

**LEARNER PERFORMANCE AND TEACHING IN PUBLIC SECONDARY SCHOOLS
IN ZAMBIA: A CRITICAL STUDY**

By

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submitted in accordance with the requirements for
the degree of

DOCTOR OF EDUCATION

in the subject

Philosophy of Education

at the

UNIVERSITY OF SOUTH AFRICA

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DECEMBER2017

DECLARATION

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I declare that Learner Performance and Teaching in Public Secondary Schools in Zambia: A Critical Study is my own work and that all the sources that I have used or quoted have been indicated and acknowledged by means of complete references.

SIGNATURE



5 December, 2017

DATE

DEDICATION

I dedicate this dissertation to my husband, Aston Kaleyo Tembo and our children, Nyembezi, Luumuno and Aston in view of their support and patience in the course of my studies. I also dedicate this dissertation to my parents Damian Haamoonga and Hildah Namalambo Choobe - Haamoonga, for giving me the impetus to take my academic life to higher heights. Lastly, I dedicate this dissertation to my sisters, brothers, nieces and nephews for having so much hope that I could successfully walk through this level of academia.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

I wish to sincerely acknowledge that a number of people helped me in one way, or another throughout my studies, but it is not possible that I could mention each and every one of them individually.

However, in particular, and firstly, I should like to thank my supervisor Professor Leonie Higgs for patiently guiding and counselling me academically. I really thank her for being so professional, but inspiring and tolerant in times when I did not seem to know what to do.

Secondly, I should like to thank Prof. Mishack Gumbo for having willingly assisted me at proposal level to narrow down to one particular focus out of the many things I struggled to focus on.

Thirdly, I salute my research participants for patiently providing valuable information that laid a foundation to my studies.

Fourth, I should like to thank Mr.Mooka Mukelabai for his assistance in ICT related issues and all the friends and relatives who in one way or another supported me in realizing this great goal.

SUMMARY

The study was primarily undertaken to critically study the nature of learner performance and teaching in public secondary schools in Zambia, with a focus on four public, co-education, day schools in the Copperbelt region for the purposes of addressing the challenge of poor performance in the Grade 12 National examinations that has characterised public secondary schools in the country. The researcher was guided by the main research question: *‘What is the nature of learner performance and teaching in public secondary schools in Zambia?’* The aim of the research was to establish the factors that negatively affected learner performance and teaching in the selected schools in order to develop effective mechanisms that would improve the education system in public secondary schools both at regional and national levels.

The study was undertaken using a qualitative interpretive phenomenological approach mainly propounded by Martin Heidegger (1889-1976), for the purposes of collecting the lived experiences of the 24 purposively selected participants employed in this research: 4 head teachers, 8 teachers and 12 learners. Data collection was based on semi-structured interviews among the two longest serving teachers (male and female) per school and each of the head teachers in all the four schools; and two focus group interviews (from the highest and lowest performing schools) comprising six learners per group of equal gender among the selected Grade 12 candidates from the debate club and school council. The research also included analysis of documents like: school mission statements and visions, schemes and records of work and learners’ record of performance. The gathered information was manually analysed and interpreted.

The major findings from the analysed data were that public secondary schools were negatively affected by four main categories of factors: (a) socio-economic factors; (b) the nature of the teaching and learning environment; (c) personal factors relating to the learners, teachers and head teachers; and (d) policy issues relating to learner enrolment and assessment, teacher selection, recruitment and development and highly controlled bureaucratic systems.

The study established that improved learner performance is crucial to national development because the quality of an education system is measured by the performance of learners, and is the

major drive for many aspects of development. The study also revealed that it was possible to improve learner performance, based on a number of lessons that can be drawn from the international research findings on characteristics of high-performing schools.

Finally, the study recommends that public secondary schools in Zambia should revise their approach to enrolment of learners, teacher recruitment and development, and leadership appointment, and should adopt policies that meet the needs of the Zambian context as well as investing in research.

Key Terms:

Critical study, performance of learners, public secondary schools, teaching, Zambia.

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LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

| | |
|---------|---|
| ACAPS | American Council of Academic Plastic Surgeons |
| CDC | Curriculum Development Center |
| CPD | Continuous professional development |
| CRC | Convention on the Right of the Child |
| CSO | Central Statistical Office |
| DEBS | District Education Board Secretary |
| ECZ | Examinations Council of Zambia |
| ERCC | Education, Research and Consultancy Center |
| GCE | General Certificate of Education |
| GTA | Great Toronto Area |
| ICF | Intermediate Care Facilities |
| ILO | International Labour Organization |
| IPA | Interpretive Phenomenological Analysis |
| ISSN | International Standard Serial Number |
| JICA | Japan International Cooperation Agency |
| MERLOT | Multimedia Educational Resources for Learning and Online Teaching |
| MESVT | Ministry of Education Science and Vocational Training |
| MESVTEE | Ministry of Education, Science, Vocational Training and Early Education |
| MOE | Ministry of Education |
| MOH | Ministry of Health |
| NEA | National Education Association |
| OECD | Organization for Economic Co-operation and Development |
| PCK | Pedagogical Content Knowledge |
| PISA | Programme for International Student Assessment |
| SNDP | Sixth National Development Plan |
| UNAIDS | United Nations Programme on HIV/AIDS |

| | |
|--------|---|
| UNESCO | United Nations Educational Scientific and Cultural Organization |
| UNICEF | United Nations Children’s Fund |
| UNISA | University of South Africa |
| USAID | United States Agency for International Development |
| WHO | World Health Organization |
| ZECF | Zambia Education Curriculum Framework |

CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION AND BACKGROUND

1.1 Introduction

This study critically examines learner performance and teaching in public secondary schools in Zambia with a focus on the Copperbelt region, in the context of the poor performance that has been recorded in most public secondary schools in the Grade 12 National examinations, which mark the end of secondary school and are the entry point for tertiary education (Examinations Council of Zambia, 2013:1).

For example, as shown in Table 1.1 below, the period between 2010 and 2015 the Grade 12 national performance did not exceed 60% except for the year 2013 when it was 60.21%. Public secondary schools, in particular, are the most affected because they account for 90% of the country's schools and teachers (Beyani, 2013:10).

Table 1.1: Summary of the National Grade 12 performance 2010-2015

| Year | Number sat | Number passed | % pass |
|------|------------|---------------|--------|
| 2015 | 125 602 | 71702 | 57.08 |
| 2014 | 119 862 | 66 971 | 55.9 |
| 2013 | 104 809 | 63 104 | 60.21 |
| 2012 | 103 853 | 60 318 | 58.1 |
| 2011 | 90 031 | 53 906 | 59.87 |
| 2010 | 79 030 | 47086 | 59.58 |

Source: (Extracted from Ministry of Education, 2011, 2012, 2013, 2014, 2015)

Table 1.1 above reveals that the number of candidates sitting the Grade 12 examinations over the years has grown, but performance has been almost static as nearly 40% of the candidates are unable to reach the minimum performance level. The situation was even worse in some provinces, such as the Copperbelt, where performance levels declined sharply from 60.2% in 2013 to 43.9% in 2014 (Examinations Council of Zambia, 2014:13).

This poor performance requires attention, because, as argued by MESVTEE (2014:9-10), assessment information derived from observations made over a long period of time for a particular set or crop of learners provides a vital picture of the achievements of a system of education, and at the same time, serves as a bastion of the evidence employed in arriving at educational decisions, reflecting the core aim of teaching and learning. It allows teachers, school leaders and policy-makers collaboratively to take action to change the learning environment by means of suitable decisions relating to instruction, management and policy. As outlined by Examinations Council of Zambia (ECZ) (2014: vii), the yearly assessments aim at evaluating the acquired skills and knowledge, for the purposes of revealing the extent to which learners understand the curriculum at various levels. The ECZ (2014:vi) further says that the assessment reports provide an analysis of abilities, knowledge and tasks learnt during the year being reviewed, as they clearly show how the learners perform on different assessment items in the examination.

Therefore, students' performance is one of the key educational outcomes in any system of education, revealing the attainment of teachers', students' and schools' educational goals (Republic of Kenya, 2013:1). Poor performance points to the need for Zambia to work towards improving achievement of the intended educational outcomes.

This study is important because it evaluates the extent to which Zambia meets its national educational targets, as reflected in its education mission statement:

to guide the provision of education for all Zambians so that they are able to pursue knowledge and skills, manifest excellence in performance and moral uprightness, defend democratic ideals, and accept and value other persons on the basis of their personal worth and dignity, irrespective of gender, religion, ethnic origin, or any other discriminatory characteristic (MESVTEE, 2014:8).

Therefore, the extent to which these targets can best be measured is through assessment. For this reason, the researcher agrees with World Bank (2010:29) that increasing the evaluation standards and aiming at establishing the means to efficiently communicate the intended information on the assessment outcomes will pave the way for adjustments in policy, approaches to teaching and

most of all, the standards of learning in the education system of Zambia. Therefore, it is important that all efforts to assess learners focus on employing worthwhile approaches that allow effective communication on areas requiring adjustment in order to ensure improvements in the Zambia's system of education.

While the researcher acknowledges the importance of assessment in evaluating educational outcomes, the researcher agrees with MESVTEE (2014:7) that Zambia's efforts to use assessment to evaluate what goes on at various levels of education, have been condemned for emphasising 'assessment of learning' which focuses more on summative or high-stakes examination at the expense of 'assessment for learning'. MESVTEE (2014:7) adds that the way in which National examinations are administered, monitored and disseminated in Zambia is faced with four challenges: too much reliance on summative assessment which results in an inclination towards rote learning and teaching for assessment purposes; limited usage of assessment data in making decisions; one-sided investment in the kind of assessments that do not encourage evaluation of learners for the purposes of facilitating learning; and lastly, the inability of major actors to create an evaluation approach that allows for the timeous identification of learning gaps.

In spite of the foregoing, examination results or grades serve as a source of reference on the attainment of the educational goals in Zambia. This can be confirmed from Ko and Chung (2014:12) who advance that, even if some scholars have objected to employing grades to determine the worth of education, the impossibility of using other kinds of assessment to arrive at a conclusion on the learning outcomes, over a specific time, means that almost every institution makes use of grades. This can also be confirmed from the sixth National Development Plan where the quality of education in Zambia is said to have remained stagnantly low as revealed by the test and examination results (MESVTEE, 2012:xv). It is for this reason that the scored grades in the National examinations provide a basis for undertaking the study.

Using social constructivism, the researcher critically studies the nature of learner performance and teaching in the public secondary schools in the Copperbelt region of Zambia with a focus on the views and lived experiences of the teachers, head teachers and learners in the selected

schools. The researcher focuses on teaching in terms of quality and effectiveness, which is one of the often-cited factors that influence learner performance in public secondary schools in Zambia (MESVTEE, 2013:47). This is supported by the National Council for Accreditation of Teacher Education (2010:1) which claims that as much as the family and poverty greatly impact the performance of learners, research over the years reveals that there is no intervention within schools that surpasses teacher effectiveness in terms of student learning.

This study is important in facilitating meaningful and improved education provision for the Copperbelt region and Zambia as a whole, because the role of education is not only to see to it that children are able to attend school. It also prepares the young ones for life, through providing them with the chance to gain access to quality jobs, raise money to enable them to survive, add value to the people they live with and the larger communities and reach their maximum potential (UNESCO, 2012:i). It entails assisting nations to develop the workforces they require to grow their economies. Increasingly, countries are realising that competing in the global economy can best be done through provision of quality education to all with emphasis on higher-order student outcomes, inclusion of creativity and innovation as well as skills that allow for working collaboratively, use of new technologies and addressing complex challenges (Ingvarson, Reid, Buckley, Kleinhenz, Masters & Rowley, 2014:2). It is for this reason that all schooling in Zambia is driven by the aim to develop learners' qualities physically, intellectually, socially, effectively, morally, and spiritually to ensure they grow into well-rounded individuals able to achieve personal fulfillment and contribute meaningfully to society (MESVTEE, 2013:2).

Furthermore, there is a wealth of information that suggests factors that affect learner performance such as availability and use of learning materials, conduciveness of the environment and suitability of facilities and the amount of time spent in the classroom (UNESCO, 2015:41), but little research is available to confirm these factors. Through this study, the researcher contributes towards the much-needed research evidence for improving learning achievement which, as argued by Ministry of Education (a) (2010:09), will continuously be associated with the government's goal of achieving relevance, competence and reliability to ensure quality provision of educational services.

The other motivation for this study lies in promoting effective approaches to recruiting new teachers, teacher training and continuous professional development (UNESCO, 2015:5). For example, Ingvarson et al. (2014:3) report that a general conclusion of their study of experience internationally is that best-practice teacher-education programmes demand best-practice approaches to the selection, preparation and induction of teachers into the profession. In view of this, as reported by Reform Support Network (2011:1) across the United States for instance, for the first time, there has been an emphasis on establishing systems of effectiveness for educators with a focus on production of efficient teachers and leaders through revising policies and implementing robust systems of recruiting, improving, maintaining and appreciating teachers and principals.

Furthermore, this study brings awareness to the policy-makers in terms of the need for continuous training to keep abreast of new developments and evidence-based teacher evaluation to improve schools' performance. Guerriero (2012:2) posits that, in recent years, the most important aspect of improving the results of the students includes increasing the standards of the teaching corps because a high level of teacher standards is a fundamental element in determining the levels of student attainment, despite any previous student learning or the background and characteristics of the family. Ko, Sammons and Bakkum (2013:42) add that, in view of the fact that teachers are the most significant resource available to schools, continuous investment in teacher development is a requirement to ensure that they are equipped with all the pedagogical skills needed to meet students' developmental and learning needs.

In support of the above discussion, this research encourages teachers themselves to actively participate in the improvement of teacher effectiveness, considering that improving teacher effectiveness is fundamental to raising student achievement (Hanushek, 2013:23). Underpinning this assertion, Organization for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) (2011:7) indicates that in a number of educational systems that have recorded high performance, teachers are not only extremely influential in positively increasing educational results, they are also themselves pivotal in the attempts for improvement. Instead of forcing teachers to make adjustments to their practice through top-down, mass changes, the teachers themselves as professionals, actively participate and spearhead the necessary changes to their educational

systems. For instance, through conducting action research, teachers can explore means by which they can offer quality education through changing the nature of “teaching related activities, thereby enhancing students’ learning” (Koshy, 2011:1). Unless the teachers themselves develop positive attitudes about the possibility of influencing learner achievement through their personal effort, there can be very little hope for realising improved performance in any education system, because, as observed by Salisbury University (2013:7), the perceptions and ideas that professionals in education use in their duties are essential elements in teaching and learning. Thus, commitment to students and learning, morally as well as professionally, are as important as skills and knowledge.

The researcher is of the view that critically studying learner performance and teaching in public secondary schools in Zambia, Copperbelt region in particular will provide clear, reliable and accessible evidence regarding what is workable in schools and classrooms to realise sustainable improvements in the outcomes of students (Centre for Education Statistics and Evaluation, 2014:2). This, in turn, will provide an opportunity to serve the Zambian society because addressing the challenges of poor performance will lead to schools functioning at their maximum levels through the development of students’ “skills, values, and habits of mind that will allow them to become productive and engaged citizens of our democracy” (Tschannen-Moran & Gareis, 2015:256).

Based on the above arguments, the researcher is of the view that this study will provide an opportunity for the Copperbelt region and in turn, Zambia to revisit some of its existing educational approaches in public secondary schools for the purposes of enhancing learner performance.

1.2 Background to the research

This section provides background information that relates to the study in terms of context, focus and policy. In particular, the section provides historical and policy information on the Zambian education system for the purposes of laying a foundation for the study.

The Zambian government recognises the fact that, education is a basic human right as well as a means of transformation and an instrument of both social and economic development (ECZ, 2013:2). Therefore, schooling is driven by the aim to equip learners at various levels of education, with knowledge, skills and values, that are required for contributing to society and economic development (MESVTEE, 2013: iii); in keeping with the democratic, social and economic needs of the 21st century (Dumont, Istance & Benavides, 2010:2).

Since independence in 1964, Zambia has committed herself to providing education for the Zambian people as guided by both international agreements and national policies (MESVTEE, 2012:2). Through the national policy on education, 'Educating our Future', Zambia recognises education as a basic human right and has endeavoured to meet the learners' and country's needs in terms of development. It facilitates appropriate teaching and learning at various levels characterised by a high level of standards, enhancing optimal and balanced development of learners' qualities, physically, intellectually, socially, efficiently, morally and spiritually, so that individually they can attain full growth for their personal fulfillment and the benefit of the community (Ministry Of Education, 1996:5).

There are four main levels of formal education in Zambia: early childhood (3-6 years), primary (Grade 1-7), secondary (Grades 8-12), and tertiary (MESVTEE, 2013:2). At every point of delivery in the education system, Zambia attaches great importance to elements like access, equity and quality with emphasis on democratization; decentralisation; curriculum relevance and diversification; efficient and cost-effective management; capacity-building; and cost-sharing. However, as reported by the Ministry of Finance (2012:8), the country faces a lack of adequate space and infrastructure at higher education levels resulting in a pyramidal system where enrolment levels at primary are high, but there are low progression rates compared to other countries with rectangular systems where enrolment rates are almost the same as completion rates.

Additionally, the curriculum is founded on the Zambia Education Curriculum Framework (ZECF) which provides guidance as well as regulations for all learning institutions providing formal education and assisting educators in implementing the national policy on education, guided by the democratic values of liberalisation, decentralisation, equality, equity, partnership

and accountability (MESVTEE, 2013:1). There are four categories of schools in Zambia: government-funded schools; grant-aided schools (run by organisations that are faith based, but receive grants from government); community schools (usually sponsored by the local communities, Non-Governmental, International Organisations; and private schools (entirely in the hands of an individual where students take full responsibility for the required fees) (UNICEF, 2014: viii).

The researcher outlines below three of the principles for the development of education suggested in the policy document which are related to the study: equity and equality, partnership, and quality, to give insight into school operations and provide terms of reference for teaching and learning in public secondary schools in Zambia.

1.2.1 Equity and equality

The principle of equity and equality was founded on the fact that education is a basic human right for all Zambians as enshrined in the 2011 Education Act, the United Nations Universal Declaration of Human Rights, and the Convention on the Right of the Child (CRC) (MESVTEE:2012:4). Louis, Leithwood, Wahlstrom and Anderson (2010:7) assert that education has a very important role in the individuals' and countries' survival and success in today's global environment. In support of this assertion, Sayed (2013:15) underlines that realising education rights for all, lies in significantly doing away with structural obstacles to gaining access to an education system that is worthwhile and desirable. UNESCO (2014:142) declares that, "education lights every stage of the journey to a better life. To unlock the wider benefits of education, all children need access to both primary and lower secondary education of good quality".

