Factors Affecting Low Literacy Levels in Rural Schools of Mansa District of Luapula Province: A Case of Four Selected Schools.

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Abstract: *The purpose of the study was to evaluate the factors of low literacy levels in rural primary schools and the study sought to investigate the literacy teaching and learning materials and the methods used by teachers in teaching literacy in the four schools. The study employed a mixed paradigm and descriptive survey design that sampled four schools, Head teachers, teachers and learners. Data was obtained from respondents by means of interviews, questionnaires and classroom observation schedules. Frequency, percentages, tables, graphs and pie-charts were used to analyze the quantitative and qualitative data obtained. Data was then analyzed manually in some cases and also, a combination of software MS Access and MS Excel. The findings revealed that Grade 3 learners' performance and achievement in literacy and were quite low and the study recommended that the Ministry of Education should give timely grants and supply literacy materials to schools while school administrators should ensure that teachers' supervisions and monitoring are done and teachers should adhere to the stipulated lesson procedure, teach using aids, use five pillars when teaching, organize teaching well and adhere to homework and remedial work policies.*

Key words: *Literacy, First language, second language, mother tongue*

1. INTRODUCTION

Government and the general public have had grave concern about illiteracy levels in Zambia, and have a vision of making a 100% literate Zambia. National policies, documents, seminars and circulars have been designed in order to realize this dream. Teachers have been trained and pedagogical approaches have been revised and upgraded to improve literacy levels. All these concerted efforts seem not to be yielding the desired results in the three sampled rural schools of Mansa District in Luapula Province of Zambia, where teachers celebrate a six (6) out 120 learners' literacy rate, which represents only 4% of the whole class. Despite all the intervention put in place by the Ministry of Education, still, most of the learners in the Zambian Government schools can hardly read. This ugly scenario is the ultimate commissioner of this study.

Literacy is defined by the Zambian National Curriculum as the ability to read and write so as to understand and communicate effectively, C.D.C (2013). The importance of literacy to an individual, community, nation and the global world can never be over-emphasised. Educating our Future policy (1996) affirms that literacy is key to successful learning at school and is an element for active participation in social economic cultural and political life. It is a basic tool for achieving the United Nations Education for All (EFA) Campaign and Millennium Development Goals 2030. Most importantly, it provides benefits to the individual as well as society. Higher degrees of literacy lead to higher self-esteem and a willingness to participate in community which will later be associated with adult productivity. NLF (2013). Literacy give a community or nation the security as noted by Mwanakatwe, (1974) as he states, 'The security and wellbeing of any tribal community/nation is dependent upon the efficiency of the training given to its members from infancy to adulthood'. This efficacy remains a distant dream if literacy is given little attention than it deserves. It is therefore in the best interest of the individual and society to provide support to developing literacy.

Many findings support the opinion that Zambian children are not gaining 100% basic literacy skills. For instance, the baseline study of the Zambia Primary Reading Programme conducted in 2013 noted that among grade 1 – 6 learners tested, the majority of children were still three grades below their grade level in Zambian languages –NLF (2013). This face has not greatly changed up to date. The

South Africa Consortium for monitoring Education quality (SACMEQ III) of 2010, also noted that among grade 6 learners that were tested in reading, only 27.4% were able to read at a basic competency level. For instance, it is regrettable to note that the National Mean Performance in Zambian languages in 2006 was at 37.8%, in 2008 at 39.4% and in 2013 it was at 36.8% (Z.N.S.R., 2013). From this situation, a question may be raised as to what else needs to be done to improve low literacy levels in Primary schools especially in rural schools so that it conforms with the yearning demand of the National Policy in education, Educating our Future (1996; 34) which states in part, "A fundamental aim of the curriculum for lower and middle basic classes is to enable pupils to read and write clearly, correctly and confidently in a Zambian language and in English. All stakeholders are therefore summoned to rise to the occasion and provide support to the expectations of the National Policy document.

1.1. Statement of the Problem

Literacy is the cornerstone of any meaningful learning and learners can attain any higher education if illiterate and illiteracy slows down the country's development. Despite being the Provincial Headquarters of the Province, all the results indicated in the National Reading Assessment survey of 2016, 2017 and 2018 indicate that Mansa has been below the National average in literacy attainment. For instance, the survey showed that, in 2016, Mansa was at 25%, while in 2017, it was at 40% and in 2018, it was at 49% respectively.

