsworth, Cenage Learning.

[5] Avwokeni, J, A. (2006). Research Methods, Process, Evaluation and Critique. Porthourcot, Unincampus Tutorial Services

[6] Bell, J. (2009). Doing your research project. Ontario, Open University Press

[7] Benson, C. (2016). Addressing language and instruction issue in education. Stockholm, sense publishers.

[8] Biku, T. (2018). The effects of teaching without pedagogical training. Advances in medical training and education and practice 2018, 9. Dove press.

[9] Bryman, A. (2004). Social research methods. 2nd edition. Oxford university press, New York. Burstall, C. (2006). Primary French with balance. Windsor, England.

[10] Barcu, M. (2004). Plant Morphology; Safflower Varieties; Plant hormones Analysis; Plant Cells and tissues Analysis; Australia; Australian Journal of Crop Science.

[11] Beka, M. (2016). Mother Tongue as Medium of Instruction: Benefits and Challenges. U.K, International Journal of Innovative Languages, Literature and Art Studies.

[12] Bialystok, E. (2001). Bilingualism in development: Language, literacy, and cognition: Cambridge; Cambridge University Press.

[13] Bloom, L, D and Volpe, M. (2012). Completing Your Qualitative Dissertation: A Road Map from Beginning to End. London: SAGE Publications

[14] Catherine Wallace (2012). Reading, N.Y. Oxford University Press.

[15] Cherry Holmes, C, C. (2002). Notes on pragmatism and scientific realism. Educ. Res, 2 (1), 13-17.

[16] Carmody, B. (2004). The Evolution of Education in Zambia. Mission Press, Ndola, Zambia

[17] Camp, J. (2000). Linguistics of communicative activity. Retrieved online from www.dailyjstor.org

[18] Chaudhary, G, K. (2015). Factors affecting curriculum implementation. Retrieved from deccanherald.com

[19] Chakrakodi, R. (2013). Why do we need books? Geelong Victoria, Deakin University. Chishiba, M. G. and Manchishi, P, C. (2014). The language strategy in the Zambian education system from 1924 – 2014. International journal of language and literature: American research institute for international development

[20] Cobin, J and Strauss, A. (2008). Basics of Qualitative Research; Techniques and Procedures for Developing a Grounded theory. Thousand Oak, CA; Sage

[21] Creswell, J. (2009). Educational Research: Planning, Conducting and Evaluating Qualitative and Quantitative Research 4th Ed: Pearson, Boston.

[22] Creswell, J. (2012). Research Design: Qualitative, Quantitative and Mixed Methods Approaches. Thousand Oak Sage

[23] Cummins, J. (2004). Bilingual Education and Special Education: Issues in Assessment and Pedagogy. San Diego, College Hill

[24] Chishiba G, M and Manchishi, P, C (2015). The Language Strategy in the Zambian Education System from 1924 to 2014. Lusaka, UNZA.

[25] Coleman, K, S et al (2011). Pedagogy Leading Technology in higher education: The Future in crisis? New York: Nova Science.

[26] Cummins, J, D. (2007). English Language Teaching: Toronto; University of Toronto.

[27] Dutcher, N. (1997). The Use of First and Second Languages in Education: A Review of International Experience. Pacific Islands Discussion Paper Series. Eibinger

[28] Emenanjo, E. N. (2006). Languages and the national policy on education: implications and prospects. Fafuwa foundation. Internet journal of education.www.fafuwa.com

[29] Eberhard, D M., Simon, G.F., Fennig, C.D (2020) Introduction to the special issue on phonetics of under-documented; USA, ASA.

[30] Ferry, J. (2016). Prelinguistic Relational Concepts: Investigating Analogical Processing in Infants. U.K, John Wiley & Sons.

[31] Hamish, M. (2013). Multilingual Education in Africa: Lessons from the Juba Language-in- Education Conference. London: British Council.

[32] Gupta, J. (2006). The use of two languages in teaching. European journal of operations. Retrieved online from https//scholar Google.

[33] Honeyman, T. (2016). A grammar of Momu, a language of Papua New Guinea. From www.openresearch/repository. anu.edu.au

[34] Edward, R. (2009). Reading for All. London: David Fulton Publishers.

[35] Feldman, R, S. (2003). Learning Strategies in college and life, 2nd Edition. New York: The MC Grew Hill companies.

[36] Matafwali, B. (2005). Reading Comes First, Lusaka Baseline Reading study.

[37] James, L. (2019). The 10 most spoken Languages in the world; Australia, Babbel Magazine.

[38] Kashoki, M. (1989). Language in Zambia. The Last Battle in the Front Line (A Seminar Paper).

[39] Kashoki, M. (1990). The Factor of Language in Zambia. Lusaka, Zambia Education Publishing House.

[40] Kisilevsky, B, S. (2003). Fetal auditory processing: Implications for Language development? Washington D.C, American Psychological Association.

[41] Kisilevsky, B, S. (2003). Effects of experience on fetal voice recognition; Washington D.C, American Psychological Association.