In spite of the emphasis on education as a birth and basic right, Westbrook, Durrani, Brown, Orr, Pryor, Boddy and Salvi (2013:6) report that many countries lack complete access to education by girls or disabled and poor children. Migrants, refugees and ethnic minorities have continually faced discrimination in terms of access and quality. In turn, this hinders economic growth. Marcus and Page (2016:2) add that gender inequalities in many low-income countries has grown

over the years in spite of the recorded improvements in terms of girls' access to education and better learning outcomes.

In the context of Zambia, equity and equality challenges have been confirmed by the Ministry of Finance (2012:13) which reports that poverty levels in rural areas where the majority of the Zambians live, are as high as 77.9% in comparison to urban rated at 27.5%, a situation which creates challenges for many rural children to enjoy fully the privilege of education as a basic human right. UNICEF (2014:52) agrees that the right to education has not fully been addressed considering that Zambia has recorded a large number of children who are unable to gain entry into school; those whose entry is overdue; and those that have dropped out for various reasons such as unavailability of schools within reasonable distances, limited financial assistance and child marriages particularly in rural areas.

In acknowledgement of the above, Beyani (2013:2) reports that access to tertiary education remains an issue in Zambia as of the 55000 school leavers at O' level, only approximately 15% gain access to tertiary institutions, thereby preventing many eligible candidates from progressing beyond secondary school level. On the other hand, inequalities in access to education can be seen from the low-level transition rates to the higher grades, Grade 9-10, which stand at about 34.5% compared to that of Grade 7 to 8 at an average of 58.3% (MESVTEE, 2013:10).

In view of the foregoing, equity and equality were included in the national policy as part of government's commitment to ensuring that no learner is prevented from accessing education and acquiring basic skills on account of their personal or social situations like religious affiliation, gender or family background (OECD, 2012:9). The policy declares that, in recognition of education as a basic human right, the Zambian government has embraced equity and equality as a means to promoting the social and economic welfare of every member of the Zambian society (Ministry of Education, 1996:1). In view of this, questions remain about the education of girls who are prevented from fully accessing education on account of cultural shortcomings; those in rural areas where schools are located in far-flung areas; low performers who are denied access to higher levels of education due to limited schools; and the poor who, on economic grounds, cannot afford to pay for education. The policy, however, has removed the cut-off point at Grade

9 national examination, makes re-entry a possibility and provides for open and distance learning (Ministry of Education, 1996:4).

As mentioned in the preceding paragraph, in 1997, the 'Re-Entry Policy' emerged as a measure to deal with high levels of girls dropping out of school due to pregnancy, by allowing them to return to school after delivery (MESVTEE, 2012:2). The fact that a total of 14,928 and 16,378 primary and secondary learners in 2013 and 2014 respectively, were reported pregnant and only a total of 5829 in 2013 and 7391 in 2014 returned to school (MESVTEE, 2014:44), confirms the limited education opportunities for girls (Marcus & Page, 2016:2; UNICEF and MESVTEE, 2014:52; Westbrook, et al. 2013:6), thereby preventing many girls from enjoying educational benefits. UNESCO (2012:6) states that gender parity and equality in education are basic human rights and affording those rights to girls is a way of bettering other social and economic outcomes. This is acknowledged by UNESCO (2014:143) in their argument that realisation of most of the sustainable developmental goals can only be fully achieved through equitable education where every attempt is made to ensure the disadvantaged are able to "benefit from its transformative power".

While the researcher acknowledges that the re-entry policy has potential to increase educational opportunities for the girls (MESVTEE, 2012:2), the low number of girls who return to school after delivery points to the need to take the policy to another level by, for instance, focusing more on sensitising girls on the value of avoiding pregnancies until they are ready for and capable of looking after their newly-born babies. The revelations that the number of pregnancies increased from substantially between 2007 and 2014 could lead to increased levels of health and social problems. Central Statistical Office (CSO), Ministry of Health (MOH) and Intermediate Care Facilities (ICF) International (2014:76) confirm that teenage pregnancy and motherhood is a big problem in Zambia in that it is capable of presenting critical health challenges for both the mother and the child and at the same time reducing the women's chances for education and employment. Therefore, the education policy in respect of re-entry policy would be better enhanced by investigating why the numbers of pregnant girls has kept increasing since 2007. UNESCO (2012:6) underlines that comprehending why the girls' enrolment levels are low is fundamental to attaining gender parity.

Another aspect relating to equity and equality was the abolishing of the Grade 9 cut-off point in 2008 in order to increase the number of learners who proceeded to Grade 10 and to reduce the drop-out rate (UNICEF and MESVTEE, 2014:46). This meant that learners would be selected to Grade 10 as long as they obtained 40% in any six subjects, as opposed to the previous system where one was required to score a range of marks in six subjects including English (Examinations Council of Zambia, 2014:10). Abolishing the Grade 9 cut-off point in public secondary schools in Zambia relates to the global emphasis on increased access to education for every child (UNICEF and MESVTEE, 2014:39). However, as posited by Sayed (2013:25), increasing access to education at the expense of quality has the potential to undermine educational goals. The bare 40% pass in any six subjects could be too low to ensure the required prerequisite knowledge for success in secondary education (Thomas, 2014:55). This could potentially compromise the quality of education in Zambia, especially because malpractice in both internal and external examination centres has been on the increase in the recent past (ECZ, 2014:27).

Furthermore, the poor entry qualification of learners at Grade 10 level relates to the revelations by the Africa Progress Panel (2012:4) where many children are reported to have been accessing an education of extremely low quality with minimal learning. In support of this, Sayed (2013:9) argues that the emphasis on access and completion overlooks what students really learn and, because of this, several children in many countries leave school without attaining appropriate “literacy and numeracy or other relevant skills”.

The researcher observes that this problem has the potential to increase the number of learners who cannot read and write the official language, English, thereby contributing to the number of candidates at Grade 12 who are unable to pass the set standards of the school certificate (ECZ, 2014:13). Unless teachers work extra hard to ensure that low performers are helped to attain maximum skills and knowledge that would enable them to competently meet the demands of the curriculum, it would be unlikely that learners would yield positive results in the Grade 12 examination.

1.2.2 Partnership

The second principle for the development of education is partnership, which is based on the premise that the responsibility for educating students and achievement of their potential does not lie in the hands of the school professionals alone, but also in partnerships between parents and guardians, the community and other stakeholders (Gary & Witherspoon, 2011:6). National Education Association (2012:38) adds that the popular proverb: 'it takes a village to raise a child' emphasises the key role the whole community plays in the young people's upbringing and development, hence the need for the active involvement of all stakeholders in the decisions that affect the welfare of the learners.

In support of the foregoing, the National Education Association (NEA) president Dennis Van Roekel at the summit in September 2010 stressed that it was evident that child development was not just interaction at classroom level, but it involved the interlinked efforts of social services, parental engagement, opportunities for service learning for student, and learning that exceeded school-related activities for the purposes of students' success (Gary & Witherspoon, 2011:36).

The importance of partnership in the development of education in Zambia can also be seen in the argument of the Centre for Education Statistics and Evaluation (2014:3) that realising learner outcomes that are positive hinge on the shared vision of all stakeholders, that is, leaders at school level, families, students and community members, as well as collective identification of strategies that can bring about the intended goal. Smarter Schools National Partnerships (2010:16) highlights that high-performing schools have realised the significant role of active family and community participation in the education of the students in addition to teachers and the school community.

Furthermore, partnership in education has the potential to prevent, for example, absenteeism and disruptive behaviours while providing outside-school academic support. Garcia and Thornton (2014:1) acknowledge that despite the numerous adjustments that have taken place in several education systems like those in America, as far back as 1921, family involvement has repeatedly remained a cardinal element in education in view of its contribution to increasing learner attainment, facilitating school attendance and restoring parents' confidence in their children's

education. In acknowledging the above argument, Naylor and Sayed (2014:27) observe that while teachers provide the most significant input in the learning of the students, they are incapable of compensating for or overcoming “deep-seated historic and structural inequalities in society”. Therefore, the involvement of the community in school affairs can help address some of the behaviours that are influenced by the communities the learners come from.

The foregoing provides clear evidence of the role partnership plays in learner performance and teaching.

1.2.3 Quality

The third principle for the development of education in the policy document relating to the study is quality, a term which is used to emphasise that learners are provided an opportunity to achieve excellence by means of excellent quality of teaching (MOE, 1996:4). Quality as described by Grobler, Warnich, Carrell, Elbert and Hatfield (2011:23) entails meeting the customers’ needs, safeguarding against mistakes and accidents and working hard to ensure there are no mistakes in the output. According to Rado (2010:98), in very broad terms, quality is fit-for-purpose, that is, goals we intend to achieve by a particular means, based on compliance with particular guidelines and set procedures that are clearly defined and lead to client satisfaction.

In line with the definitions above, quality in education may be linked to achievement of educational goals and objectives through the school, which is one of the most important institutions of any given society characterised by numerous cardinal objectives such as development of the future citizens, that must be fulfilled within “the society that builds it” (Sidhu, 2013:1). Quality may be considered as an effort to meet societies’ expectations in terms of learner output through the process of teaching and learning on which the school’s excellence is measured (Van Deventer & Kruger, 2013:2). Teaching and learning are closely linked to education because the role of teaching is mainly to bring about effective changes in the learners’ conduct through the teachers’ influence (Kuppuswamy, 2012:108). This in turn, leads to the fulfillment of educational targets, which include facilitating an individual’s acquisition and development of relevant new information, skills and attitudes (Ngaroga, 2016:13). Rado

(2010:84) notes that the aims of education include: reinforcing culture; allowing for individual personal growth; making adjustments in social structure; contributing to the economy; and facilitating “integration of the society, service providing functions and modernization”.

In respect of the above argument, Das (2012:47) claims that the teaching process is founded on three cardinal factors: learners, the teacher and the subject, the teachers being the most important factor since they serve as a medium of communication between the learners and the subject. In support of this, Darling-Hammond (2010:1) reports that, for a long time, policy-makers have undertaken several reforms to raise schools’ standards, including, for instance, new standards and tests, revised curricula and models of governance. The one key lesson derived from these undertakings is the fact that teachers are significant determiners of the success or failure of school initiatives. This is confirmed by West-Burnham (2010:6) who argues that the qualities of teachers and their classroom practices have the greatest potential to influence the attainment of students.

Van Deventer and Kruger (2013:62) concur that quality education is linked to the manner in which people are managed as well as the activities carried out in the classroom, district, province and the education system as a whole. This provides evidence of the role of leadership in the success of schools which relates to the assertion by Anderson and Mundy (2014:7) that leaders impact the achievement of student outcomes through promoting conditions for teaching and learning. Tschannen-Moran and Gareis (2015:257) underscore the fact that principals are charged with the huge task of ensuring that they create the kind of learning environments that are desired.

In support of the above, Naylor and Sayed (2014:15) contend that the manner in which schools are led and governed greatly influences the way teachers conduct themselves in the classroom, for example: attendance; the amount of time they spend on teaching in school; and access to continuing professional development (CPD) within school, since all these are dependent upon the efficiency and “visionary instructional leadership”, the manner the school is run and governed.

Quality could also be linked to the nature of the teaching and learning environment in terms of such things as the size of the class or the sanitary conditions. Usher and Kober (2012:6) note that the manners in which schools are arranged, for example, class size, programmes, climate and student categories are capable of influencing students' engagement in learning, for instance, large classes could lead to health problems which could demotivate learners. As such, Thomas (2014:46) underlines that learning requires a conducive environment structured for the benefit of the student in order to facilitate maximum learning atmospheres as well as richness in educative possibilities. This is supported by Australian Council for Educational Research (2012:16) in their comment that high-performing schools ensure that their schools are characterised by a learning environment that is secure, non-intimidating, healthy and intellectually stimulating.

The above arguments provide valuable evidence on the various elements that are associated with quality in education and unless as much effort as possible is attached to the multiple facets of quality, there will be minimal improvement in terms of learner performance and teaching.

1.2.4 Conclusions on Zambia's contextual framework

The researcher is of the view that focusing on the three principles for the development of education, as highlighted in the previous section, has potential to influence learner performance and teaching and in turn, improve Zambia's education system as a whole. However, the researcher observes that the policy document would have added more value to Zambia's educational development if there was emphasis on, for example, research, learner engagement, teacher evaluation and training as well as evaluation of head teachers as these are among factors that could lead to improvement of learner performance.

To start with, the researcher observes that the policy document provides no evidence of attaching great importance to research as a means to developing education quality. For instance, the policy document refers to 'research' as one of those things that will take place in the "centres of education, from pre-school to university" (MOE, 1996:4) and not as a major element for informing decisions for education provision in Zambia. Yet as observed by ECZ (2013: iii), decision-making which is evidence-based is important for quality education provision in Zambia. The limited availability of Zambian-related literature on issues of learner performance and

teaching confirms the lack of emphasis and support for research at policy level. The Centre for Education Statistics and Evaluation (2014:2) acknowledges that lack of accessible evidence that is clear and reliable regarding what exactly is feasible in schools and classrooms has been a major cause of failure to achieve improvements that are sustainable in the student outcomes.

Relating to lack of research is the observation that the policy document does not provide much room for schools to investigate and implement within their contexts that which could improve learner performance. For example, as advised by Naylor and Sayed (2014: 27), all efforts aimed at improving teacher quality should be context-based. In line with the principles of reflective teaching, improving teacher quality based on one's context is important, because deriving meaning and gaining understanding from one's reality promotes adaptability in new situations (McGregor and Cartwright, 2011: xvi). The silence on research in the policy document has the potential to hinder the possibility of individual schools to reflect on their individual experiences and develop research-based strategies in respect of their contexts. Hénard and Roseveare (2012:25) add that leadership plays a key role at institutional level in decision-making and molding the quality culture for the institution because leaders are usually the innovators of quality teaching innovations and their strategies "directly affect the outcomes of teaching and learning".

Failure to emphasise context-based decisions can lead to adopting what may not be ideal in a given situation. This is confirmed by Mourshed, Chijioke, and Barber (2010:18) who contend that sometimes efforts to improve educational systems have been hampered by adoption of systems that have been used in schools which are not the same in terms of expectations, social and political contexts. Yet, school improvements require integration of three aspects: identifying what is obtaining in terms of student outcomes; exploration of possible interventions for the target improvement; and adaptation of the identified interventions to the existing situation. State of Victoria (2014:10) indicates that evidence-based teaching practice is important in improving learner achievement because there is a belief that certain learning challenges and associated low achievement can be linked to unsuitable and inadequate teaching and gaps relating to students' mental problems, or their socio-economic background.

Secondly, the silence on learner engagement in the policy document creates a challenge for learner performance and teaching because, according to Fredricks, McColskey, Meli, Mordica, Montrosse and Mooney (2011:1), student engagement has been identified by researchers, educators and policy-makers as a vital element in dealing with underachievement, student demotivation and isolation, as well as increased dropout levels. West-Burnham (2010:19) underlines that learners' voice through, for example, their opinions on learning and teaching that they consider efficient, their experiences in terms of feedback on learning, their lesson observation, including their inclusion in CPD and surveys based on their learning encounters, is of great value in minimising inequities within schools. Taylor and Parsons (2011: 5) contend that educators are encouraged to keep seeking comprehension and implementation of specific, well-defined or agreed-upon mechanisms that include student engagement in and outside the classroom. It is only at policy level that this can be achieved, hence the need for its inclusion.

The third observation relating to learner performance and teaching in the policy document is the admission of learners to senior secondary school based on the junior secondary school-leaving examination results (MOE, 1996:47); in spite of the fact that National examinations in Zambia have been characterised by malpractice (ECZ, 2014:27). The researcher observes that the obtained results may not provide a strong base for senior secondary level because, as observed by Mlambo (2011:83), learning is a process that involves an accumulation of knowledge; hence, a student who at recruitment point meets the required entry criteria is likely to be more equipped for the course than the one who enters with a bare minimum qualification.

The observed gaps in terms of entry qualifications point to the need for educationists in Zambia to pay serious attention to the qualifications the recruited students possess to ensure they are ready to stand the demands of the secondary school level. Goss and Hunter (2015:1) acknowledge that it is possible for teachers and schools to raise the performance of every student given that they are empowered to gather and make use of available data regarding each student's achievement and progression.

The fourth observation which relates to learner performance and teaching is teacher selection and recruitment, which are among the factors linked to school improvement. Anderson and Mundy

(2014:5) confirm that policies and practices that hinge on recruitment of teachers, how they are deployed, selected and hired, working conditions and their retention are cardinal to school improvement.

Additionally, Coggs, Rasmussen, Colton, Milton and Jacques (2012:1) indicate that:

State and district leaders across the country are working intensely to respond to legislation calling for revised teacher evaluation systems that incorporate multiple measures of student learning and teacher practice. Teacher evaluation systems need to be designed and implemented with teacher learning and development at the core rather than appended later as an afterthought.

Teachers should be able to get advice on the evaluation process on specific areas that require improvement so as to enhance learners' performance.

Ingvarson et al. (2014:3) contend that high-performing countries acknowledge that quality teachers are important in quality teaching. As such, they have, for instance, deliberately adopted policies that attract the most capable people into the teaching profession, making entry to teacher education very competitive and encouraging the most capable secondary school leavers and university graduates to study for a qualification in education.

Ingvarson et al. (2014:3) further confirm that best-practice teacher-education programmes demand best-practice approaches to the selection, preparation and induction of teachers into the profession. Hightower, Delgado, Lloyd, Wittenstein, Sellers and Swanson (2011:7) argue that despite teacher certification being cardinal as a benchmark credential required for entry into the teaching profession, there is minimal evidence from research that qualifications represent teachers' abilities to realise increased student achievement.

Given these key indicators of learner performance and quality teaching, Zambia requires a policy document that takes care of the manifold aspects of education to ensure it meets the needs of its recipients.

1.3 Significance of the study

The study is important because it provides research-based evidence on the nature of learner performance and teaching in public secondary schools in Zambia, particularly Copperbelt region, thereby leading to improved teaching which is recognised as essential in improving student outcomes, productivity and competitiveness at national level as well as increased levels of equity, an important element in improving national performance (Ingvarson et al. 2014:2). Higher Education Commission (2012:8) emphasises that education and institutions whose education is founded on research-based evidence have been recognised as offering better quality education. The researcher is in agreement with Ontario Ministry of Education (2013:48) that undertaking this research will reveal “practices that are supported by research and/ or inquiry and experiences in classroom, schools and school boards that have been validated over time”, that could improve learner performance.

In support of the above comments, the researcher is of the view that the study will assist the Zambian government to respond to the recent global demands to focus on evaluating teaching as a practice that could influence learner performance. As suggested by Rockwood School District (2014:7), a system of evaluation that focuses on efficient teaching practices and gives timely and practical feedback to teachers is fundamental to the improvement of teaching and learning; because it gives opportunities for teachers’ reflection, and sets targets for improving practice. Evaluation provides an opportunity to educators to reflect on their actions in relation to meeting the aims and objectives of providing education.