1.2. Purpose of the Study

The purpose of the study was to evaluate the factors of low literacy levels in the four selected rural schools.

1.3. Research Objectives

1. To establish the suitability of teaching methods used in teaching literacy in rural schools of Mansa District on literacy skills acquisition.

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

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

1.4. Theoretical Framework

The study was guided by the Social constructivist theory by Vygotsky (1978) which uses the Zone of proximal development (ZPD) and according to Vygotsky, learning occurs in zones where ZPD is the distance between a student's ability to perform a task under adult guidance with peer collaboration and the student's ability in solving the problem independently. Vygotsky's theory promotes learning contexts in which learners play an active role in learning whereas the teacher plays a collaborative role in order to help facilitate meaningful construction in learners and therefore, learning becomes a reciprocal experience. Scaffolding instruction as a teaching strategy originates from this theory and the strategy provides individualized support based on the learner's ZPD, Don 2017.

1.5. 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 education in Zambia on factors affecting low literacy levels in rural schools of Mansa district of Luapula Province in Zambia.

2. LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1. Literacy

Literacy is traditionally defined as the ability to read and write(Mike and Hannalis, 2010). In the modern world, this is one way of interpreting literacy. A more broad interpretation is literacy as knowledge and competence in a specific area. The concept of literacy has evolved in meaning. The modern term's meaning has been expanded to include the ability to use language, numbers, images, computers, and other basic means to understand, communicate, gain useful knowledge, solve mathematical problems and use the dominant symbol systems of a culture (MOE, 1976).

The key to literacy is reading development, a progression of skills that begins with the ability to understand spoken words and decode written words, and culminates in the deep understanding of text. Reading development involves a range of complex language underpinnings including awareness of speech sounds (phonology), spelling patterns (orthography), word meaning (semantics), grammar (syntax) and patterns of word formation (morphology), all of which provide a necessary platform for reading fluency and comprehension (Allan,2011).

Africa as a content has also its share in the illiteracy battle. The rate of literacy in Africa has not improved enough to compensate for the effects of demographic growth. For instance, out of 775 million illiterates in the world, more than one-fifth was in sub-Saharan Africa (UNESCO, 2011). For instance, countries with the lowest levels of literacy are concentrated in Africa. These include Niger (28.7%), Burkina Faso (28.74%), Mali (33.4%), chad (35.4%) and Ethiopia (39%). Equatorial Guinea has at least the highest literacy rate of (94%) - UNESCO (2011).

2.2. Overview of Literacy Education in Zambia

The history of literacy education in Zambia has been long, meandering, slow and, at many occasions appeared that the people charged with this responsibility were not sure how and where they were taking it to; particularly that education which involves the adult people.

Williams (1990) begins his definition of literacy by noting the social nature of literacy. He says that to be literate means different things in different situations or social contexts. Further, he says that it is possible to be literate in one context but not the other. Furthermore, the researcher gives his view to agree with Williams (ibid), by giving an example of a grade seven pupil who we can consider literate among his or her peers but illiterate among university graduate students. This is the reason why, as earlier stated, the definition of literacy is largely dependent on the relationship between the two terms "education" and "school".

According to this implication, whoever does not go through school has no education and whoever has no education has no literacy. (Chirwa, 2007). This thinking has given rise to the situation where non-school forms of education are called adult literacy. Gove and Cvelich (2011) describes adult literacy as a "convenient hook to hang what are cheaper forms of education provision".

Sometimes the definition of literacy is linked to the official language of the country, which in African countries is very often a foreign language. It is also assumed that literacy statistics for Africa do not include persons who are literate in other languages other than the official languages' which are French, English, Spanish, Portuguese, to be more specific (Dambey 2010).The 19th century missionaries on the other hand used the term literacy 'to refer to' the ability to read and write(Townsend and Konold 2010).this study will define the term literacy as the ability to read and write as the slogan found in many Primary Reading Programme (PRP), materials say, we speak what we read and read what we write(Constable et al 200 in Tambulukani 2015).