[42] Henriksen, S, M. (2010). Reflections on language and education issues in Mozambique.Retrieved from www. Researchgate.com

[43] Khanna, A. (2014). The need for teacher training. Retrieved from www.auro.com

[44] Keeves, J, P. (2007). Issues in language learning. International education journal 8(2) Shannon research press.

[45] Koda, K. (2005). Insights into second language learning: A cross linguistic approach. Cambridge, University press.

[46] Kombo, K, D and Tromp, L, A, D. (2006). Proposal and thesis writing: An introduction. Nairobi, Pauline publishers

[47] Lartec, K. (2014). Strategies and Problems Encountered by Teachers in implementing

[48] Maree, J, F. (2006). A Review of the South African research in the field of dynamic assessment. Retrieved online from www.journals.sagepub.com

[49] Mbewe, E. (2016). Teacher' Pupils' and Parents' Perception on the Use of Chinyanja as A Medium of Instruction in Selected Lower Primary Schools in Lusaka District. International Journal of Humanities Social Sciences and Education Vol. 3 Issue 11

[50] Mudenda, M. and Nankamba, S. (2017). The Challenges Of Using Local Languages As A Medium Of Instruction In A Multilingual Setting In Selected Schools Of Zone Five In Kitwe International Journal of Multi- Disciplinary Research and Development. Z.R.D.C.

[51] Machinyise, E. (2017). The Attitudes of Parents and Teachers towards Multilingual Medium of Instruction in Lower Primary School Classrooms. The Case of Kapiri District Schools of Zambia. World Academy, Science, Engineering and Technology: Lusaka; UNZA.

[52] Manchishi, P. (2004). Early Childhood Care and Education in Zambia: An Integral Part of Education Provision. Lusaka, UNZA.

[53] Manchishi, P. (2004). The Status of Indigenous Languages in Institutions of Learning in Zambia. Past, Present and Future. The African Symposium Vol. 4 No. 1. Lusaka, UNZA.

[54] Manchishi, P and Banda D. (2013). For Indigenous Languages Medium of Instruction in Zambian Primary Schools (Grade 1 to 4). A Seminar Paper. Lusaka, UNZA.

[55] Matafwali, B. (2005). Reading comes first, Lusaka Baseline Reading study.

[56] Miti and Daka (2007) Barriers to the Use of Zambian Language in Education, Lusaka, University of Zambia.

[57] Mkandawire and Sitwe, B. (2017). "Terminological Dilemma on Familiar language based instruction and English language: A reflection on Language of Initial Literacy Instruction in Zambia" Journal of Lexicography and Terminology. Lusaka: Zambian Journal of Language.

[58] MOE (1996). Educating Our Future Reformed Document. Lusaka, ZEPH.

[59] MoGE (2013). Zambia Education Curriculum Framework, Lusaka, CDC.

[60] MOE (1997). National Reading Committee: Zambia primary Reading Program, Lusaka CD

[61] M.O.E (1977). The Education Reforms. Zambia Education Publishing House Lusaka.

[62] M.O.E (1992). Focus on Learning. Zambia Education Publishing House. Lusaka.

[63] M.O.E. (2000). The Basic School Curriculum Framework. ZEPH, Lusaka

[64] M.O.E (2013). National Literacy Framework CDC. ZEPH, Lusaka

[65] Moon, C, Lagercrantz, H and Kuhl, K, P. (2013). Language experience in utero affects vowel perception after birth: a two country study; USA Acta Paediatr.

[66] Nkosha, D, C. (2009). Parents Attitudes towards the use of Indigenous Zambian Languages as Media of National Reading Committee (1997) Zambia primary Reading Program, Lusaka CDC. Partanen, E. (2013). Babies learn to recognize words in the womb, USA, American Association for the Advancement of Science.

[67] Powell, R, A. (2016). Introduction to learning and behaviour, engage Learning. Boston; MA.

[68] William, D, J. (2017). English Teaching in the Primary School. London: Evans Brothers Publisher, Daily Nation_16th April, 2016.

[69] MOE (1996). Educating Our Future Reformed Document: Lusaka, ZEPH.

[70] MOE (2011). 2011-2015 Strategic Plan Improving Learner Performance: Mporokoso District Education Board Secretary.

[71] Teddlie, C. and Tashakkori, A. (2009). Foundations of mixed methods research: Integrating Quantitativeand qualitative approaches in the social and behavioural sciences. Thousand Oaks CA: Sage.

[72] Tihtina, Z, G. (2014). Effects of Mother Tongue Education on Schooling and Child Labour Outcomes: University of Notre Dame; Economics Department.

[73] UNESCO (2003). The use of the vernacular languages in education monographs on fundamental education V111. Paris: UNESCO.

[74] William, E. (2008). Investigating Bilingual Literacy Evidence from Malawi and Zambia. A Research Paper, Department for International Development, London, England

AUTHOR' BIOGRAPHY:

Stanley Kalasa specializes in Special Education and is currently lecturing at Rockview University in the Department of Special Education

Anna Phiri specializes in Textile Design and Technology and is currently lecturing at Rockview University in the Department of Home Economics

Lufeyo Chitondo specializes in Language Education and is currently lecturing at Rockview University in the Department of Literature and Languages.