Rockwood School District (2014:7) further suggests that the process of teacher evaluation demands a focus on the following important indicators: identifying indicators of teacher practice that lead to maximum learner performance; establishing current performance levels; identifying alternative strategies to improve performance; and providing feedback on the feasibility of the new strategies. This then calls for a follow-up on the amount of growth that would have occurred before finally reflecting on whether the identified indicator is still a focus area. This means that teacher evaluation embraces a series of activities requiring maximum focus and consistency in

ensuring that the expectations of the education system in schools lead to enhanced learner performance.

Furthermore, the study has potential to influence the Zambian educational policy-makers in ensuring teachers account for their practice, thereby focusing on improving the performance of learners. The researcher is in agreement with Burnell and Schnackenberg (2012: xvi) who contend that it is a requirement that professionals in education are accountable to their different communities, and be able to respond to the demands of the public regarding the efficacy of their outputs.

That aside, this research should be able to inform educational policy-makers on issues of leadership in view of the contribution they make to school improvement. The Australian Council for Educational Research (2012:1) confirms that there is enough evidence from research that shows that school leadership groups are capable of improving teaching and learning quality considering that efficient leaders develop a culture of excellence in terms of expectations; give clarification regarding what teachers should teach and what is to be learnt by students; create powerful societies of professional learning; and spearhead continuous attempts at bettering teaching practices.

Additionally, the study provides an avenue for communicating to teachers about their role in school improvement, not only as individuals but as a team with a common goal. This is because the best influence on student learning lies in the teacher workforce collectively undertaking the work coupled with good leaders or coaches; having a consensus on good outcomes; setting high expectations; being aware of the students' accomplishments in learning; looking for evidence repeatedly regarding their influence on all the students; making adjustments to their teaching in respect of this assessment; and participating in the success of the learning outcomes (Hattie, 2012:35).

1.4 Clarification of key terms

The researcher seeks to clarify the meaning of the following key concepts: critical study, learner performance, public secondary schools, teaching and Zambia, for the purposes of providing the meaning of those terms in the context of the study.

1.4.1 Critical study

“Critical study” in this context is used as derived from the individual definitions of the two words ‘critical’ and ‘study’. For the purposes of this study, the word ‘critical’ as an English word is used to mean “making careful judgment about the good and bad qualities of something” (Hornby, 2012:364). In other words, it involves giving personal views, judgement, interpretation or analysis about a particular situation (Online Cambridge Advanced Learner’s Dictionary and Thesaurus, 2015).

On the other hand, ‘study’ in this context is used to mean a heavily-loaded investigation and analysis of a matter or piece of research (Online Collins English Dictionary and Thesaurus, 2016).

In view of the above definitions of ‘critical’ and ‘study’, ‘critical study’ in this context entails an investigation which provides a careful judgement about the nature of learner performance and teaching in public secondary schools in Zambia. The researcher will focus on, for example, historical and policy matters regarding learner performance and teaching that guide public secondary schools for the purposes of judging the good and bad elements, and in turn, explain why learners perform poorly in the Grade 12 National examinations.

The provided meaning of critical study relates to the description of a critical study in education by University of Georgia (2017:1) in terms of educational theories and practices for the purposes of gaining insight into the complicated relationship that exists between education and culture, schools and communities. In this context, since the study is educational in nature, it seeks to

establish its relationship between the lives of the learners, teachers and head teachers as social beings in their respective schools and the impact on learner performance.

1.4.2 Performance of learners

Learner performance in this study is used to refer to the learners' scores in the Grade 12 National examination, which marks the end of secondary education (ECZ, 2013:1). Learner performance also relates to how learners respond to the given assessment items in the National examination based on the set standards (ECZ, 2014: VI); in this context, the Grade 12 examinations.

1.4.3 Public secondary schools

These are schools from Grade 8 to 12 in the Copperbelt region which are government sponsored and normally open to the majority of the Zambian children with little limitation on access (UNICEF and MESVTEE, 2014:viii).

1.4.4 Teaching

Kochhar (2014:23) describes teaching as an art and interaction between two parties in order to bring about transformation in terms of knowledge. University of Queensland (2012:12) adds that teaching is a professional activity that focuses on making decisions, interpretation of information, and planning and implementation of actions to uphold students' learning. Das (2012:47) reveals that teaching is a medium of communication between the pupils and the subject. According to Richardson, Karabenick and Watt (2014:xx) teaching comprises a multidimensional category of activities demanding a complicated combination of intellectual abilities, skills in pedagogy, characteristics in terms of personality as well as talents in organisation.

1.4.5 Zambia

Zambia is an African country which was formerly ruled by the British government as Northern Rhodesia (CSO, MOH and ICF International, 2014:1). The Ministry of Finance (2012:1)

explains that Zambia is a landlocked country located in Southern Africa between latitude 8 and 18 degrees south and 22 and 34 degrees east covering a total area of 752 614 square kilometers. It shares borders with eight countries: Angola, Botswana, Democratic Republic of Congo, Malawi, Mozambique, Namibia, Tanzania and Zimbabwe, and it is known for its abundant natural resources such as copper, water and fertile land. CSO (2012:2) further reveals that, the country has grown from about 4 million people at independence in 1964, to about 14 million for the year 2014, going by the 2.8% annual growth rate between 2000 and 2010. Zambia is currently divided into ten provinces: Central, Copperbelt, Eastern, Luapula, Lusaka, Muchinga, Northern, North Western, Southern, and Western.

1.5 Statement of the problem

For some time now, most public secondary schools in Zambia have continued to produce low pass rates in the Grade 12 National examinations (ECZ, 2014). This has been attributed to a number of problems that surround these schools, such as crowded classrooms, lack of teacher motivation, and health and nutritional challenges which have led to teachers' ineffectiveness in their work. This has raised public concern considering that the Grade 12 examination marks the end of secondary school life and serves as the entry point for tertiary education. At the same time, this examination reveals the extent to which the specific learning objectives in secondary schools have been achieved.

In view of the observed poor learner performance in public secondary schools in Zambia, the researcher attempts to critically examine learner performance and teaching in the selected schools with a focus on a set of research questions grounded on the three theories. These include: Bandura's (1977) socio-cognitive theory, Shulman's (1987) 'teacher knowledge base' theory and Maslow's (1943 & 1954) human motivation theory.

The researcher observes that while a number of factors have contributed to the high failure rate in public secondary schools in Zambia, there is not much empirical evidence on the key factors in teaching that influence learner performance.

1.6 Research questions of the study

Main question

- What is the nature of learner performance and teaching in public secondary schools in Zambia?

Sub-questions

1. How do the selected Grade 12 learners describe their learning performance experience in their schools?
2. What key factors do the selected teachers attribute to the poor performance of learners in their schools?
3. In what way do the selected head teachers describe their experiences of learner performance and teaching in their schools?
4. What are the participants' views on how learner performance and teaching in the selected schools can improve?

The four sets of questions are meant to comprehensively examine the extent to which teaching is seen to influence learners' achievement in public secondary schools in Zambia. The research questions form a basis for the purposes, aims and objectives of the study as they give insight into the researcher's intended achievement in the study.

The researcher is aware that the research may not be able to solve the challenges of low learner achievement, but she is convinced that the outcomes of the study could create an opportunity for further research which eventually may lead to the problems being sorted out.

1.7 Purpose and aim of the study

The purpose of this study is to examine the nature of learner performance and teaching in public secondary schools in Zambia, specifically the Copperbelt region. In particular, the researcher

intends to establish, from a phenomenological point of view, how the perceptions of a sample of learners, teachers and head teachers in public secondary schools in Zambia relate to established key factors in teaching that impact on learner achievement. At the same time, it will create an avenue for teachers' reflections on their practice to ensure they meet the demands for quality teaching and learning in public secondary schools in Zambia. Danielson (2013:13) argues that there is empirical evidence that reflecting on one's teaching can improve teaching, and it is, therefore, important that this reflection is guided by a framework that facilitates this activity and creates meaningful, thoughtful and rewarding progress.

The research will take the opportunity to make strong recommendations regarding monitoring and evaluation of teaching and learning in public secondary schools. Snook, O'Neill, Birks, Church and Rawlins (2013:11) emphasise that there should be great importance attached to teachers' acquisition of the "new diagnostic, teaching and evaluation skills" that have been confirmed through research to be more efficient in enhancing the learning of students such as employment of formative feedback founded on common measures of important teaching approaches. Therefore, the research aims at advising education policy-makers on possible interventions that could be initiated to deal with the challenges of poor performance in public secondary schools in both the Copperbelt region and Zambia as a whole, as well as providing lessons to other countries facing similar challenges.

In order to fulfil this aim, the researcher will interpret the meanings of the lived experiences of the selected participants with regard to the nature of learner performance and teaching in their schools, followed by recommendations on the possible ways to improve learner performance.

1.8 Objectives of the study

In fulfilling the above aims of the study, the research focuses on the following objectives:

- To link the perceptions of the sample of Grade 12 learners in the selected schools in the Copperbelt region to established key factors in teaching that show linkage with good performance.
- To link the perceptions of the sample of teachers in the selected schools in the Copperbelt region to established key factors related to poor learner performance.

- To establish how the perceptions of the sample of head teachers in the selected schools in the Copperbelt region relate to key factors that influence learner performance.
- To determine the participants' views on how learner performance and teaching in the selected schools can improve.

1.9 Research design

The purpose of this research is to establish the nature of learner performance and teaching in public secondary schools in Zambia based on the views of the teachers, learners and head teachers in respect of their experiences in their schools. In view of the focus of the study, a qualitative research design is considered to be appropriate in achieving the targeted goal. Mitchell, Namey and Guest (2013:3) indicate that this design enables examination of subjects that are studied in natural setups followed by transformation and making sense of the phenomenon being investigated through the process of interpreting of field notes, photographs, conversations and other similar representations.

Additionally, using a qualitative research design is considered suitable for this study in view of its application of information-gathering strategies that involve narrations, descriptions to gain knowledge on the reality of things and the meaning of the research as perceived by the participants in the investigation project, such as face-to-face interviews, observations and recording of video interactions (Mills, 2011:4).

A qualitative design will enable the researcher to search for the subjective interpretation of learner performance as a social phenomenon from the point of view of the subjects involved in the study (Bhattacharjee, 2012:38). In turn, this will allow the researcher to collect information directly from the teachers, head teachers and the learners in the selected schools as the primary data sources of the phenomenon under investigation.

1.9.1 Methodology

This study is founded on the phenomenological theoretical framework, which is one of the qualitative methods said to be educational in nature, which seeks to analyse and describe individual's experiences of a phenomenon in their daily living (Creswell, 2013:78).

In particular, the study employs interpretive phenomenology which is known as hermeneutic or existential phenomenology mostly propounded by Martin Heidegger (1889-1976 cited in Friesen, Henriksson & Saevi (2012:2). The selection is based on Heidegger's premise that investigating human behaviour requires a humanistic approach and not a scientific one and the application of personal views in the research process, because the researcher needs to be deeply involved with the phenomenon in order to understand the experience (Eddles-Hirsch, 2015:253).

This phenomenological philosophical approach is appropriate for this study as reality is not independent of the mind since it can only be known through the human mind and through meanings that are constructed socially (Ritchie, Lewis, Nicholls & Ormiston, 2013:5).

Additionally, constructivism will be useful in this study because of its potential to facilitate interaction with the participants on their cultural and past encounters in respect of learner performance, and will allow the researcher to capture the meaning of their experience and interpret it to explain what influences learner performance in public secondary schools in Zambia, specifically the Copperbelt region (Davidsen, 2013:319).

The various descriptions of the selected participants regarding their daily life encounters will provide a foundation for interpreting what is happening in public schools on learner performance and teaching as phenomena, influenced by the researcher's background of teaching which will enable her to position herself in the research and acknowledge the manner in which her personal interpretation flows from her own individual, cultural and past experiences (Creswell, 2014:26).

In view of all the foregoing, Heidegger's hermeneutic phenomenology method underpins this study because it is interpretive in nature and it focuses on developing a deep understanding of a particular experience (Reiners 2012:24). Therefore, it has the potential to facilitate investigation because interpretive phenomenology leads into a thorough interpretation of the meaning as well

as structures of a specific phenomenon in respect of first-hand experience (Matua & Van der Wal, 2015:24). This will allow the researcher to interact with the teachers, learners and head teachers who will be selected for their potential to provide rich information.

1.9.2 Research methods

In order to address the challenges of poor performance among learners in public secondary schools in Zambia, the research will be undertaken in four selected schools on the Copperbelt region of Zambia where a total of purposively selected 24 participants: twelve Grade 12 learners from among the school council and debate club, eight longest serving teachers of equal gender, two per school and four head teachers will be used as key informants for the study using semi-structured and focus-group interviews. It will include 12 semi-structured interviews and 2 focus-group interviews each comprising 6 learners. The four head teachers were selected because, by virtue of their administrative positions, they have a lot of experience with learner performance and teaching in their schools and will be capable of providing rich information on the study such as speaking on the nature of the school as a whole. The longest serving teachers were included because their individual experiences during their many years of stay in school would be a source of valuable and rich information for the study. The Grade 12s from the school council and debate club were also included because of their years in secondary school, their involvement in numerous debates on cross-cutting issues and their role in linking their fellow learners with teachers and the school administration.

The researcher is of the view that employing systematic procedures in phenomenology, like the semi-structured and focus-group interviews, supplemented by documentary analysis will allow gathering of individual participants' views in their own language (Creswell, 2012:506), and the researcher will be able to collect detailed descriptions of the lived experiences of learners, teachers and head teachers on learner performance and teaching in public schools. The use of these methods will be appropriate for the study because interpretive methods include use of open-ended interviews, focus groups, open-ended questionnaires, open-ended observations, the think-aloud protocol and role playing (Scotland, 2012:14).

The research will also include analysis of documents like the schools' policies on continuing professional development, records of learner performance, school mission statements and visions to provide additional data sources and increase credibility, a process which is referred to as triangulation of methods (Creswell, 2012:239; Elmusharaf, 2013:30). Using more than one data source is also linked to the assertion that flexibility plays a very important role in qualitative research (Banister, Dunn, Burman, Daniels, 2011:200-201, Frost, 2011:11-12) where not only one method is used to collect data, but a combination of them.

The choice of the sites, participants and the size of the sample are influenced by the need to identify locations that are accessible as well as availability of the target population (Berg & Lune, 2012:47). The selection of the participants is based on the premise that one's selection of research participants should be arrived at by the target of one's study, hence, allowing one to fulfill the demands of the research and responding to the research questions (Saunders, 2012:2). Englander (2012:21) adds that selection of participants in phenomenological research primarily focuses on who has the experience being sought for the purposes of gaining general knowledge about the phenomenon being investigated, rather than how many or how often someone has had a specific experience, and as such, it does not involve statistics.

The use of the number 24: 12 semi-structured interviews and 2 focus group interviews each comprising 6 learners, is derived from the suggestion by Quinlan (2011:310) that phenomenological research is detailed in nature and it usually employs a minimal number of participants sometimes referred to as a 'sample'. O'Leary (2012:114) supports the idea that qualitative research designs demand collecting rich information from a few instead of many participants, for the purposes of understanding a phenomenon, rather than achieving representativeness.

1.10 Delimitations and limitations of the study

This study was limited to four schools: low- and high-performing from each of the two parts of the Copperbelt region (Northern and Southern), with similar profiles in terms of the number of years in existence, school, social and economic status. The researcher only used a sample of 24

participants because qualitative studies recommend a small number of participants to maximise the richness of the information.

The researcher is aware that at times, face-to-face interactions may yield different results due to the mood of both the interviewer and interviewee and this may require that interviews are repeated in the research process. This, in turn, may create certain challenges in terms of available resources such as time and finances to allow repetition of the research process. However, as advised by Reis, Amorim and Melao (2017, 277) the researcher will ensure that the research is as credible as possible by collecting data from multiple sources: head teachers and teachers using semi-structured interviews, grade 12 learners using focus-group interviews and lastly, documentary analysis of school mottos and vision, learners' record of performance, schemes and records of work and school policy on teaching and professional development.

1.11 Thesis overview

The study is divided into five chapters, as follows:

In the first chapter, the study provides the background to the study, the aims, objectives and significance of the study.

The second chapter provides a literature review on studies that have already been done on teaching and learning in relation to learner performance. It will also review the different theoretical/conceptual underpinnings of such studies. In doing so, the chapter concludes by indicating how the present study adds value to the existing corpus of studies that have been done on learner performance and teaching.

The third chapter discusses the theoretical/conceptual framework that undergirds the research as well as the research methods that are used in the study.

The fourth chapter provides feedback on the findings of the research as well as interpretation, evaluation and discussion of the significance of the research findings.

The fifth chapter provides a summarised synthesis of the research outcomes in relation to the aim of the study and makes recommendations in response to the problems that the study attempts to address. The chapter also makes suggestions on areas of concern that can still be addressed in research on learner performance and teaching, particularly in the context of Zambia.

1.12 Conclusion

In this first chapter of the study, the researcher provides the road map for the critical study on learner performance and teaching in public secondary schools in Zambia. The researcher justified undertaking the study through the aims and objectives as well as the significance of the study. The chapter provided insight into the contribution of the study to educational improvement in public secondary schools in the Copperbelt and Zambia as a whole.

The next chapter focuses on diverse literature with regard to teaching and learning in an attempt to respond to the key question: *“What is the Nature of Learner Performance and Teaching in Public Secondary schools in Zambia?”*

CHAPTER 2

LITERATURE REVIEW ON TEACHING AND LEARNING

2.1 Introduction

The purpose of this chapter is to review literature of a scholarly nature on teaching and learning in order to gain insight into how they influence learner performance. In this study, the researcher critically studies learner performance and teaching in public secondary schools in Zambia with a focus on the Copperbelt region for the purposes of addressing the poor performance that has been recorded in the Grade 12 National examinations in public schools in the recent past. As reported in chapter 1, Zambia's national performance in the Grade 12 examination between 2010 and 2015 did not exceed 60% except for the year 2013 when it was 60.21%. Public secondary schools, which account for 90% of the country's schools and teachers (Beyani, 2013:10), are the most affected.

The situation described above indicates gaps in terms of educational outcomes and calls for a reflection on the key objectives of teaching and learning (MESVTEE, 2014:9-10). At the same time, the reported poor performance is a source of worry because students' performance is one of the key elements that reflect educational outcomes in any education system (Republic of Kenya, 2013:1). ECZ (2014:VI) comments that examination performance reports provide a chance for analysing capabilities, knowledge and learning over the course of a given year because they show the lowest, average and highest learners' and their performance on different kinds of assessment items in the examination.

The researcher is of the view that a critical study on learner performance and teaching in public secondary schools in Zambia, Copperbelt region particularly, will provide an opportunity for evaluating the effectiveness of the secondary education system in Zambia, considering that test scores reflect instructional effectiveness and reveal key aspects of classroom performance (DeMonte, 2013:2). In support of this, the Centre for Education Statistics and Evaluation (2014:16) adds that referring to assessment results has been proven to have a positive impact on improvements in learner outcomes.