2.3. Literacy in Pre-Colonial Education

Although there is a tendency to think that pre-colonial African IndigenousEducation (AIE) had no literature since the languages used had no written forms, and so likewise the notion that there were no books in these languages, this thinking was erroneous because Africans had orature as their way of preserving their history. It is not only unfair to suggest that Africans had no literature but also to think that literacy can be limited to the meaning of being able to read and write.

Africans have been known to have achieved a lot in many areas of study during the very years of antiquity. DfES (2007) cites many achievements by Africans during the age of antiquity in Mathematics, architecture Chemistry and medicine. Campbell (2000) as quoted in Banda (2000) records the accounts of Diop and Rodney as testimony to the capability of African people realised through indigenous African Education. Owing to the same thinking, many African leaders like Jomo Kenyatta (Tiberondwa 1981) protested that it was not right to say white missionaries brought Education to Africa because Africans had their own education which he says they learnt from cradle to the grave. And Illich (1970) denounces the ritualization of the so called Diplomas which learners yearn for one after another causing diploma disease.

Dore (1980; 141) calls this education 'the diploma disease, the courage of the certificates of school achievements'. This achievement forces the notion in the learner's mind and the minds of all other

people that formal school education is to make one get a job not to make one do the job better (Lynch 1997 and Rodgers 2004).Whilst Rodney referred to colonial education as the deskilling of skilled African people, Freire's metaphor calls it "banking education" in which teachers just deposit information and knowledge into empty accounts of their learners, the knowledge they can use during examination rather than using it for problem solving.

In the foregoing, it could be said that in spite of the fact that Zambian languages were not written in the pre-colonial period, these mother tongue languages which were mediums of instructions acted as the record of unwritten history of human life and culture; the most valuable inheritance of human beings(Banda 2002). In it were the tools of inculcating literacy, the functional literacy that made the young people relevant to their society. Sharing the same view, Ocit (1973), Bray et al (1986) and Ngulube (1989) agree that in indigenous education stories, proverbs, sayings of the wise, riddles, beliefs, poems, fairy tales, myths, taboo legends and tongue twisters were not only books but theatre. This is the reason we say literacy was there during the period of indigenous education and at the centre of it was language, the mother tonge (L1) (Ngulube: 1989, Kelly: 1996 and Utne: 2000). In Western education the elements of culture. stories, riddles, beliefs, proverbs, myths and taboos are written in books printed in unfamiliar language which many disadvantaged African children cannot access because they cannot read. These are the children who miss out on the important values and culture of their societies because these are hidden in books written in a foreign language they do not understand.

2.4. Literacy in the Post-Independence Education

In 1965, Kashoki (1987:400) notes that two important developments in the promotion of non-formal literacy which was commonly known as adult education, took place .these were the formation of Zambia adult literacy programme and the department of community development. Among other things this new created department was tasked to run literacy programmes (Kashoki ibid). A lot of campaign programmes were organised by pupils and teachers. Radio programmes were put in place to foster the literacy campaigns. In these programmes, the use of mother tongue (MT) was cardinal as there was a lot of community participation. Kashoki gives a case of Lamba people who presented to the government the alternative of using Lamba language for literacy programmes other than Bemba, one of the seven Zambian languages with official status (Kashoki, 1993:163-164)

2.5. Literacy levels

Zambia is not an exceptional. It has had a number of interventions which are intended to fight illiteracy policies have been designed, curriculum revised in the quest to curb illiteracy. The fight against illiteracy in Zambia can be traced as far back as the missionary times- (Kelly, 1999). When missionaries came to evangelise, they could not make desired program because of illiteracy levels of Indigenous Zambians, hence thought of teaching Indigenous Zambians in their own local languages, so that they could read the Bible- (Mwanakatwe, 1974). The missionaries used the native language policy but this changed shortly after independence in 1966. The 1966 Education Act made English the language of instructions from grade one onwards (Kelly, 1999). This language policy of 1966 did not yield the desired results hence reviewed in 1977 in what came to be called Educational Reforms of 1977. The draft document made recommendations for the mother tongue but the final document changed the content and read in part, "It is generally accepted by educationalist that learning is best done in the mother tongue, this situation is found to be impracticable in the case of every child in multi-lingual societies, such as Zambian Society- (M.O.E., 1996: 22). This meant, English had to continue being used as a language of instruction. Other policy documents such as the 1992 Focus on Learning and the current 1996 Educating our Future have made little progress in addressing illiteracy problems.