2.2 The role of the teacher in quality education

Gerritsen, Plug and Webbink (2014:2) underline that teacher quality is of great importance in the production of human capital. Gaining insight into what determines teacher quality is cardinal in the improvement of the educational quality and thus a crucial aspect for educational policy. The Centre for Education Statistics and Evaluation (2014:2) also notes that lack of accessible, clear and reliable evidence regarding what exactly is feasible in schools and classrooms has been a major cause of failure to achieve sustainable improvements in student outcomes. This is because evidence-based decision-making is important for quality provision in education in Zambia (ECZ, 2013: iii).

Rockwood School District (2014:7) confirms that the teacher is the most outstanding element in a student's learning, followed by efficient leadership. Ingvarson et al. (2014:2) agree that improving teaching is key to raising students' outcomes, productivity and competitiveness at national level and improving national performance. According to Kochhar (2014:177), teaching quality is a standard of measure of the nation's achievement and aspirations and teachers' performance serves as a source of evaluation for a country's worth and capabilities.

The first chapter further revealed that a critical analysis of learner performance and teaching in public secondary schools in Zambia was important in laying a foundation for tertiary education because the Grade 12 National examinations mark the end of secondary school and are the entry point for tertiary education (ECZ, 2013:1). The poor performance points towards inadequacies in terms of foundational knowledge required to enter tertiary education because learning is a cumulative exercise. Students admitted to tertiary institutions with better Grade 12 results will most likely be more adequately prepared for the course material rather than those who do not perform well (Mlambo, 2011:83).

Additionally, the preceding chapter revealed that the study was important in establishing existing policies regarding for example selection and recruitments of teachers because good approach to recruitment, pre-service training and CPD could improve teacher quality (UNESCO, 2015:5). For example, as reported by Reform Support Network (2011:1) with reference to United States

experience, there has been unprecedented attention throughout the nation to developing educator effectiveness systems such as the development of efficient teachers and leaders through adjusting policies and practices regarding recruiting, training, retention and rewarding teachers and principals. Hightower et al. (2011:11) state that high-performing systems include recruiting teachers from the most outstanding three of every graduating class; creating a method of choosing teachers for teacher training; and examining applicants for particular characteristics such as high standards of overall literacy and numeracy, interpersonal and communication capacities, willingness to learn, and motivation to teach.

In view of the above arguments, critically studying learner performance and teaching in public secondary schools in Zambia will provide insight into the reality surrounding these schools which in turn will help in addressing the problem of poor performance:

In order to help answer the research questions presented in Chapter 1, the researcher discusses teaching and learning to provide insight into factors that promote or do not promote learner performance. In particular, the literature review addresses the following themes: the meaning and demands of teaching; the meaning and expectations of learning; the contribution of teaching and learning to national development; and international research findings on characteristics of high-performing schools.

2.3 Meaning and demands of teaching

2.3.1 Teaching Defined

Schools as institutions everywhere in the world exist as avenues aimed at facilitating teaching or education for the purposes of achieving educational goals of any given society (Kruger & Van Schalkwyk, 2010:3). Therefore, teaching as an act involves passing information or knowledge, instructing or providing learners with the desirable knowledge, skills and attitudes through a process of interaction between the teacher and learners.

In support of the above description, Kuppuswamy (2012:108) posits that teaching is closely linked to education, whose primary aim is to bring about desired adjustments in the learner's behaviour and serves as a process of speeding up the acquisition of such adjustments by the learners. Given that education generally is said to be a process that allows individuals to acquire and develop worthwhile new information, skills and attitudes (Ngaroga, 2016:13), teaching then is an avenue for achieving the aim of education.

According to Das (2012:47), any teaching process concentrates on three cardinal factors which include learners, the teacher and the subject, teaching being the most important factor since it serves as a medium of communication between the learners and the subject. In support of this, Darling-Hammond (2010:1) posits that policy-makers have undertaken several reforms to raise schools' standards such as new standards and tests, adjustments to school operations, revised curricula and models of governance. Nevertheless, studies have repeatedly revealed that teachers are focal in determining the success or failure of the school initiatives.

On the other hand, teaching is described as an art and a dialogue involving two parties for the purposes of transforming knowledge (Kochhar, 2014:23; Ko, Sammons & Bakkum, 2013:42). The University of Queensland (2012:12) describes teaching as both a normative and ethical exercise which does not just end with facilitating learning technically, but is primarily centred on developing student capacities and needs as human beings physically, intellectually and emotionally. Therefore, teaching refers to the teacher's ability to positively realise student outcomes and in turn improve schools (Stronge, 2012: iv). Ko et al. (2013:2) emphasise that teacher effectiveness entails paying attention to student outcomes and the teacher conduct and classroom procedures that support increased student outcomes.

Richardson et al. (2014: xx) explain that teaching comprises a multidimensional category of assignments demanding a complicated combination of intellectual abilities, skill in pedagogy, characteristics in terms of personality as well as talents in organisation. The University of Queensland (2012:12) adds that teaching is a professional activity that is centred on processes involving making decisions, interpretation of information, planning and implementation of

actions to support students' learning, with success being enhanced by learners' willingness to learn and the availability of family and community support.

The 1996 ILO/UNESCO Recommendation concerning the Status of Teachers Provision iii:6 as cited in Ministry of Education (b) (2010:vii), emphasises that teaching ought to be considered a profession, being a kind of service that is public which demands expert knowledge of teachers; specialisation in terms of skills that are acquired and consistently maintained through intensive and continuous study; and a sense of individual and collective responsibility towards the education and the welfare of the learners in their custody.

The researcher observes that the expectations of teaching as an educational exercise point to the fact that teachers have a pivotal role in the performance of learners (Gerritsen et al. 2014:2) thereby demanding teacher effectiveness in order to achieve positive learner performance. World Bank (2012:1) adds that the effectiveness of the teacher is a cardinal school-based predictor of student learning and that excellence in teaching is capable of offsetting the learning challenges of students who are disadvantaged. This is supported by Anderson and Mundy (2014:5) in their claim that quality of teaching is a fundamental element influencing student learning. According to Naylor and Sayed (2014:6), teaching ranks second in terms of influencing student outcomes after taking into consideration student characteristics like home background. Caena (2011:2) underlines that high-quality teaching is an extremely important foundation to education and training and that the development of teachers' ability to teach cross-curricular matters and different types of learners, working in partnership with fellow professionals and parents is deemed to be absolutely necessary.

2.3.2 Quality teaching defined

Ko and Chung (2014:11) state that there is a significant positive relationship between teachers' teaching quality and learners' academic performance. Machin and Murphy (2011:5) state that a highly-efficient teacher increases every learner's achievement by a third in terms of examination grades, as opposed to mediocre teaching. In agreement with the above statements, Hanushek (2013:23) advances that, as much as factors like families, friends and the community are

fundamental to the learning of students, the public responsibility for the youths' education lies in the school, particularly, teachers and administrators.

Knox and Anfara (2013:59) also comment that the success of every school largely depends on the manner in which teachers carry out their respective duties. This can be confirmed from studies that claim a causal relationship between teacher input and learners' outcomes (Suriamurthee & Kudayja, 2010:376). Anderson and Mundy (2014:5) note that quality of teaching is a fundamental element influencing student learning; therefore, policies and practices on recruitment of teachers, how they are deployed, selected and hired, working conditions and their retention are cardinal.

Araujo, Carneiro, Cruz-Aguayo and Schady (2016:2) argue that, while teacher quality has been at the centre of discussion from the academic and policy point of view in recent years, there is still no consensus on how best to determine teacher effectiveness. For example, teacher quality is a combination of quality in terms of teaching encompassing individual teacher qualities, skills, knowledge and understanding, classroom practices and above all their influence on the outcomes of students (Naylor & Sayed, 2014:4). OECD (a) (2013:20) notes that teacher quality typically includes factors such as class size, certification, type of qualification, degrees earned, or years of experience. Jensen, Roberts-Hull, Magee and Ginnivan (2016:1) emphasise that teacher subject expertise is very important in quality teaching.

Center for High Impact Philanthropy (2010:7) explains that a quality teacher could be described as one who positively influences the learning and development of students in their respective subject areas by combining content knowledge, a variety of skills in communication, teaching methodology, development of the child, and identifying and meeting the needs of the learners in their various individual cultural contexts. Rado (2010:84) argues that teacher quality points towards meeting educational aims which include reproducing culture; broadening skills development; revising the social structure; economic operations facilitating integration of society; functions for service provision; and modernisation.

In line with the above arguments regarding the meaning of teacher quality, Rado (2010:98) posits that in general terms, quality is appropriateness for the purpose, which means meeting set standards, as indicated for example in a contract, and achieving client satisfaction.

2.3.3 Expectations and demands of teaching

In view of the arguments in the preceding section, OECD (b) (2013:23) states that teachers need knowledge and skills that will assist their learners to attain learning outcomes that are clearly defined. Darling-Hammond, Hylar, and Gardner (2017:1) underscore that sophisticated teaching is required to develop 21st century student capabilities, like in-depth mastery of difficult content, thinking critically, dealing with complicated problems, and efficiency in communication and collaboration; hence, the need for teachers to acquire and improve pedagogies that are needed to deliver these skills.

State of Victoria (2014:9) indicates that teacher effectiveness includes appreciation that every learner is capable of learning; individualised teaching to ensure that every student's needs are met, focusing on meaning and comprehension instead of merely completing assignments; emphasis on powerful formative assessment; and facilitating students 'active participation in learning.

Additionally, Ingula, Rono and Ndambuki (2011:9) advise that teachers should be aware and be able to understand the numerous factors that may affect the progression of the students in any learning process and they must endeavour to employ strategies that encourage the involvement of learners. Naylor and Sayed (2014:8) agree that there is much evidence to suggest that teacher quality encompasses several elements like classroom practices, subject knowledge, professional development, teaching experience and teacher-student relationships which, in turn, affect student outcomes.

The section below discusses four teacher qualities in relation to the focus of the study: knowledge of the subject, pedagogy and learners as well as teacher self-efficacy and motivation.

2.3.3.1 Subject knowledge

Das (2012:47) argues that the subject one teaches is one of the three important elements, other than the learners and the teacher, that underpin any teaching process. Therefore, teacher's knowledge of the subject is the most important requirement in competent teaching. Teachers need to have a strong attachment to the subjects they teach by working towards gaining the required knowledge, which in turn allows for confidence to teach students effectively (Thomas, 2014:76). This calls for teachers' investment in mastering the subjects they teach, so that they gain competence in their delivery as well as assisting the learners to acquire the necessary knowledge.

Danielson (2011:2) adds that being able to direct student learning calls for teachers who are knowledgeable in the subjects they teach; the different principles and skills inherent in the subject; and the content and scope of the knowledge required. They must also know how the subject has developed into the 21st century, including, for instance, exposure to global and cultural differences as deemed necessary. This is why Dumont et al. (2012:5) indicate that excellence of knowledge and understanding is much more important than merely the depth of the knowledge obtained.

McGregor and Cartwright (2011:8-9) acknowledge that subject knowledge is a major requirement for teaching because if teachers do not know the subject they are supposed to teach, they will not have a well-defined idea of what the learners are expected to learn. Thus, a teacher should have knowledge of the subject's major facts and appreciate and understand how they are connected.

2.3.3.2 Pedagogical knowledge

While subject knowledge has been identified as an important element in the teaching process (Danielson, 2011:2; Das, 2012:47; Thomas, 2014:76), its contribution to learner performance is likely to be limited unless coupled with knowledge of how to teach a subject (Figueroa & Van Damme, 2013:25-26). Pedagogical knowledge is the expert knowledge of teachers to facilitate

efficient teaching and learning for all students. It encompasses principles and strategies for organisation and management of the classroom and is one of the indicators of quality teaching (OECD(c) (2013:21). It includes capability, for instance, to consider the diversity of learners, their “prior knowledge, emotional, psychological and cognitive needs, and curriculum requirements” (MESVTEE and JICA, 2011:19).

Koehler (2011:1) further describes pedagogical knowledge as in-depth knowledge of teaching and learning strategies and how it incorporates the entire purposes, values and aims of education. It cuts across all issues of student learning, classroom management, lesson plan development and implementation and student evaluation. It involves knowing about methods to be used in the classroom, the type of the intended audience and techniques for assessing students’ understanding. In acknowledgement of this, Fullan (2013:43) argues that pedagogical knowledge encompasses creative teaching practices which are characterised by three elements: student-centred pedagogy; learning beyond the classroom; and the use of Information and Communication Technology.

In agreement with the assertions above, Thomas (2014:75) stresses that teaching is becoming more demanding and depends on committed and effective individual efforts, such as incorporation of adjustments to strategies for teaching, methods and styles of teaching, knowledge, developing skills, and creativeness.

2.3.3.3 Knowledge of learners

Danielson (2011:6) observes that content is not taught abstractly by teachers who ought to be aware not only of the content of their subject, including the associated pedagogy, but also student expectations, acknowledging the recent findings of the mental psychology research that active intellectual engagement of students facilitates learning; that the manner in which each student learns is individual; and it is likely that each student will come with knowledge gaps and preconceived ideas that the teacher will need to discover in order to suitably plan activities for learning. According to Ingula et al. (2011:8), teaching as a process demands being knowledgeable about the various aspects of the learners: physical intellectual, social, emotional

and moral; because they are the recipients who make up the class and for whom educational activities are planned.

Additionally, Kuppuswamy (2012:3) emphasise the knowledge of how the child develops and laws of learning. As such, the education process must be built on adequate knowledge of the development of the child and learning principles.

OECD (b) (2011:6) confirms that both teachers and leaders in schools are faced with huge demands to change educational outcomes under very challenging circumstances, requiring teachers to make learning experiences personal and competently face the increasingly diverse cultural makeup of their classes and the different ways of learning so that every student has the opportunity to excel. Sharma, Loreman and Forlin (2011:12) emphasise the importance of inclusiveness in education built on the philosophy that students differ in many aspects not only in terms of ability, and in order to cope with their learning requirements, it is necessary that schools adjust accordingly and transform their practices. Schools have an obligation to cope with approaches that allow accommodation of different characteristics of learners especially those that appear to be challenging.

Apart from that, Lo (2012:20) observe that there is a tendency among many teachers to conclude that being able to clearly explain the content of their subjects leads to students seeing the content exactly the same way as it is seen by the teacher. Yet, this is hardly the case, because the initial steps in improving teaching involve breaking down the original beliefs or views and acknowledging the fact that students will normally have a diverse understanding of the same content. Therefore, teachers are advised to investigate students' views since these may be the reason for diverse outcomes in learning.

In support of the above observation, Sousa and Tomlinson (2011:8) suggest that learner differences require 'differentiated instruction' where a teacher attempts to discover particular modes through which individual learners would effectively learn, bridging the gap between critical content and student needs in cases where the content may not be part of the child's environment. It also entails that teachers are always conscious of three things: the manner in

which the content is arranged in terms of values and validity; learners' personalities; and the particular aspects of their classroom that facilitate the linking of content with learners' understanding.

Additionally, Figueroa and Van Damme (2013:29) stress the importance of diversity, which entails facilitating learning through adjusting teaching to accommodate students' previous knowledge, abilities and former experiences which influence the effectiveness with which students personally acquire and retain knowledge. For instance, the teacher must be able to recognise the different circumstances that assist in learning by ensuring equity, irrespective of one's background in terms of language, culture and socio-economic status.

2.3.3.4 Teacher self-efficacy and motivation

Teacher efficacy relate to teachers' beliefs regarding their own efficiency (Yilmaz, 2011:92) and it relates to 'motivation', which is derived from the Latin word, 'movere' meaning to move, and is translated as, "the process of arousing movement in the organism" (Chauhan, 2014:202). According to Mangal (2013:53), motivation is something which forces, pushes and strengthens someone to do or conduct themselves in a specific manner during a certain period to achieve particular aims. Motivation is influenced by one's needs which in turn influence one's actions for the purposes of attaining particular goals or fulfilling the goals (Kruger & Van Schalkwyk, 2010:67). For instance, a teacher with strong self-efficacy is committed to taking risks and trying out approaches to teaching that are highly effective or experimenting what may work out and what may not so that the students they teach could benefit (Ling, Pihie, Asimirin & Foori, 2015:28). Oakes, Lane, Jenkins and Booker (2013:99) add that teachers with a high level of belief regarding their personal efficiency set higher targets for themselves; persevere in challenging circumstances; deliver highly-rated support; take more time on instructing academically; give more assistance to students facing problems; and believe that students are capable of performing regardless of their potential or home environment. Such teachers are optimistic that they can ensure that the schools successfully meet the educational aims through maximum realisation of their learners' potentialities.

Furthermore, high teacher self-efficacy could promote the kind of behaviour that leads to successful management of classroom activities because teachers characterised by a high level of individual belief regarding their effectiveness in teaching are more capable of controlling their emotions, managing stress and, as a result, they are not likely to end up relying on punishment in dealing with challenging classroom behaviours (Gaudreau, Royer, Frenette, Beaumont and Flanagan, 2013:361). This is confirmed by Richardson et al. (2014:xxi), in their assertion that teachers' motivation to teach largely influences how teachers relate professionally; behave towards their work; experience job satisfaction; and believe in their effectiveness to teach and how they relate with students. The opposite is also true because, according to Gaudreau et al. (2013:361) teachers who have minimal individual feelings about their effectiveness take more time on activities that are non-curricular in nature, harshly judge their students' challenges, and have a tendency to strictly manage or control their classrooms and punish students.

2.4 The meaning and expectations of learning

Learning as described by Kochhar (2014:24) is an educational process aimed at producing worthwhile adjustment in the children's behaviour through exposure to particular experiences which lead to positive adjustment in one's behaviour. In this respect, Thomas (2014:41) advises that learning should be directed along the appropriate path, in order that valuable knowledge is created by using important information from every possible source. Therefore, the learning activity of learners is an important factor in the educational programme and the schools' outcome is a crop of learners who have obtained the required abilities, information and way of thinking to deal with life after school (Van Deventer & Kruger, 2013:253).

On the other hand, Kundu (2015:157) defines learning as an active process which forms a basis for the existence of schools and involves modification and acquisition of behaviour patterns as a result of enrichment of experience and interaction with the environment. It is a growth, progression and improvement process where a person gains knowledge, repeats behaviours, and develops abilities and ways of thinking which, in turn, lead to behavioural patterns (Thomas, 2014: 41).

Mangal (2011:180) describes learning as a process which targets desirable change of behaviour in learners through direct or indirect experiences. In this case, learners are expected to obtain a particular set of information and insight, develop particular skills and learn to conduct themselves in a particular way as required by the community and the educators (Kruger & Van Schalkwyk, 2010:11). Hence, learning is not an exercise influenced by heredity, but a process of reaction to external stimuli which always encompasses some tasks, training or exposure (Mangal, 2011:189).

In relation to the description of learning above, Lofthouse, Leat and Towler (2010:9) argue that lesson procedures are complex and are not only affected by a high standard of planning, but also the nature of interactions, the environment in which learning takes place and all the participants' motivation. There is no finite definition of what it takes to learn because of divergent views about the way learning takes place. As such, there are many factors that determine the success of the learning process, and meeting the learning needs of the learners requires that teachers acknowledge the various resources that students come with to school; however, this must not dilute the teachers' commitment to assisting all the learners attain their potential (Center for Education Statistics and Evaluation, 2014:2). For example, according to Ko and Chung (2014:12), the performance of learners could be affected by other factors like the existing school conditions, classroom members, the arrangement of the curriculum, the guiding principles of teaching and the circumstances under which teaching occurs. Sousa and Tomlinson (2011:37) confirm that students differ significantly in their strengths, interests, learning styles, and readiness to learn. The differences in how best individual students learn in a respective context and the teachers' expectations regarding how students learn can hamper the process of learning if these differences are not understood.

In support of the above, Dumont et al. (2012:16) comment that students differ in many ways fundamentally to learning: prior knowledge, ability, conceptions of learning, learning styles and strategies, interest, motivation, self-efficacy beliefs and emotions, as well in socio-environmental terms such as linguistic, cultural and social background. It is for this reason that Sharma et al. (2011:12) emphasise that the aim of schools is to meet the needs of all the students and schools

should be able to take responsibility for any difficulties students may experience since they would arise from school practices.

Learning as a process also demands motivation which is something that forces living organisms to behave in a particular manner (Chauhan 2014:202; Mangal, 2013:53). Usher and Kober (2012:2) note that lack of motivation among students poses a challenge to improving academic achievements even if the teacher, curriculum or school are good. Unmotivated students have the potential to disengage other students from academics and, in turn, negatively affect the environment and the whole classroom or school. Kundu (2015:157) adds that motives or drives are elementary to any learning, including its process, because they encourage achievement of a goal. Erasmus, Loedolff, Mda & Nel (2013:141) observe that students seldom learn without purpose; it is only when they can gain from a particular situation and when the problems are founded on real circumstances prevailing in their life that they are willing to learn.

Kochhar (2014:27) comments that effective learning is preceded by powerful motivation; therefore, a kind and caring teacher commits to motivating learners in a number of ways to raise interest and to facilitate a powerful and continued urge to learn, thereby leading to learning that is sustained. Usher and Kober (2012:2) further argue that higher motivation has been closely associated with increased academic performance, increased comprehension of concepts, satisfaction with school, self-worth, social adjustment and completion rates. This is because motivation has potential to influence students' approach to school generally, their relationship with teachers, time and effort devoted to their studies, their willingness to seek assistance when they face challenges, their performance in tests and other education-related issues.

2.5 The contribution of teaching and learning to national development.

The role of education in national development almost goes without saying, and there is evidence that outstanding education is beneficial to the broader society and contributes to personal and social wellbeing (Mourshed et al. 2010:6). OECD (a) (2012:13) emphasises that lack of education leads to high costs for individuals and communities. Absence of skills to facilitate participation socially and economically results in poor health, overdependence on welfare

payments, and poses a danger to future generations. Ingvarson et al. (2014:2) contend that countries are realising that competing in the global economy can best be done through provision of quality education to all, with emphasis on higher-order student outcomes, inclusion of creativity and innovation, as well as skills that allow working collaboratively, using new technologies and addressing complex challenges. For example, the Japanese have traditionally placed a high value on educational standards and their steadfast view that children have the potential to be successful has advanced the economy of Japan for many years (Gurría, 2012:1).

In line with the above arguments, Mourshed et al. (2010:111) emphasise that school quality has an impact on every area of children's lives, how their individual destiny is shaped, and the capacity of the society to be creative and develop economically. The key role education plays in transmitting skills and knowledge required to cope with the daily changes facing society was confirmed in the 'International summit on the Teaching Profession' held in New York in 2011 where the General Secretary of Education International, Fred Van Leeuwen echoed that globalisation and the increasing adjustments in technology are putting a lot of pressure on education to ensure that students are prepared for the 21st century work and citizenship (Center for Global Education, 2011:5).

In view of the above observations, Kruger and Van Schalkwyk (2010:3) argue that schools are institutions primarily aimed at providing education for the purposes of attaining the educational goals of a given society. According to Van Deventer and Kruger (2013:2), a school's excellence is measured by the quality of its main activities, teaching and learning. Thus, teaching and learning are important in national development because they are officially-arranged activities which involve an interaction between a teacher and learner about particular content (Kruger & Van Schalkwyk, 2010:15), and schooling primarily exists to support the attainment and development of children and young people (Lofthouse et al. 2010: iii).

Marsden (2014:3) suggests that nations should invest in teacher quality because teachers comprise one of the biggest categories of workers trained professionally in most advanced economies, and, as is the case in other specialised fields, they are highly educated and have the capacity to display independence in the manner they conduct their work. Their work as educators

has the ability to uplift the standards of the total number of workers at national level and add to the wellbeing of their students in later life. Gerritsen et al. (2014:2) underline that teacher quality is believed to be an essential element for human capital production; therefore, being aware of what contributes to the quality of teachers is significant in advancing educational quality and should be included in education policies.

In view of the foregoing, countries are encouraged to focus on ways that best ensure school improvements for the purposes of realising the benefits of education. For example, the State of Victoria (2014:7) reveals that high-performing schools commonly agree on three policy goals for school improvement: improving every learner's education levels; raising teacher quality; and building the capacity of all instructors who facilitate learning.

2.6 International research findings on characteristics of high-performing schools

In view of the various discussions on teaching and learning in the previous sections, this section sets out to discuss what high-performing schools have done to achieve positive results. The researcher is of the view that improving learner performance and teaching in public schools in Zambia can be a reality as revealed in an OECD background report: 'Building a High-Quality Teaching Professions: Lessons from around the World' in which countries with an outstanding performance have proven that it is possible to attain standards and equity in education (Center for Global Education, 2011:6). This can also be confirmed from the argument by Mourshed et al. (2010:14) that improvement of school systems lies in implementing strategies that are based on the experiences of school systems that have resulted in sustainable improvements. Battelle for Kids (2015:2) adds that the saying "to be the best, you have to learn from the best", is also applicable in education in that low-performing schools can improve all students' opportunities for learning by "mining the practices of high-growth districts and schools". For example, according to Jensen (2014:1), Australia's schools that previously were known for problems in terms of behaviour, low expectations and lack of staff morale have since made tremendous improvements and have become role models for low-performing schools, not because of their inspirational leaders, but as a result of following the same approaches, "as turnaround schools around the world".

The researcher is of the view that lessons from high-performing schools internationally, can inform public secondary schools in Zambia about how to improve learner performance and teaching. For the sake of this study, the researcher makes reference to some of the key common experiences of the top-performing countries like Canada, Estonia, Finland, Hong Kong, Shanghai-China, Singapore and South Korea (OECD (c) (2013:31). The researcher particularly discusses the five outstanding characteristics of the top-performing countries that relate to the study: strong leadership that increases expectations; effective teaching based on teachers drawing lessons from one another; growth and weighing of student learning; creating a positive school culture; and involvement of parents and the community (Jensen, 2014:1; Jensen & Farmer, 2013:2-3).

2.6.1 Strong school leadership

According to Jensen (2014:6), leadership is broadly regarded as a very important ingredient in any organisation. Efficient leadership at every level of the system of education is elementary to improving student attainment (Pirtle & Doggett, 2013:5). Loislue (2017:49) contends that leadership can be described in various ways, but there is a general consensus that leadership entails capability to influence, “process of influencing, social influence and the ability of an individual to motivate”.

From the educational point of view, leadership is about driving the school towards achieving positive achievements and responding to the national aims and goals of education (Igbal, 2016:1). School leadership and governance critically impact teacher classroom practices in terms of teacher attendance, time spent in school teaching, access to school-based CPD because all these depend on the effectiveness and “visionary instructional leadership, management and school governance” (Naylor & Sayed, 2014:15). This is in line with the argument put up by Emmanouil, Osia, & Paraskevi-Loanna (2014:38) that recent research in education provides evidence that schools have been changed into organisations of learning which need to be structured carefully and constantly renewed, always bearing in mind their needs both now and in the future. Leadership plays the role of mediating, which ignites stimulation, motivation, assistance and direction in the correct way, making the most of the teachers’ abilities and

attaining improvement in school. For this reason, Hénard and Roseveare (2012:25) emphasise that leadership and decision-making at institutional level play a key role in moulding the quality culture for the institution because they are usually the innovators of quality teaching innovations and their strategies “directly affect the outcomes of teaching and learning”.

Louis et al. (2010:9), underline that leadership exists primarily to fulfill two functions: providing direction and exercising influence for the purposes of bettering the organisation. In particular, it involves ensuring that people are motivated and supported in achieving the targets set for achieving the goals of the organisation (Marishane & Botha, 2011:7). It is, therefore, necessary that leaders have the appropriate skills and knowledge to direct and influence attainment of their respective institutions’ aims and objectives. Leadership also provides room for checks and balances on how an organisation operates. Hénard and Roseveare (2012:25) underscore the fact that efficient school leadership is not easy without provision of particular organisational support for quality teaching and learning. It means seeing to it that leadership innovations are adhered to and that conceptual strategies for the organisation to implement quality teaching are reconciled with practical experience across disciplines, timetables and sections or schools. According to Anderson and Mundy (2014:7), research generally emphasises leadership practices are efficient when enacted in a manner that is skillful, logical, and target-oriented so as to develop collective agreements on school goals founded on student learning, teacher knowledge and skills development for teaching effectively; facilitating conditions and relationships at workplace that are conducive for teaching and learning; and successful management of instructional programmes that allow for achievement of school goals. Therefore, training and retraining of school principals and leaders is important because of their responsibility to apply educational policies in schools (Vaillant, 2015:4).

In acknowledgement of the above assertions, School Performance Improvement Frameworks (2010:15) confirm that effective instructional and administrative leadership has been identified as a requirement for the implementation of change processes at high-performing schools. However, as observed by Hénard and Roseveare (2012:25), change is only as effective as the support provided by a school to increase quality teaching and learning.

Battelle for Kids (2015:11) adds that high-performing schools have departed from the tradition top-down leadership system in preference for distributed leadership while Botha and Triegaardt (2014:10) state that high-performing schools combine the efforts of the management team of the school with that of the teachers. Such efforts are directed at meeting the school targets and values and relieving the principal of such things as numerous administrative and management tasks. For example, according to OECD (2011:53), countries like Finland and Ontario did away with top-down systems because they found out that they did not lead to comprehensive and sustainable adjustments in practice such as paying attention to issues that were very remote from “the instructional core of teaching and learning”; having a wrong assumption regarding teachers’ efficiencies in some domains; and having a conflicting nature which deterred teachers from working successfully. As a result, “teachers and schools were not buying into their reform strategies”. Instead, Finland and Ontario opted to pay attention to improving teaching and provided careful and comprehensive attention to the implementation of reforms, including provision for teachers to practice ideas that were new and learning from others. They also initiated an integrated collection of expectations encompassing teachers and students and sought support for reforms from teachers.

Battelle for Kids (2015:11) further emphasises the need for engaging all stakeholders in decisions that affect a school. A 2012 survey report of 14 educational occupations (Battelle for Kids, 2015:11) confirmed that teachers want to participate in the decisions that affect their schools, such as assisting in the creation of the community in which they operate, increasing engagement levels, and building a sense of ownership

Rothman (2011:7) adds that Finland, Ontario and Singapore recruit principals from among expert teachers who display leadership abilities and attach great importance to broadly-based clinical training for them for the purposes of preparing them to take up their leadership posts. For example, those who intend to take up the position of principals in Ontario participate in the programme for qualifications of principals; while in Finland leadership training encompasses university-based programmes that have “a peer-assisted leadership model” where part of the training is carried out through “shadowing and being mentored by the senior school principal”.

Also, as required by law, principals in Finland must have the qualification to teach where they lead, for example an elementary teacher will not be appointed as a high school principal.

OECD (2011:52) further report that leadership in Singapore is preceded by repeated assessment of young teachers for leadership capabilities and giving them the chance to “demonstrate and learn”, for instance, by working on committees; thereafter they can be upgraded to heading a department before being transferred to the Ministry for some time. Following the monitoring of these experiences, those who are considered capable of being principals are shortlisted for interviews and undergo exercises in situational leadership. If they perform well, they proceed to the country’s single institution for teacher training for a period of six months undergoing executive training, coupled with international study tours and a school innovation project.

2.6.2 Effective teaching and teacher collaboration

As already mentioned above, there is considerable evidence from international research to suggest that teachers are among the key elements in any education system and their quality is fundamental in achieving positive student outcomes and quality education (Anderson & Mundy, 2014:5; Caena, 2011:2; Gerritsen et al. 2014:2; Naylor & Sayed, 2014:6; World Bank, 2012:1). For example, according to Mourshed et al. (2010:11), the quality of education provided to learners is a very important factor in the future wellbeing of a society. Therefore, West-Burnham (2010:6) contends that, the quality of teachers as well as their classroom practices has the greatest potential to influence the attainment of students. Coe, Aloisi, Higgins and Major (2014:3) advise that teacher quality calls for a triangulated approach of evaluating teachers using continuous assessment and feedback based on a broad range of measurements drawn from different credible sources rather than using a single test.

In view of the above, Anderson and Mundy (2014:5) comment that policies and practices that focus on recruitment of teachers, how they are deployed, selected and hired, their working conditions and their retention are cardinal. Ingvarson et al. (2014:3) confirm that quality teachers are important in quality teaching and that best-practice teacher-education programmes demand best-practice approaches to the selection, preparation and induction of teachers into the

profession. That is why high-performing countries have, for instance, deliberately adopted policies that attract the most capable people into the teaching profession, making entry to teacher education very competitive and encouraging the most capable secondary school leavers and university graduates to become teachers.

Teacher quality is also greatly determined by how much emphasis is put on teacher preparation because, when they understand how learning takes place, they can begin to adjust their practices which can result in real improvement in learner outcomes (Lofthouse et al. 2010:9). Gaudreau et al. (2013:361) observe that teacher training at pre-service level gives minimal guidance on management of behaviour in class, which could be the reason many teachers have a feeling of inadequate preparation and are often overtaken by numerous difficulties when they start teaching.

The concern for moving away from emphasis on pre-service training on such measures arises from the research evidence that less than 20% of teachers in their initial year of teaching felt ready to choose and adjust curriculum materials, manage a broad range of classroom controls and disciplinary cases and evaluate students (Coggshall, Bivona & Reschly, 2012:9). The Centre for Education Statistics and Evaluation (2014:11) indicates that many teacher training programmes pay little attention to classroom management. This deficiency is confirmed by McKenzie, Rowley, Weldon and Murphy (2011:77) based on a 2010 survey in Australia's schools where teachers claimed classroom management, and more specifically managing student behaviour, ranked among the top areas in which teachers expressed need for more professional training.

At the same time, effective teacher practice calls for practice-oriented teacher preparation rather than just emphasis on qualifications. The National Council for Accreditation of Teacher Education (2010:2) notes that, very often, teacher education has been characterised by preparation in terms of subject matter, theory and teaching methodologies which are taught in intervals that are secluded and remotely detached from clinically-oriented practice. Yet, just like medicine, teaching is a practice-oriented profession and teachers should be prepared to become experts in their practice by being able to apply their professional knowledge to improve the

learning of students and being able to increase their knowledge of the profession by means of practical application. The National Council for Accreditation of Teacher Education (2010:ii) underscores that effective teacher preparation for the classroom in the 21st century demands a shift in teacher education from the traditional preparation in the academic and course work which is not firmly rooted in experiences that are school-based. Instead programmes should be adopted that are deliberately founded on clinical practices, combined with academic content and courses that are professionally founded, which allow the trainees to be exposed to the actual experiences they may come across in the classroom.

In view of the foregoing, the researcher agrees with European Agency for Development in Special Needs Education (2010:16) that there is no initial teacher education course capable of competently equipping teachers with all their requirements throughout their careers, because the teaching profession demands are increasingly changing, calling on teachers to develop a sense of reflection on their individual learning needs based on their specific school situation and taking responsibility for their personal, life-long learning. Jensen et al. (2016:60) add that it is not likely that initial teacher education could completely prepare a teacher for all classroom situation realities. Therefore, in-school support for teachers is critical in facilitating subject expertise and filling in gaps in terms of knowledge in the process of adjusting to teaching full-time because this allows teachers to see first-hand the effect of new knowledge and adjustments in practice on student learning. Darling-Hammond et al. (2017:1) confirm that professional development, if properly established and implemented efficiently, brings about worthwhile adjustments in terms of teacher practice and the outcomes of students. The Ministry of Education (2015:iii) underlines that continuing professional development is an important tool for enhancing educational quality as it facilitates building of educators' knowledge base and competences.

In support of the above argument, the Ministry of Education (b) (2010:1) acknowledges that teaching is both a learnt and a learning process where every teacher is expected to be a learner. Teachers must continue to develop their methodologies of teaching and delivery of content at school level as it is not feasible to send the whole crop of teachers to colleges or universities for in-service training. Cator, Schneider and Ark (2014:9) emphasise that with the emergence of dynamic educational initiatives, teachers need to meet to high standards and undergo continuous

learning at professional level because their functions and strategies do not remain the same. The European Commission (2013:7) acknowledges that the functions and expectations of teachers and schools are constantly changing. As such, in the modern times, teachers require the knowledge to continuously adapt their practice which includes critical self-evaluation, giving feedback on the outcomes of students, providing new evidence for in and out of class and professional interaction so as to adjust the way they do things. Caena (2011:10) adds that, when teachers within each department or subject area together discuss professional issues, it is possible that discussions will be closely related to the actual lived experiences, provide a chance for learning actively and lead to a shared understanding in terms of instructional targets, strategies, challenges and possible ways to solve them. Therefore, collaborative practice is an important strategy for improving systems because it allows teachers and school administrators to work collectively in the establishment of instructional practices, investigating what is feasible in class, and doing this with extreme care as well as commitment to improving practice individually and collectively (Mourshed et al. 2010:74).

In relation to the above comments, Naylor and Sayed (2014: 27) advise that all efforts aimed at improving teacher quality should be context-based. In line with the principles of reflective teaching, improving teacher quality based on one's context is important, because deriving of meaning and gaining understandings from one's reality allows individual projection regarding possibility in new situations. On the other hand, a highly centralised system of managing public schools hampers the possibility of individual schools reflecting on their individual experiences and developing research-based strategies in respect of their own contexts (McGregor & Cartwright, 2011: xvi). Teacher training towards changing instruction and raising classroom outcomes demands sustainable investment in terms of time (DeMonte, 2013:1) but most continuous professional development programmes fail to positively contribute to teaching and improvement of student achievement due to "reliance on short-term, episodic, and disconnected professional learning for teachers". Darling-Hammond et al. (2017:v-vi) underline that effective professional development includes seven major characteristics: focus on content, active learning, upholds collaboration, applies effective practice models, makes available coaching and expert support, provides feedback and reflection and has a duration that is sustained.