For 30 years (i.e. since 1966 – 1996) literacy situations in Zambia has not been a good sight either. All National Assessments conducted to present still shows an achievement of below 40% in both English and Zambian languages – (N. A. S., 2014 – 2017). The SACMEQ of 2011, also noted that among grade 6 learners that were tested in reading, only 27.4% were able to read at basic competency level – (M.O.E., 2013). The Ministry of Education has designed some interventions to address weaknesses in the earlier policies, chief among them have been;

Inadequate pre-service training in literacy instruction, a curriculum not sufficiently focused on literacy instructions, inadequate provision of in-service training in literacy teaching methodology, inadequate provision of appropriate reading materials and half-hearted attempts at developing primary language skills in literacy.

Low literacy levels in primary schools can be solved by scaffolding learning through instruction in local language. The rationale for teaching in a local language is rooted in scientific research which supports developing a learner's language ability – vocabulary, intrinsic knowledge of grammar rules and use of his or her language in order to develop reading and writing skills (Dennis Child, 2007). While many factors affect education quality, the language of classroom instruction fundamentally impacts on a child's ability to read and learn. This is because learning in one's first language is essential for the initial teaching and reading.

The government has reviewed the language policy a record three times; 1977, 1992, 1996. All these reviews still left English as the main medium of instruction in education (Zimba, 2007). Additionally, all these reviews have not brought much change in the quality of acquiring skills in children, as comprehension of content in foreign languages is a problem. Secondly, the government made two errors among many. The first one is that politicians did not implement the policies planned. The other reason is that there is no value added to the learning of local languages when compared to the benefits that English gives the people of Zambia – (Kashoki, 1978). As a reaction to the unsuccessful reviews undertaken above, the government decided to emphasise the 1996 Language policy which said pupils at lower primary should learning in local languages – (Simwinga, 2005). In 2001, the govt recommended that all grade one pupils in Zambia must use 'Local' or 'Familiar' language to learn initial literacy skills using the programme called, Zambia New Breakthrough to Literacy (ZNBTL) that is found within the Primary Reading Programme (PRP) – (M. O. E., 2000).

As a strategy towards a language policy, Ministry of Education introduced instructions in teaching in a familiar language so as to build learner's arsenal for learning to read in other languages as well as learning content subjects from 1 – 4. As a district Mansa is still struggling to improve literacy rates in its schools. A district with 128 learning institutions, but only five schools were at 40% literacy rate. Information at the District Education Board Secretary's office indicated that, for the past five years, from 2014 to 2018 and 2018, the District literacy average has been below 40% in the National Assessments.

3. METHODOLOGY

3.1. Research Design

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, (Musonda, 2009). The research design was a descriptive survey, (Kerlinger in Kombo and Trump, 2006) points 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 causes of low literacy levels in the district, to what extent do communities contribute to these low levels and also teachers, and some possible solutions to address low literacy levels. Structured open-ended interviews were conducted and questionnaires were used to respondents. The internet also supplemented data for the study.

3.2. Research Sites

The study was strictly carried out in the rural parts of Mansa District of Luapula Province. The study was carried out in the four rural schools namely: Kalaba, Mutiti, Matanda and Fimpulu from which respondents were also sampled.

3.3. Population, Sample and Sampling Procedure

The population for the study consisted of all Head teachers, Education standards officers, teachers, learners and community members. The participants of the study were drawn from 4 schools and 4 villages, those being; Kalaba, Mutiti, Matanda and Fimpulu Primary schools while the four villages

were Kalaba, Mutiti, Matanda and Fimpulu . All the respondents or participants from the four villages were only those who were pure Aushi and teachers, were those teaching at lower primary (Grade 3) in Mansa district. The population included Head teachers from the selected schools who were interviewed. It included some community members who were interviewed using open interviews. Mugenda and Mugenda (2013) describes population as the entire group of individuals or items under consideration in any field of inquiry and have a common attribute.

The sample size comprised of 90 respondents, 40 respondents of 10 from each of the 4 villages, 4 lower primary school teachers (Grade 3), one from each school, 4 Head teachers, one from each school, 40 pupils, 10 from each school and two education standards officers from the district education office were conveniently. The community members were conveniently sampled so that areas with pure Aushi speaking people and the schools which were hard to reach and with poor performance were targeted in order to explore the core of the research problem.

Sampling is the procedure a researcher uses to gather people, places or objects to study, Aronson (2018). Sampling procedure is a process of selecting a number of individuals or objects from a population such that the selected group contains elements representative of the characteristics found in the entire population, Agesa (2012).

Simple random method was used to select 40 community members, (10 from each village) from the 4 sampled communities and 40 pupils (10 from each school) while purposive sampling was used to select the 4 teachers from 4 sampled schools teaching grade three classes (1 from each school), 3 Head teachers from the four sampled schools (1 from each school) and 2 Education Standards Officers from the District Education Office.In the sampling of institutions and villages, the study adopted the stratified cluster random sampling technique. The schools and villages were stratified by initial language of instruction and familiar local language and clustered by location (zones). Sampling was done zone by zone.

3.4. Data Analysis

In this research, data was analysed qualitatively as the semi structured interviews and questionnaires 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 questionnaires (Smith, 2013).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 and questions.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 be from respondents to be 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 Village Head persons to interview members of the community and the District Education Board Secretary (DEBS) and school authorities to observe lessons, interview and administer questionnaires as well as assesses respondents. The names of respondents would remain anonymous for the sake of confidentiality. However, the identity of respondents was concealed in the thesis but for identification in the thesis, forty learners were allocated numbers 1 to 40, the four Grade 3 teachers were allocated letters A to D, the two Education Standards Officers were allocated colours Red and Blue, the four Primary school Head teachers were allocated names of fruits: Banana, Orange, Apple and Mango while the forty community members were allocated ordinal numbers 1st to 40th.

4. FINDINGS AND DISCUSSIONS

The following findings were presented according to set research objectives:

4.1. Teaching methods

According to study results, teachers in all the four schools used phonics, syllabic, word recognition and other methods but the content whole word method was not used by all the teachers in the four schools and this was evidenced by the responses of all the four teachers who were asked about the methods used to teach literacy 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.

Figure1. *Methods of teaching*
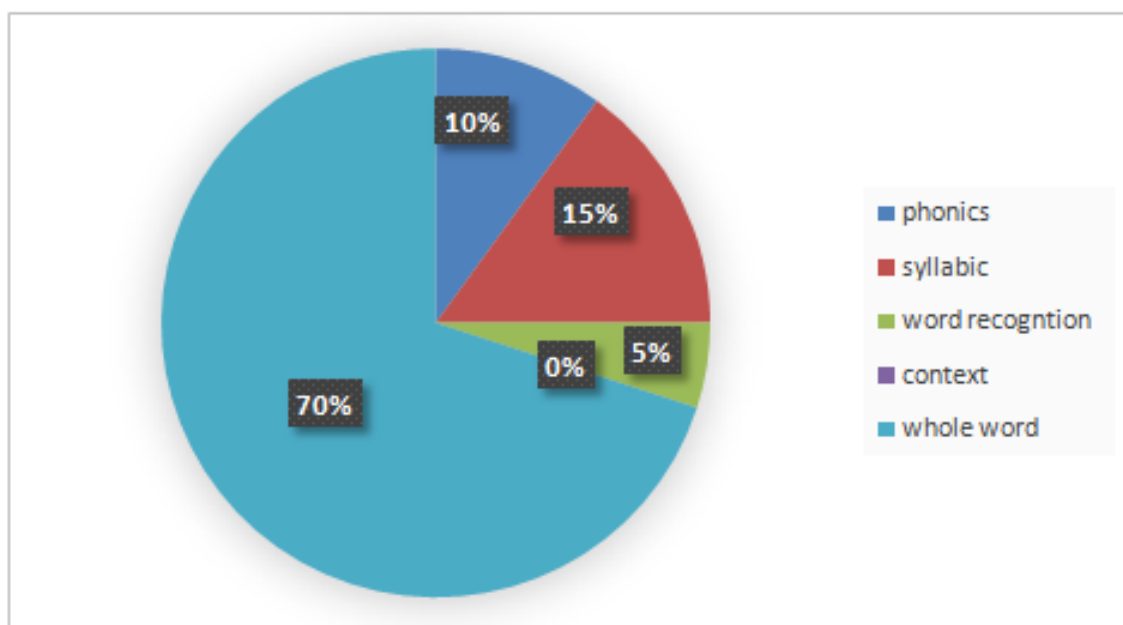
Source: *Research findings 2019*