In relation to the discussion above, Tucker (2014:4) confirms that Shanghai attaches great importance to teacher quality by not only recruiting their teachers from the high-performing high school graduates or demanding that their teachers possess a master's degree on joining the teaching profession, but insisting on subject specialisation no matter the Grade level, and ensuring that they gain competence in the craft of teaching through initiating “ an apprenticeship programme for learning the craft of teaching”. Furthermore, Tucker (2014: 5-6) indicates that Shanghai is also known for having a teaching system founded on a professional model as revealed by “the way it supports and incentivizes the continuous disciplined improvement of teacher performance”, such as training teachers in research strategies as well as providing an opportunity for teachers, not administrators, to spearhead systems of bettering the curriculum and teaching strategies, working collectively as a group.

On the other hand, Morgan (2014:454) reports that Finland, only selects 10% of the best high-school graduate applicants using a comprehensive selection system where initially one is required to score highly in the college entry examination, a powerful grade point average, and involvement in extracurricular activities. Candidates who meet these conditions are further subjected to sit a teaching examination, display efficient communication skills, and at least average performance in an interview where they respond to different questions, including justification for taking up the teaching profession. Morgan (2014:454) adds that the actual university teacher training focuses on preparing prospective teachers to be both researchers and practitioners and encompasses a “clinical practice at a model school, where they learn how to deliver research-based instruction and mentor beginners”.

Alliance for Excellent Education (2011:6) reports that teachers in Singapore spend approximately 20 hours per week engrossed in a timetable for planning and learning together, and 100 hours per year in a professional development programme supported by the state outside normal school hours. The performance management system is set up in such a way that it directly connects professional development with the curriculum and provides teachers with opportunities to become more effective. Ontario Ministry of Education (2012:55) explains that Singapore maintains a professional learning environment in which it incorporates all

stakeholders in the continuous activity of identifying present achievements, developing targets to advance those levels, and collectively working towards achieving those goals.

2.6.3 Growth and Weighting of Student Learning

Student learning and growth have, in the recent past, taken centre-stage in the examination of educator efficiency (Lachlan-Hache & Castro, 2015:1). Das (2012:13) advises that measuring education efficiency should focus on the purpose of teaching any subject, which is to empower the child with knowledge of that particular subject, and it should always focus on realising the general educational objectives. The key aim of schooling is to advance the attainment and development of the child and the young. If schools are avenues for enhancing achievement and development of learners, then their effectiveness lies in realising this goal and should be seen from the final outcome of the learners usually determined by way of a formal assessment (McGrane & Lofthouse, 2010: iii). It is expected that teaching should bring about improved achievement of students based on outcomes that will enhance their success in future. Above all, teachers' efficiency is best judged by the students' progress (Coe et al. 2014:2). This is because student learning is "confirmed by a situation in which learners progress further than might be predicted from consideration of their attainment with intake" (Van Deventer & Kruger, 2013:2).

The Centre for Education Statistics and Evaluation (2014:2) argues that improvement to student outcomes can be enhanced by teachers' acknowledgement of the diverse abilities learners have when they start school and utilizing this information to efficiently meet their learning needs. Therefore, it is extremely important that learners are carefully assessed through systematically gathering information that will help to determine accurate conclusions about the quality of teaching (Omari, 2011:230). The American Institute for Research (2014:3) recommends that in measuring student learning, educators must focus on three key factors: objectives of the course, available assessments as well as the capacity and resources. It is recommended that both proficiency in which students reveal advancement in terms of fundamental knowledge and skills, and growth in which students show accumulation of knowledge from one period to another, are important in determining the value of an education system (American Institute for Research, 2014:7).

Student growth is supported by Goss and Hunter (2015:1) in their argument that it is possible for teachers and schools to raise the performance of every student given that data regarding each student's achievement and progression is available. The Ontario Ministry of Education (2010:6) reveals that the core aim of assessment and evaluation is to enhance student learning, and it is important that appropriate approaches are adopted to facilitate the gathering of relevant data on decisions relating to instruction, uphold the levels to which students are engaged and raise student learning. This is why Dumont et al. (2012:5) advance that the "modern cognitive science" indicates that knowledge, understanding and critical thinking is essential as opposed to the amount of knowledge acquired; hence, the need for teacher preparation that focuses on the real classroom situation.

In support of the above discussion, the Ontario Ministry of Education (2010:6) emphasises that assessment and evaluation must be guided by certain key elements such as fairness, transparency and equity to all students, carefully designed in relation to the expectations of the curriculum and learning goals, including all the students' needs, styles of learning, preferences and experiences, clearly communicated to both parents and students. The Ontario Ministry of Education (2010:6) goes on to suggest that assessment and evaluation should be continuous, diverse in nature, and spread over a period of time to give a number of chances for learners to show the complete range of their learning. Feedback should be well-defined, relevant and timely to support increased learning and attainment as well as leading students to develop the skill of self-evaluation and create particular goals and design. For example, according to the Ontario 'Education for All' Report (2005:5) cited in Ontario Ministry of Education 2010:7), students must be treated according to their personal needs rather than being treated in the same way as others, because some may need additional or different kinds of support so that they can operate at a level that matches their abilities and requirements.

The American Institute for Research (2014:7) acknowledges that worthwhile measures of student learning are founded on the students' expected learning and what teachers are scheduled to cover in a course "in terms of content, skills, and complexity", and it should enable students at several stages of performance to demonstrate their learning. Furthermore, "administration and scoring

procedures should be in place that can produce consistent results across students and classrooms”.

Jensen (2014:9) confirms that Australia has been able to record successful student achievement through putting emphasis on every student’s learning progression. This is done by means of the Australian Council for Education Research Progressive Achievement Tests in March and November to establish the progress of every child and class. This is followed by teacher’ performance management meetings at the end of the year to establish how student learning has improved in the course of the year.

Research conducted in schools and districts in Washington State as reported by School Performance Improvement Frameworks (2010:15) reveals that the characteristics associated with school improvement include monitoring growth and student learning through a consistent chain of various assessments in order to focus and raise instructional activities. This helps to establish those who need help and to make alterations to the teaching in line with the evaluations.

2.6.4 Positive school culture.

Fisher (2012:4) describes school culture as all the ways of thinking, the behaviours and values embraced by the school that influence the manner in which the school runs. School culture is a reflection of the manner in which schools carry out their daily activities (Bhengu & Mthembu, 2014:46), and as such, it relates to the ‘pervasive’ element of the life within school that affects all the elements of the education provided (Mestry, Pillay & Schmidt, 2012:57).

A positive school culture, therefore, is the way in which members of a given school carries out its daily business in order to fulfill its key purpose of achieving the countries’ educational goals (Kruger & Van Schalkwyk, 2010:3). Cleveland, Chambers, Mainus, Powell, Skepple, Tyler and Wood (2012:35) add that school culture is the repeated styles of meaning that are historically spread by the school community members like patterns of behaviour, what they consider to be important, the way of thinking, celebrations, “rituals, traditions, and myths perceived in different levels which affect the way people relate with one another in school”.

Given that the success of every school is measured by the teaching and learning quality (Van Deventer & Kruger, 2013:2), a positive school culture provides direction on the way teachers are expected to conduct themselves in line with the goals of the institution based on the needs of the students at the school (Cleveland et al. 2012:36). Therefore, a positive school culture can be understood as the existence of an environment that facilitates successful fulfillment of the school expectations. McGregor and Cartwright (2011:10-11) confirm that school culture encompasses daily schedules, manner of operating and actions that make up “an automatic and accepted” manner of conducting business that could either hinder or promote its way of doing things.

Thomas (2014:46) comments that learning requires a conducive environment structured for the benefit of the students by creating an atmosphere for effective learning as well as richness in educative possibilities. This is supported by School Performance Improvement Frameworks (2010:16) in their comment that high-performing schools ensure that their schools are characterised by a learning environment that is secure, non-intimidating, healthy and intellectually stimulating.

Additionally, learning environments, according to Sousa and Tomlinson (2011:30), are hidden but influence all the occurrences in a class because they determine the end results and affect students’ preparation for the challenging task of learning. The teacher should be able to control the social nature of learning ranging from emotional, social and active learning and classroom management.

Jensen (2014:6) reports that turn around schools ensure that the school environment is “orderly and disciplined”. This relates to the organisational culture where educationists have a common element of “collegiality” as well as a common zeal to attain, thereby ensuring that they develop an atmosphere that is “constructive, productive and positive to teaching and learning that is conducive” (Van Deventer & Kruger, 2013:5). Jensen (2014:6) emphasises that great adjustment often takes place in the initial stage in the process of turnaround that aims at creation of new patterns of behaviours that are accepted both in schools and classrooms. Van Deventer and Kruger (2013:5) add that organisational culture provides an official agreement on what is

acceptable and worthwhile for the school. It uses influence to compel both students and teachers to adhere to the given set of guidelines and “to validate the high expectations or performance” in relation to the mission statement and policy of the school.

Furthermore, Jensen (2014:10) explains that the reform agenda in Australia emphasises the importance of adjusting the existing cultures in school as confirmed from the turnaround schools, such as, focusing on non-tolerance of disruptive learners so that teachers could be given an opportunity to smoothly undertake their planned lessons and avoiding disturbing other students, based on the spirit of strengthening learning, with zero tolerance of behaviours that are not in line with the culture.

McGregor and Cartwright (2011:39) comment that schools comprise teachers from diverse social and cultural backgrounds, each characterised by diverse individual and professional goals. According to Erasmus et al. (2013:329), the various backgrounds may not be in line with prevailing cultures in the institutions. Thus, school leaders play a very important role in enhancing positive school cultures because they are capable of influencing the development of appropriate behaviours for achieving school goals and putting in place the kind of mechanisms that support and strengthen new approaches for working (West-Burnham, 2010:11).

2.6.5 Parental involvement

Parental involvement refers to the level of parents’ participation in the education of their children such as following up activities in class, and helping children with matters that relate to their school (Ireland, 2014:1). Over the years it has been identified as one of the factors that lead to achievement of positive learner outcomes (Centre for Education Statistics and Evaluation, 2014:3). According to Usher and Kober (2012:4), parental involvement has been proven in many studies to help in creating learners’ competence, control, inquisitiveness and positive outlook on academics, considering that there is considerable evidence to suggest that among the major hindrances to increased academic achievement for many students is non-parental involvement in the education of their children (Khajehpour & Ghazvini, 2011:1205).

Gary and Witherspoon (2011: 6) acknowledge that it is not possible to educate learners based on teachers' input alone because it involves collective input of families, communities and other stakeholders. According to Hinkle (2013:1), parental involvement can benefit learners and schools in terms of positive academic achievement, learners' attitudes towards school and behaviour generally. Roland (2015:1) reveals that research indicates that children whose parents are involved in their education usually perform well in school, avoid being in trouble and stay away from destructive behaviours such as abuse of drugs and alcohol. Parental involvement also allows parents to identify problems and put measures in place to deal with them in good time.

Garcia and Thornton (2014:1) observe that in spite of the many changes that have characterised education systems over the last century, family engagement has consistently remained an extremely important factor in the achievement of learners. It contributes to enhanced learner achievement, encourages school attendance and restores parents' confidence in the education of their children. Chowa, Masa and Tucker (2013:3) confirm that research in countries like the United States reveal that parental involvement greatly affects the academic success of the children.

Khajehpour and Ghazvini (2011:1205) identified six programmes that could be employed by schools to establish powerful parental abilities: schools helping families with skills in parenting and child-rearing; schools' communication with families concerning school activities, including progress and needs of the learners; involving families as volunteers in school programmes; encouraging parents to be part of the learning activities at home; inclusion of families as participants in key school decisions; and coordination with business and agencies to make available facilities and services for "families, students and the community".

School Performance Improvement Frameworks (2010:16) attest that high-performing schools have recognised the importance of high levels of family and community involvement with the view that educating students is everyone's responsibility and not the preserve of teachers and school staff. Khajehpour and Ghazvini (2011:1205) are of the view that the most "accurate predictor" of learner attainment is the level to which the family participates in the education of their children, and has little to do with the income status of the family.

Tucker (2014:4) testifies that Shanghai is ranked among the highest-performing countries in the world in terms of educational achievement because “parents and their values and attitudes matter”, in that what they say to their children regarding the significance of education, undertaking what is demanded of them by their teachers and attaining the most outstanding levels are vital factors in improved achievement. Jensen and Farmer (2013:25) explain that Shanghai’s success has been greatly enhanced by the development of several mechanisms to cement the connection between the community and involve families in the school, such as social and extracurricular programmes that encourage children’s learning through creation of an opportunity for teachers, students and parents to interact and cooperate for the improvement of every child’s learning. This is consistent with what Usher and Kober (2012:6) report about Baltimore City Public Schools in Maryland in the United States, where the perpetually absent learners are followed up individually through home visits and interaction with parents, and, in some cases, service providers are also engaged.

Bandura’s (1977) social cognitive theory makes the suggestion that young people adopt communication of worthwhile conduct and goals that are socially approved through observation and interacting with people who matter in their lives; in view of this, parents are capable of modeling towards school mindsets and conducts that are good. According to Chowa et al (2013:3), children are more capable of applying themselves and achieving improved school outcomes if their parents are interested in their academic work, are committed to helping them with homework and are committed to holding them accountable for undertaking school tasks.

The foregoing provides evidence of the role of the school, parents and community in the education of the learners and the need to strengthen the bond among all key players. Khajehpour and Ghazvini (2011:1205) conclude that successful home-school partnership lies in six types of involvement involving three components: family, school and community which include ability in parenting, communication, volunteering, learning at home, decision making, and collaboration with the community.

2.7 Conclusion

The chapter has discussed the literature related to learner performance and teaching in order to lay a foundation for the study. The reviewed literature reveals that teaching and learning are at the centre of every education system. Teaching which is considered to be an art is a multifaceted activity that involves facilitating knowledge acquisition and student development in terms of capacities that in turn leads to the attainment of the educational goals.

The reviewed literature further reveals that quality education can only be a reality if it is founded on quality teachers. Quality teaching though not clearly defined, in this context, means the teachers' ability to achieve the educational goals normally revealed in learner outcomes. It was also revealed in the reviewed literature that among the major expectations of teaching includes: subject and pedagogical, knowledge of learners, teacher self-efficacy and motivation. As such, all education systems are advised to attach great importance to those elements.

The reviewed literature has also shown that learners are important factors in schools' outcomes and many factors like school environment, the teachers and leadership are capable of influencing their learning which the teachers should be aware of in order to successfully meet the needs of the learners. It was further revealed that teaching and learning play a very important role in national development because of their contribution to education which is fundamental to all aspects of humanity. Hence the need for paying attention to teaching and learning and all that influence their contribution to education.

The researcher went on to review literature relating to international research findings on characteristics of high-performing schools from for example, Singapore, Finland and Ontario, where five of them were identified: strong leadership, effective reaching based on teacher learning from others, growth and weighing of student learning, creating a positive school culture and involvement of parents and the community.

The reviewed literature has assisted in identifying significant characteristics of teaching and learning in relation to learner performance which set a pace for the study. Some of the contributions made by this section include the cases of countries that rank highly in terms of teaching and learner performance. The examined cases helped in identifying factors that have influenced learner performance that are research-based as well as particular frameworks that could be used in guiding teaching and learning in any given environment including public secondary schools. The cases discussed in this section clearly show that it is possible to realise positive results in any process of teaching and learning.

The researcher is of the view that the literature review has provided a firm theory foundation for the study. Understanding the meaning and nature of teaching and learning, has provided insight into what they are, as revealed by different authors. The researcher is in agreement with a number of scholars that teaching and learning are heavily influenced by a number of factors depending on one's context. Most of all, quality teaching is the utmost guaranteed source of improved learner performance which in turn provides hope for attaining the national educational goals that lead to national development.

One other key finding in the reviewed literature is that teaching is not an inborn activity, but a profession that demand a range of skills, knowledge, hard work and commitment; otherwise one would never succeed in meeting the demands of the teaching profession.

The literature reviewed further shows that teachers need to develop the habit of reflecting on their work as a way of evaluating their activities. In other words, they need to invest in constant evaluation of their personal practices in order to yield positive results in their work. The section shows that teachers must always bear in mind that they play a key role in determining learner outcomes and as such they must be willing to embrace every learner irrespective of their different characteristics and backgrounds which could potentially lead to diverse performance.

However, the researcher notes that there is not enough information regarding the best approaches to evaluate teaching other than through learner performance. Yet it is possible that learners could, through their individual efforts, work towards performing highly because of their personal

aspirations. Thus, the researcher advises that more research be directed towards meaningful ways of evaluating teaching in order to improve teaching and learning especially in public secondary schools of Zambia.

In respect of all the above revelations from the reviewed literature, the researcher emphasises development of new policies on recruitment, retention and evaluation of teachers tailored towards positive learner performance.

The next section discusses the theoretical perspectives surrounding teaching and learning.

2.8 Theoretical perspectives on teaching and learning

In the previous section, the researcher reviewed numerous studies that relate to the subject of learner performance and teaching in an attempt to lay a theoretical base for the study. A theoretical base is necessary in providing solutions to the challenges of learner performance characterising public secondary schools in Zambia.

In this section, the researcher discusses three theories which the researcher finds relevant in guiding teaching and learning in a manner that warrants improved learner performance in public secondary schools in Zambia. These include Bandura's (1977) socio-cognitive theory, Shulman's (1987) 'teacher knowledge base' theory and Maslow's (1943 & 1954) Human Motivation theory.

The researcher believes that the three theories together provide valuable information that could provide insight into the focus of the study and at the same time, they form a basis for developing the research questions which guide the research.

In particular, the theories relate to key factors concerning teaching that can be related to learners' performance. The three theories focus on human behaviours as influenced by various factors. Being humanistic in nature, the study will be able to derive numerous lessons that are appropriate for the study.

2.8.2 Shulman's knowledge base for teaching theory

The 'Knowledge Base for Teaching Theory' is one of the models that provides the demands and expectations of teaching as a profession (Shulman, 2012:4). Fernandez (2014:80) explains that every kind of profession possesses a collection of knowledge that distinguishes it from others and places those who gain knowledge of the particular skills in an appropriate position to enter the profession. Therefore, teacher knowledge base refers to the set of knowledge and skills, instruments and attitudes, personality and conduct for teaching as a profession.