The study showed that 98% of the respondent agreed that, the methods used in schools to teach learners literacy 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 literacy. 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. Literacy 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 four schools as shown in Table 2 below.

The responses from respondents on teaching and learning materials were that the materials mostly available in the four 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 four 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.

Figure2. *Learning materials*

Source: *Research findings 2019*

The study revealed that literacy teaching were readily available in all the four 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% and the following data has been given in Table 1 below which reveals this information.

The study reviewed that, the teaching and learning materials in literacy 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 literacy. The study reviewed that, this deficit has been caused by non-procurement of literacy 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 literacy 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, 1981:98).

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. As noted by the Ministry o-f General Education, as it states.

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 literacy 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, literacy in Mansa District 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).

Table1. *Teaching materials ratio*

s/n	Materials	Class enrollment	No. material needed	No. available	Short fall	Availability
1.	Literacy TG	48	1	1	0	100
2.	Learning activity book	48	48	10	48	4
3.	Story book	48	240	0	240	0
4.	Local material	48	48	0	48	0
5.	Markers	48	24	0	24	0
6.	Adhesive	48	4	0	4	0
7.	Flip chart	48	48	4	44	8

Source: *Research findings 2019*

The study reviewed that the four sampled schools used other teaching and learning and on the availability, the literacy materials were third at 6% together with social studies (6%) while, C.T.S. was the first at 12%, the second were Mathematics, Science and English at 9% and all the 4(100%) of Head teachers confirmed the availability and ratio of learning and teaching materials in relation to Literacy materials. The response from Head teachers were as presented in Table 2 below:

4.3. Teaching Aids

According to study results, teachers used the following resources to teach: chalkboard (98.6%), textbook teaching (69.7%) and learners' exercise books (68.5%) while least used or available resources were supplementary reading resources (7.7%), manipulatives or real objects (15.4%) and worksheets (7.7%). Study results also indicated that 79% of the teachers made their own teaching and learning aids against 72.6% who were able to show examples of what they had made.

Data also showed that there was an association between teaching and learning materials used in class and what teachers actually made or improvised to aid teaching. Teachers mostly used posters, charts and pictures (83.3%), flashcards (50.0%) and these same two types of teaching and learning aids accounted for high scores in self-made materials with 39.1% for posters and charts and 36.5% for flashcards. For teachers who did not make own teaching and learning materials, the major reason for not doing it was lack of materials (36.1%) and other reasons (17.5%). The combined score for don't know, took too much time to make and not effective only accounted for about 10.1%.

4.4. Teachers' Improvisation in Literacy Lessons

Study results indicated that 79% of the teachers made their own teaching and learning aids in Literacy against 72.6% who were able to show examples of what they had made. This finding was consistent with results in other sub-sections of this study and it continued to show that there was a gap between what teachers said they did against what actually existed on the ground. Study results showed that although teachers improvised, the use of these other materials had not been a common practice in Reading lessons.

Teaching and learning materials are an essential part of the learning process and some of these materials are already made but in the absence of these, teachers have to improvise. However, from the study, not all the sampled school teachers made their own teaching and learning materials. On this, literature, (MOE 1977:33), indicated that, "teachers should be resourceful and not only depend on already made or written teaching and learning materials." It is important therefore that teachers exploit the surrounding environment and make use of materials that can enable learners to understand concepts learnt in class.

4.5. Teacher Monitoring

Study findings showed that all the teachers (100%) were never monitored by peers, (93.3%) never monitor themselves, and no teacher (0%) was never monitored internally while (16.7%) teachers were never monitored externally. Weekly monitoring was only at 16.7% internally. Not all teachers (83.3%) were monitored annually as shown in Table 3 above. On internal monitoring, Head teacher Banana from Matanda Primary school said, "teachers do not monitor each other's lessons and it seems difficult for a teacher to monitor oneself but as a school we have been encouraging this and have actually planned for this the coming term as it is a good way of measuring each other's lessons and it also encourages cordial professional development." Head teacher Apple from Kalaba Primary school said, "internal monitoring enhances teacher performance and ensures children learning but this is not easy to implement looking at staffing levels at our school as the Deputy Head teacher, Senior teacher and myself have classes thus making it difficult for us to regularly monitor the teaching and learning at our school.

Monitoring is an important component in the education system as it provides a structure for tracking progress and feedback mechanisms. It also provides both qualitative and quantitative data useful for designing, implanting and learning about future education programmes. Monitoring is supposed to be done by Education Standards Officers, Zone Officials, Head teachers, Deputy Headteachers, Senior teachers, School in-sevice Co-ordinators, peers and also by the teacher himself or herself.

The study results revealed that internal teacher supervision and monitoring was inadequate by Head teachers and other administrators at school level. The survey also revealed that School management concentrated on marking teachers' schemes of work and lesson plans and it was quite rare that administrators checked learners' exercise books to check whether they were marked regularly and whether teaching and learning was taking place. Education Standards Officers were under resourced and only frequently monitored schools that were close to the District Administrative centre and in all the four sampled schools both teachers and Administrators relaxed in the performance of their duties due to lack of or inadequate external monitoring.

In summary, the study results showed that due to financial and mobility resources, external monitoring in the four sampled schools was at 22%. School management, teacher supervision and internal teacher monitoring accounted for 38.5%

5. CONCLUSION

The conclusions made were that factors affecting low literacy levels in rural include, in appropriate methods used by teachers, unsuitable of the teaching and learning materials used and also the unavailability of the same unsuitable materials. Head teachers were not well acquainted with the dynamics of teaching literacy and most of the Head teachers were not trained teachers of Languages and they had not attended in-service courses in Literacy teaching. Schools in the district had inadequate teaching and learning materials including Literacy textbooks despite over enrolment in all the schools coupled with low supply of learning materials from the Ministry of Education and schools do not receive grants for the purchase of teaching and learning materials. In the district, literacy materials were not locally made and school Head teachers do not encourage teachers to improvise teaching and learning materials in Literacy. Teachers in the district do not teach literacy lessons using the five pillars of a literacy lesson which had a negative impact on the acquisition of literacy skills among the pupils in schools and there was lack of Continuing Professional Development (CPD) in at school, zonal and district levels.

RECOMMENDATIONS

The Head teachers should come up with committees at school level to look at the factors affecting low literacy levels in rural schools such as, inappropriate methods used by teachers, unsuitability of the teaching and learning materials used and also the unavailability of the same unsuitable materials. They should also come up with measures to help address these inefficiencies.

School Head teachers should ensure that they check over enrolment in all the schools because it has negative effects on textbooks, infrastructure and tend to wear out teachers thereby rendering them ineffective.

Literacy materials were not locally made and school Head teachers do not encourage teachers to improvise teaching and learning materials in Literacy. Further, Head teachers should come up with committees in schools for production of teaching and learning materials using local materials and they should also intensify lesson monitoring as well as checking of teachers' preparations, that is, schemes of work, weekly forecasts and lesson plans including the preparations of teaching and learning aids for all the lessons to be taught on a daily basis.

The District Resource Centre Coordinator as teacher trainer should continually come up with programmes to train teachers on new methodologies in teaching in teaching Literacy as well as involve not only teachers but at lower grades but all teachers of Languages and other subjects in the curriculum..

The Ministry of General Education should come up with the position of Education Standards Officer in charge of Languages who should superintend over the monitoring of literacy activities at district level as well as ensure that the positions of Zonal Resource Co-ordinators and School In-service Co-ordinators be promotional positions with salary scales in the establishment or attract an allowance so as to motivate them, give them more time and powers to effectively organize Continuing Professional Development (CPD) activities.

There is need for other researchers to see the gap left in this study and conduct further research in the areas such as the relationship between the teachers' literacy skills and pupils' acquisition of literacy skills.

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