In relation to the above argument Slekar and Haefner (2010:8) posit that teaching is a complex activity that is intentional in nature but "dynamic and responsive" to the situation in the classroom, the learners and the subject issue. Thus, teacher knowledge is a multidimensional exercise that does not only encompass comprehension of children's mental and social growth, understanding methods of teaching as well as the curriculum for teaching but also includes the individual teacher identity, desire for knowledge search, exposure, attitudes and beliefs concerning the aim "and the meaning of teaching and learning" (Webster, 2013:21). Slekar and Haefner (2010:8) argue that teachers should depend on a wide knowledge base in arriving at day-to-day classroom decisions.

Shulman's teacher knowledge base model, in particular, advances that successful teaching is founded on seven elements: content knowledge, pedagogical content knowledge, curriculum knowledge, which are content-related and the other four: general pedagogical knowledge, knowledge of learners and their characteristics, knowledge of educational contexts and knowledge of educational ends, purpose and values and their philosophical and historical grounds (Shulman, 1987:8). Old as Shulman's model may be, its content is closely related to some of the contemporary components associated with teacher expectations and demands like content knowledge, quality of instruction, classroom climate, classroom management teacher beliefs and professional behaviours (Coe et al. 2014:2-3).

In the next section, the researcher discusses four of Shulman's suggested elements for the teaching profession that relate to the study: content knowledge, pedagogical content knowledge, knowledge of learners and their characteristics, and knowledge of educational contexts.

2.8.2.1 Relevance of Shulman's theory to the study

The researcher is of the view that Shulman's teacher knowledge base is relevant in gaining insight into the nature of learner performance and teaching in public secondary schools in Zambia; because it provides a wide range of elements that influence teaching as a profession, which have been confirmed through research to be one of the most influential elements in student achievement (Anderson and Mundy, 2014:5; Caena, 2011:2; Center for High Impact Philanthropy, 2010:7; Knox & Anfara, 2013:59; Stronge, 2012: iv; World Bank 2012:1).

To start with, Shulman identifies subject knowledge as a fundamental element in teaching because every teacher is expected to know the subject matter they are meant to deliver (Slekar & Haefner, 2010:8). This relates to one of the highlighted teacher expectations and demands mentioned in section 2.3.3. According to Das (2012:47), the subject counts among the important factors that characterise teaching; therefore, it is essential that teachers are well-grounded in the subjects they teach. Danielson (2011:2), Dumont, et al. (2012:5) and McGregor and Cartwright (2011:8) note that subject knowledge, in terms of how it is structured, is a major prerequisite to teaching because it provides the teacher with a well-defined idea of what the students are expected to learn.

The second aspect in Shulman's theory that relates to the study is pedagogical knowledge, an element which, according to Figueroa and Damme (2013:25-26), refers to the teacher's ability to teach a particular subject to the various kinds of students. Pedagogical knowledge, like subject knowledge in the preceding paragraph, is among the major demands and expectations highlighted in the literature review (section 2.3.3). Koehler (2011:1) describes pedagogical knowledge as profound knowledge of the processes and the mechanisms for teaching and learning including the manner in which it encompasses the purpose, values and aims of education. OECD (b) (2013:21) affirms that pedagogical knowledge embraces a set of guidelines

and approaches for the organisation and management of the classroom and it is one of the quality teaching indicators.

In relation to the advanced arguments above, the researcher observes that lack of pedagogical knowledge has potential to leave some learners behind and in turn compromise their educational attainment. The researcher agrees with the assertion by Dunlosky, Rawson, Marsh, Nathan and Willingham (2013:4) that a number of students are subjected to an education system where they lag behind, and creating an improved education system will need concerted efforts in many areas especially the need to assist students to manage their learning by making use of efficient strategies.

The third aspect of Shulman in relation to the focus of the study is teacher's knowledge of learners, which also relates to the reviewed literature on factors that affect learner performance and teaching. According to Liakopoulou (2011:4), knowledge of learners includes knowing the biological, sociological and mental stages of student development, understanding teachers' and students' interactions, understanding behavioural challenges of students and understanding the environment and learning constraints. Danielson (2011:6) contends that content is not taught in the abstract, but within a specific context and, as such, the teacher needs to be aware of the various aspects that relate to the learners.

Fourthly, Shulman's theory is relevant to the study because it includes the knowledge of educational contexts which, according to Liakopoulou (2011:4), entails knowing the students and their family origin, including the community at the local level, systems of education, school unit organisation and management, educational history and philosophy, and educational frameworks of administration. Teacher's knowledge of the culture in which they teach is important because culture "defines people, context, human relationships and leadership", and influences what people and organisations do (Grobler et al. 2011:638).

The above arguments provide evidence that good teaching is characterised by a number of factors which include the content of the subject being taught; the manner of instruction; how the

teacher interacts with the learners and manages the classroom activities; knowledge of the learners and their characteristics; and knowledge of educational contexts.

2.8.2.2 Conclusion on Shulman’s teacher knowledge base theory

The elements of Shulman’s theory in relation to the focus of the study relate to the factors that influence teaching and learning in relation to learner performance in the reviewed literature. The researcher observes that the highlighted components of teacher knowledge base – content knowledge, pedagogical content knowledge, knowledge of learners and their characteristics, and knowledge of educational contexts – relate to the research findings on factors that influence teaching as a profession. Therefore, Shulman’s knowledge base theory serves as a source of reference for learner performance and teaching in public secondary schools in Zambia.

The researcher is of the view that the Zambian educational planners and policy-makers have a number of lessons to draw from Shulman’s theory for enhancing learner performance.

2.8.3 Bandura’s self-efficacy theory

The self-efficacy theory is built on Bandura’s (1977) socio-cognitive theory which argues that the attainment and functioning of human beings is dependent upon “interactions among one’s behaviours, personal factors and environmental conditions” (Rashidi & Moghadam, 2014:2). According to Gavora (2010:2), self-efficacy is the individual conviction that one is able to do something in a correct and efficient way to achieve particular goals. Therefore, self-efficacy theory is built on the principle that people’s beliefs regarding their capabilities as well as the results of their input affect the manner in which they conduct themselves (Rashidi & Moghadam, 2014:2). Bandura (1993) cited in Oakes et al. (2013:99), explains that self-efficacy relates to the view that one possesses abilities to bring about changes in one’s personal surroundings. Bandura’s theory further proposes that there are four sources of self-efficacy: mastery experience, vicarious experience, social persuasion and affective status (Liu, 2013:77).

The first source is mastery experience which is assumed to be the strongest source of efficacy evaluations (Malinen, Savolainen & Xu, 2013:90). This refers to the past performance and

accomplishments one would have attained in a specific task. Brown, Lee and Collins (2015:78) explain that the view that an exercise has been successfully accomplished increases “efficacy beliefs, contributing to the expectation that the performance will be proficient in the future”. For example, Gaudrea et al. (2013:16) indicates that activities that enhance an exchange and critical reflection of one’s way of doing things are fundamental elements in establishing concrete efficacy beliefs in classroom management because they assist teachers to develop and cope with situations in class that may cause stress, such as disruptive behaviours. Bandura (1977) further argues that preparing efficient intervention techniques can provide teachers with a deep sense of individual efficacy to handle challenging circumstances and most of all, be empowered to establish new approaches to doing things.

The second source of teacher efficacy is vicarious experiences. According to Bandura (1977) cited in Liu (2013:77), this is where a particular ability is modeled by another person. Vicarious experience could be linked to the kind of orientation one may have received in undertaking a particular task.

The third source of teacher efficacy, verbal persuasion as described by Lunenburg (2011:6), is the process of convincing individuals of their ability to succeed at a certain task. In other words, it refers to the encouragement people receive as they perform their tasks; for example, feedback from people in the workplace. This could be directly linked to the way administrators reward their teachers for their professional achievement.

The fourth source of teacher self-efficacy, physiological states, includes the moods, emotions, physical reactions and stress levels which affect people’s feeling in terms of their personal abilities (Liu, 2013:77).

In the next section, the researcher discusses the relevance of Bandura’s self-efficacy theory to the study.

2.8.3.1 Relevance of Bandura's theory to the study

Bandura's self-efficacy theory has the potential to explain human behaviour in a number of situations (Klassen, Tze, Betts & Gordon, 2011:22) and for this study, the theory provides insight into the behaviours of different categories of people in the selected schools, thereby providing an opportunity for the researcher to interpret the nature of learner performance and teaching in those schools. According to Gaudreau et al. (2013:361), there is a close link "between teachers' self-efficacy beliefs, educational practices, and student achievement".

The researcher observes that self-efficacy cannot be detached from any debate relating to learner performance and teaching because it has a strong impact on learning, motivation and performance, considering that human beings attempt to learn and do those activities that they deem they will be capable of undertaking competently (Lunenborg, 2011:2). Beauchamp, Klassen, Parsons, Durksen, & Taylor (2014:61) acknowledge that teacher self-efficacy is clearly linked to teacher motivation which influences the outcomes of students.

Klassen et al. (2011:22) advance that self-efficacy beliefs of learners and teachers significantly contribute to their attainment and behaviour. Therefore, high self-efficacy allows competent use of knowledge and skills professionally while low self-efficacy prevents efficient application of professional knowledge and skills (Gavora, 2010:2). Sharma et al. (2011:12) observe that the efficacy as perceived by the teacher affects the type of environment that teachers provide for the learners and the way they undertake the various teaching responsibilities to promote student learning. This is affirmed by Haworth, McGee and MacIntyre (2015:177) in their argument that self-efficacy relates to the belief a teacher has in their capacity to structure and carry out the programmes needed to competently fulfill a teaching activity in a given environment.

The theory is also relevant to the study because its emphasis on four sources of self-efficacy: mastery and vicarious experiences, verbal persuasion and physiological state Bandura (1977:447), relate to some of the suggested influences of teaching and learning in the reviewed

literature like teacher preparation, collaboration, professional development, school leadership and motivation (Cator et al. 2014:9, DeMonte 2013:1; European Commission 2013:7; Lofthouse et al. 2010:9; Louis et al. 2010:9). For instance, vicarious experience relates to the reviewed literature which revealed that collaborative activities are some of the mechanisms for raising educational standards because they facilitate collective creation of instructional practices, establishment of what is workable in class, and commitment to improving practices both at individual and team levels (Mourshed et al. 2010:74). According to Belfi, Gielen, De Fraine, Verschueren and Meredith (2015:33), shared teacher efficacy entails the view of a group of teachers in a particular school that they are able to make a bigger difference educationally for their students than their homes and socio-economic circumstances. Rather than one or two individuals having higher efficacy to allow positive results in schools, collective efficacy has the potential to embrace the whole staff to jointly ensure maximum benefits for all. Belfi et al. (2015:33), explain that collective teacher efficacy entails the teachers' perceptions of their ability as a whole to arrange and carry out activities needed to bring about positive effects on the learners. Rebore (2011:180) comments that collaboration entails schools spending time together finding out what is required of students to learn, ways of assessing the learnt staff and how to assist students facing challenges in their learning.

Related to the above argument is the aspect of mastery of experience where sharing individual past experiences provides confidence to the teaching staff on the possibility of achieving positive results in the future. Haworth et al. (2015:165) indicate that collective approaches, including mutually-agreed teaching methods, provide an opportunity for teachers to be supported in attaining the required knowledge of teaching approaches to work efficiently with students. Rebore (2011: 179) notes that it is not practical in the modern world for any particular person to begin a professional journey and still stay in it for many years without developing skills. As such, development of staff is not just an activity that is desirable but at the same time a requirement and an investment; therefore, schools must attach importance to developing staff's skills and knowledge. Continuous staff development provides an opportunity for teachers to be updated on the numerous changes that take place in the world in terms of skills and knowledge at various levels that contribute to learner's achievements (Abou-Assali, 2014:1).

In relation to the above observations, verbal persuasion as an influence on self-efficacy relates to issues of leadership in school which has been confirmed to have an influence on learner outcomes. Louis et al. (2010:9) argue that leadership exists primarily to fulfill two functions: providing direction and exercising influence; therefore, leaders need to have the appropriate skills and knowledge to direct and influence attainment of their respective institutions' aims and objectives. Haworth et al. (2015:165) further indicates that fundamental gains associated with a holistic approach include structures in leadership that develop the capacities of teachers in diverse aspects of the school; a more united school environment; enhanced school abilities for continuous progression; raised motivation, resource acquisition; acknowledgement and exchange of expertise; and the chance to create and increase the pedagogical knowledge related to achieving student attainment and enhancing the personal wellbeing of learners.

Vicarious experience may also be linked to the argument by Oyserman and Destin (2010:1002) that one's social background and identity can influence the learners to believe that some kinds of behaviour like spending time on homework, are worthless for them, and they may identify themselves with an environment that does not inspire them in terms of the value of attaining their academic or individual goals. The Center on Education Policy (2012:6) notes that, circumstances in which learners can visualise academic attainment as a "realistic" element of their identity as a team and form good pictures of that identity can enhance motivation.

Bandura's comment that the physiological state of an individual has potential to influence their behaviour relates to the observation by Webster (2013:25) that while the idea of teacher knowledge is usually linked to cognitive capabilities, methodologies, behaviours and academic content, it is important to consider "the often unconscious emotional, volitional", and individual elements that prevent or promote quality teacher knowledge. Webster (2013:21) acknowledges that teacher knowledge is a multidimensional exercise that does only encompasses comprehension of children's mental and social growth, understanding methods of teaching as well as the curriculum for teaching, but also includes the individual teacher identity, desire for knowledge, exposure to various educational experiences, attitudes and beliefs concerning the aim "and the meaning of teaching and learning".

Verbal persuasion and physiological state can also be linked to the influence of socio-economic factors such as parental involvement on the attitude of learners towards school and their ultimate performance (Hinkle, 2013:1; Ireland, 2014:1; Usher & Kober, 2012:4).

2.8.3.2 Conclusion on Bandura's theory to the study

In view of the foregoing, the researcher, concludes that Bandura's social cognitive, self-efficacy provides evidence of the factors that influence human behaviour which is helpful in gaining insight into the nature of learner performance and teaching in the selected schools.

The researcher observes that because human behaviour is influenced by one's beliefs about a particular issue, it is possible that researchers and educationists could change their focus on what is best for achieving learner improvement. For instance, while infrastructure could be considered important in achieving improved learner performance, how the teachers and learners view their abilities to do things in school may also have an impact on the general school performance.

Finally, generally speaking, the four sources of self-efficacy provide an opportunity for educationist to realise the wide range of factors that are involved in achieving educational outcomes; hence, the need for a holistic focus rather than concentrating on one particular aspect.

2.8.4 Maslow's hierarchy of needs motivation theory

Over the years, much research has been undertaken in the area of motivation giving rise to numerous theories explaining how motivation influences human behaviour such as Maslow's Need Hierarchy Model, Herzberg's Hygiene and Two-Factor Theories of Motivation, McGregor's 'Theory X' and 'Theory Y' and McClelland's Theory (Chauhan, 2014:202; Taneja:2012:22).

For the sake of this study, the researcher focuses on 'a hierarchy of needs' (Maslow, 1943 & 1954) where he presented what he called a 'Theory of Human Motivation'. In this theory, Maslow initially presented a hierarchy of five needs in form of a pyramid comprising:

physiological, safety (physical deficiency needs) love, respect, and self-actualization (emotional growth needs) (Taneja, 2012:26) as shown in Figure 2.1 below.



Figure 2.1: Maslow's original hierarchy of needs pyramid

However, in about 1970s, Maslow expanded the pyramid to eight needs as shown in Figure 2.2 below, which include cognitive and aesthetic and transcendence needs (Simply Psychology, 2015:3)

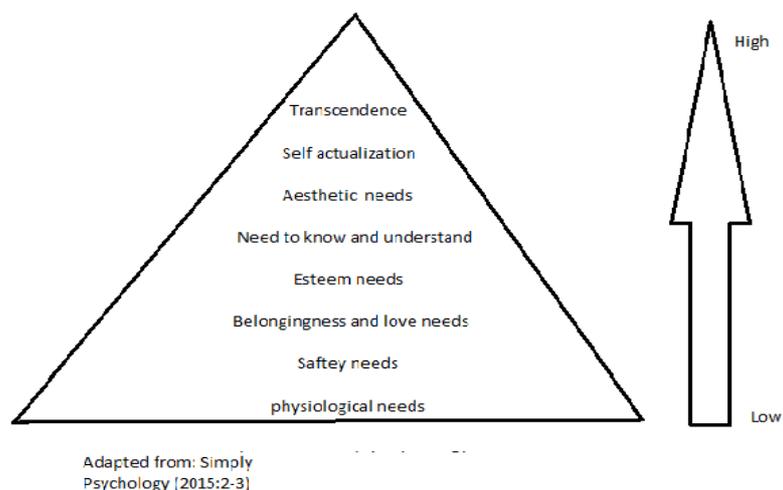


Figure 2.2: Maslow's expanded hierarchy of needs pyramid

Maslow's hierarchy of needs advances that human beings are "driven, motivated and propelled by potent forces", which he referred to as human needs and are arranged in a pyramidal hierarchical manner (Lambert 2011:4). As revealed by Simply Psychology (2015:3), Maslow was of the view that the lower physiological needs which included hunger and thirst at the base of the pyramid were fundamental to human survival and they needed to be satisfied before the next higher-order needs all the way to the top most could be considered.

The following section discusses some of Maslow's ideas in his theory that relate to the focus of the study.

2.8.4.1 Relevance of Maslow's theory to the study

Maslow's theory is applicable to education and in particular to the focus of the study because it explains some of the influences on human behaviour. Milheim (2012:166) argues that Maslow's (1943) hierarchy of needs, despite being developed more than 50 years ago, is applicable to modern education. In particular, "its psychological underpinnings" merged with its related effects on "motivation and fulfillment" makes it consistently a worthwhile framework for explaining different circumstances and situations.

To start with, Maslow's argument that lower needs like food and shelter take precedence over higher needs like safety, socialisation and self-actualisation (Lambert, 2011:4), can be confirmed; for example, in cases of extreme poverty, where learners miss school for the sake of engaging in child labour to support their families (UNICEF, 2014:51). At the same time, the theory can be applied in cases where some parents are incapable of getting involved in the academic lives of their children because of socio-economic pressures (Azhar, Nadeem, Naz, Perveen & Sameen, 2014:1) because those pressures take precedence over assisting their children reach self-actualisation through educational outcomes. Heckman (2011:80) adds that less advantaged mothers collectively do not talk much to their children and are not likely to read to their children on a daily basis; they do not have a habit of supporting their children much; they employ parenting styles that are not nurturing; and are not much involved with the school work of their children.

The second aspect of Maslow's theory that relates to the study is that of safety needs which "include the need for security, protection from danger, physical security, avoidance of pain, stability, dependency, freedom from pain and fear, anxiety, and need for structure, order, law and limits, strength in the protector and so on" Shergill (2010:29), taking precedence over attaining self-actualisation. Lack of safety has potential to yield anxiety and uncertainty among people (Milheim, 2012:161).

Keith and Spaulding (2011:11) state that learners' poor background which may include lack of security, high levels of relocation and limited parental support, prevents them from consistently reporting to school and participating actively, being keen on learning and being motivated to aspire for higher needs. Quinan, Anderson and Mundy (2014:3) comment that girls' enrolment and attendance in some countries, for example, is often affected by girls' experience of sexual harassment, gender bias, and the cost of schooling.

Relating to safety is the contribution of a conducive learning environment to learner and teacher performance. UNESCO (2016:51), posits that increasing access to water, sanitation and hygiene facilities in institutions of learning can positively impact health and education results because it creates a safe environment with reduced exposure to natural hazards like disease.

The third reason Maslow's theory is relevant to the study is that it makes reference to social needs, like the need to be loved and accepted by others (Kaur, 2013:1062), which can be applied to both learners' and teachers' level of performance in school. Jerome (2013:42) explains that Maslow was of the view that human beings are social in nature and they do not like solitude and isolation. Kuppuswamy (2012:131) acknowledges that an individual who is satisfied in terms of happiness and comfort, for example, is capable of performing better than the one who is not satisfied, because they would be better placed to concentrate, thereby affecting their educational outcomes.

The fourth link of Maslow's theory to the study is human's desire for esteem which includes the need for self-respect or a feeling of importance, recognition and looking for approval of others (Kaur, 2013:42). Esteem needs, according to Ozguner and Ozguner (2014:209), relate to learner

performance and teaching because they focus on issues of motivation, as a result of the desire for achievement, acknowledgement, work title and the scheduled tasks, being appreciated and efficient management. Jerome (2013:42) acknowledges that meeting esteem needs in an organisation would mean that administrators pay attention to their subordinates' financial or spiritual needs, which could include acknowledging and supporting competence and commitment to duty for the purposes of sustaining behaviours that assist in meeting the objectives of the organisation.

The fifth relationship between Maslow's theory and the focus of the study is the emphasis on cognitive needs, that is "the mental processes of understanding" (Hornby, 2012:288), as one of the things that influence human behaviour. According to Maslow's theory, one is likely to develop the need to gain knowledge and meaning when one has fulfilled the first four categories of needs: physiological, safety, belonging and esteem (Simply Psychology, 2015:3). Cognitive needs as a prerequisite for performance relate to Bandura's mastery experience having an influence on one's self-efficacy to do or not do something, such as a teacher who lacks cognitive knowledge being incapable of taking interest in preparing their lessons, evaluating their input or exploring best practices in enhancing learners' performance (Brown, et al. 2015:78).

The last association of Maslow's theory to the study are the transcendence needs which refer to the need for helping others achieve self-actualisation having reached self-actualisation yourself (Simply Psychology, 2015:3). This can be linked to the idea by Darling-Hammond et al. (2017:1) that teachers need to acquire and improve skills to be able to yield 21st century learners with in-depth mastery of challenging content and critical thinking. Webster (2013:25) underlines that teacher knowledge is many-sided and demands a conducive environment that is capable of promoting, maintaining, and fine-tuning "diverse visions, abilities, motivations, and reflections". For example, as posited by Thomas (2014:76), teacher's subject knowledge is important in the successful delivery of the content the learners are expected to know.

While many scholars agree that Maslow's theory of human needs is applicable in many instances that relate to human behaviour, some researchers have tended to disagree with certain arguments that he advances (Ifedili & Ifedili, 2012:80; Mangal, 2013:283; Tay & Diener, 2011:356). The

researcher is of the view that the disagreements could be applied to different contexts to deal broadly with human behaviour.

Tay and Diener (2011:356) observe that human needs are universal but the way in which they are met does not directly correlate with a hierarchy, because there are some individuals who may have good social relationships and self-actualisation though their physiological and safety needs are not satisfactorily fulfilled. Mangal (2013:283) explains that the assertion in Maslow's theory that needs emerge and are fulfilled in a specific arrangement has not been proven.

Ifedili and Ifedili (2012:80) contend that, in spite of Maslow's theory making worthwhile addition to motivation-related studies, human needs may not be in Maslow's hierarchical order when applied to cultural, economic, physiological and political contexts because it is possible that lower needs that have been fulfilled could arise again after the higher-order needs have been met.

Bradley (2010:3) argues that Maslow overlooked that there are people who are so ambitious in life to achieve their fullest potential that they would not eat or sleep until they have completed what leads to realising self-esteem or self-actualisation, which provides evidence that individuals differ in terms of needs and their priorities will vary from one situation to another.

The researcher is of the view that Maslow's emphasis on belonging and love needs as a means to realising self-actualisation may not apply in individualistic cultures such as those found in North America and Western Europe where individuals may not bother about belongingness, friendship and approval from others in order for them to achieve what they individually feel is correct Cherry (2017:1). This can also be confirmed in the philosophy of existentialism which emphasises that individuals make individual choices whose repercussions they must bear individually (Magrini, 2012:4), and those who adopt such ideas may not seek approval from anyone in what they do, yet they would be able to reach self-actualisation as well as transcendence.

That aside, the researcher observes that as much as administrators may motivate employees through increased pay and bonuses, for example, there is still no guarantee of improved performance for a teacher, who may not be sufficiently competent to teach or may not have had enough preparation to deal with the various teaching contexts. As observed by Snook et al. (2013:9), there is no guarantee that rewards could teach new skills; they could motivate additional effort only if the receiver believes the rewards warrant more effort. This also relates to the fact that needs vary from one person to another and from one employee to another, and what motivates one person may not be the same for another person (Panwar & Gupta, 2012:39). This points to the need for administrators not to assume that all workers may be motivated equally, but they must endeavour to discover individual needs and aspirations then work towards creating a working environment that is conducive. The same can be said about teachers in terms of working towards discovering individual learners' needs and interests to guide them properly in the learning process.

Finally, the Center on Education Policy (2012:6) reports that while some people may have fulfilled all the needs that precede self-actualisation, there is no confirmation that they may aspire to the attainment of high levels of education because the influence of historical and cultural factors like "stereotypes and discrimination, the views of others, and the urge to safeguard their group identity have an impact on one's motivation". For example, according to Snelson (2012:214), education for the girls in Zambia before independence in 1964 was very low because parents and grandparents were genuinely scared that education would destroy their daughters' opportunities for marriage through the interference of the teachers and above all, that the girls would lose focus on the woman's traditional place in society, which made the girls opt to stay home to assist their parents as well as laying a foundation for marriage.

2.8.4.2 Conclusion on Maslow's theory

Maslow's theory raises a number of important issues that the researcher could use to interpret human behaviour in relation to the study. According to Maslow, people have needs which they must satisfy; beginning with the physiological needs first, as they lead to satisfaction of higher level needs that in turn motivate behaviour. In other words, the theory stresses that human beings

have needs which are ranked in hierarchical order and unless lower order needs like food and shelter are met, it is unlikely that one would be able to reach self-actualisation or even help others to achieve self-actualisation.

In particular, the theory is important in critically studying the nature of learner performance and teaching in the selected public secondary schools in Zambia, since it dwells on some of the factors that dictate individual behaviours. The researcher is optimistic that the theory will help in addressing the challenges of learner performance in the selected schools with reference to the motivational factors under which teachers, head teachers and learners operate. The theory will also provide feedback to supervisors as well as the employers (government), on the reality of human behaviour in schools in relation to the environment in which teachers work or interact.

Finally, this theory has an important role to Zambia's education system as a whole because it gives an insight into why people may behave in a particular way, and how, in educational circles, this could have an impact on the performance of the learners.

It is worth mentioning that it is necessary that care be taken in applying Maslow's theory as contexts may vary from time to time.

2.9 Conclusion of the theoretical perspectives of teaching and learning

This section has contributed to the identification of fundamental theoretical views capable of addressing the challenges of learner performance in public secondary schools of Zambia. The main theme of the section was to assist in finding suitable theoretical views for addressing the challenges of learner performance surrounding public secondary schools. The three theories, Bandura's (1977) socio-cognitive theory, Shulman's (1987) 'teacher knowledge base' theory and Maslow's (1943 & 1954) human motivation theory were closely analysed so as to establish the extent to which they could be used in the Zambian context.

It is worth mentioning that the three theories discussed in this chapter show elements of controversy; nevertheless, the use of an eclectic model will provide room for integration of

positive elements of each theory in an attempt to guide teaching and learning in relation to learner performance in public secondary schools in Zambia. Common to all these theories is a profound explanation of human behaviour which gives considerable insight into the possible ways to address the challenge of learner performance in the identified schools. As such, combining the three theories should be able to lead to a critical study on teaching and learner performance.

2.10 Conceptualization of teaching and learning.

In respect of the reviewed literature and theoretical perspectives on teaching and learning, the researcher concludes that teaching and learning are interrelated and involve a number of factors which in turn lead to achieving educational aims and objectives as shown in the diagram below.

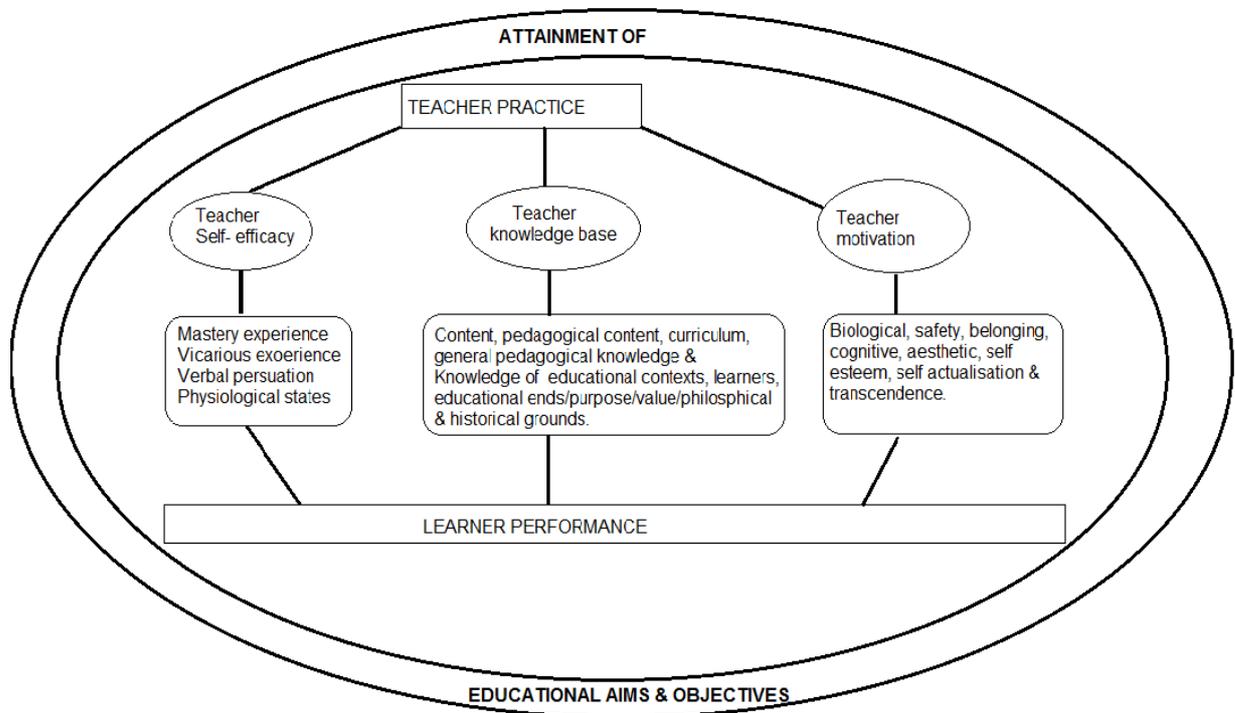


Figure 2.3: Summary of the conceptualization of teaching and learning

Source: Self-generated.

2.11 Conclusion

This chapter has reviewed the literature related to the study in order to help address the problem of learner performance in public schools. The reviewed literature has shown that teaching and learning are closely related and that quality teaching is a key factor in improving learners' performance as well as the success of any educational system. The literature reveals that quality in education has not really been agreed upon; nevertheless, it has generally been used to mean meeting learner outcomes and, in turn, meeting the aims and goals of an education system.

The reviewed literature also provides lessons from highly performing schools that teacher preparation, continuous professional development, leadership and teacher evaluation/accountability are among the key elements that influence teaching and learning.

Additionally, the chapter through the reviewed literature was able to identify three theoretical views of teaching and learning which were integrated to gain insight into the critical study of learner performance and teaching in public secondary schools in Zambia.

CHAPTER 3

RESEARCH DESIGN AND METHODOLOGY

3.1 Introduction

In the previous chapter, the researcher reviewed literature that relates to teaching and learning for the purposes of giving a theoretical base for the research. The chapter also discussed three theories which underpin the critical study on learner performance and teaching in public secondary schools in Zambia. This chapter discusses the qualitative research design and methods the researcher considered suitable in responding to the research questions of the study. The main focus of the study was to critically study the nature of learner performance and teaching in public secondary schools in Zambia with a focus on the Copperbelt region, in the context of the poor performance that has been recorded in most public secondary schools in the Grade 12 National examinations. The researcher sought to critically study the circumstances that surrounded learner performance and teaching in public secondary schools in Zambia, with a focus on the views and lived experiences of the sample of teachers, head teachers and learners in four selected public secondary schools in the Copperbelt region. The chapter provides an explanation of the research design and justification for employment of Heidegger's phenomenological approach. The chapter also includes descriptions of the procedure the researcher used to gather and analyse information for the purposes of gaining insight into the problem of poor performance.

3.2 Research design

This section describes the qualitative research design which was used in critically studying the nature of learner performance and teaching in the selected public secondary schools in Zambia. The researcher aimed at gaining insight into the views of the learners, teachers and head teachers regarding the subject matter in respect of their lived experiences in their schools. In view of the aim of the study, the researcher considered qualitative research design to be suitable in achieving this goal because this design allows examination of subjects in natural situations followed by transformation and making sense of the phenomenon being studied through the process of

interpreting of field notes photographs, conversations and other similar representations (Mitchell et al. 2013:3).

The other benefit of employing qualitative research design for this study is its usage of information-gathering strategies that involve narrations, descriptions to gain knowledge on the reality of things and the meaning of the research as perceived by the participants in the investigation project, such as face-to-face interviews, observations and recording of video interaction (Mills, 2011:4).

This design is useful for the study because it is characterised by “a set of interpretive, material practices that make the world visible, transform it and turn it into a series of representations, including field notes, interviews, conversations, photographs, recordings and memos to self” (Denzin & Lincoln, 2011:3). The qualitative design allowed the researcher to gain insight into the participants’ experiences on learner performance and teaching in the selected schools, which was required in addressing the challenges of poor performance among learners.

Linked to the above-mentioned values of qualitative design for this study is that, it will enable the researcher to search for the subjective interpretation of the learner performance as a social phenomenon from the point of view of the subjects involved in the study (Bhattacharjee, 2012:38). This will allow the researcher to directly collect information from the teachers, head teachers and the learners in the selected schools as primary data sources of the phenomenon under investigation.

The collection of information from the selected categories of people as a major source of data points to the value of qualitative research design. Chong and Yeo (2015:258) emphasise that qualitative research is interested in people’s preconceptions and what they attach great importance to; hence, it has a tendency to collect very detailed information from which meaning can be derived.

In this study, the researcher intended to establish the lived experiences of the selected participants within their schools, so using qualitative design was important as it allowed “the

researcher build a complex, holistic picture, analyses words, reports details of informants, and conducts the study in a natural setting” (Khan, 2014:225). This is because qualitative research design is naturalistic, gives preference to studying human beings, things and happenings within their natural setup (Punch, 2012:141). The researcher was able to directly interact with the identified learners, teachers and head teachers in the selected schools, their natural setting, which enabled the researcher to derive meaning of the participants’ lived experiences on learner performance and teaching.

Using a qualitative research design was appropriate in establishing the reality surrounding learner performance in public secondary schools in Zambia because a qualitative approach is employed in situations where one does not know what to expect, the issues are not well-defined and there are limitations on understanding the reasons for a situation (ACAPS, 2012:7). The design assisted the researcher to verify the nature of learner performance and teaching in the selected schools.

The major benefit of qualitative research is its provision of data about human issues of a situation that needs prompt action to control it through acknowledging the most important requirements of the people concerned; having regard for the key principles of needs-oriented help; and building a sense of ownership of the group concerned (ACAPS, 2012:8).

Punch (2012:141) observes that using qualitative research methods provides an opportunity for the researcher to make use of many frameworks for the purposes of exploring a phenomenon in respect of individual experiences. The researcher was able to use a combination of semi-structured interviews, focus-group discussions and documentary analysis to explore learner performance and teaching in the selected schools.

Being a social phenomenon, learner performance in public secondary schools in Zambia could best be understood through interacting with the selected teachers, head teachers and learners in order to learn about their lived experiences and reasons behind their behaviour which affect learner performance.

Furthermore, Coolican (2014:262) observes that exploring a particular phenomenon usually occurs within the setting of the participants being targeted and is undertaken through using tools for data collection that facilitate intensive involvement of the researcher in the participants' experiences. The researcher is of the view that it will not be possible to learn the reality surrounding learner performance and teaching without actively reaching out to the people concerned: teachers, head teachers and learners within their respective environments.

In this context, the study seeks to gain knowledge on the lived experiences of learners, teachers and head teachers in public secondary schools regarding the nature of learner performance and teaching in view of the continued reported poor performance over the years (Examinations Council of Zambia, 2016, 2015, 2014 and 2013). Being educational in nature, the study explores and examines various issues relating to teaching and learning for the purposes of finding solutions to the problems of poor performance. Persistent poor performance points to gaps in an education system because learner performance is one of the key educational outcomes in any educational system and additionally, it brings to light the teachers', students' and schools' educational goals attainment (Republic of Kenya, 2013:1).

This study will be able to make known the reality surrounding teaching and learning in public secondary schools in Zambia thereby, informing educational policy-makers on possible implementation plans that could be formulated to deal with the observed challenges.

This research is important also because it focuses on how learner performance relates to teaching since it has the potential to determine the success or failure of the students. Marsden (2014:3) observes that teachers in schools make up one of the biggest categories of workers trained professionally in most advanced economies, and as is the case with other professionals, they are highly-educated and they have the potential to independently carry out their jobs. As educators, their duty is to uplift the standards of the workforce at national level and add to the happiness of the students later in life and their achievement. As such, the research will be able to provide feedback on the existing practices in public schools which may or may not lead to positive learner performance. Ritchie et al. (2013:11) suggest that perception does not only relate to senses but to human interpretation regarding what the senses reveal to us. Therefore, qualitative

research is biased towards emphasising and supporting human interpretations of a social situation and relies on the interpretations and understanding of both the participants and the researcher of the phenomenon under investigation.

At the same time, qualitative design is considered important in providing insight into how leadership could have an impact on teaching and learning in public secondary schools in Zambia and how this affects the performance of learners. The National Association of Secondary School Principals (2013:2) posits that with current increased expectations, principals must take full responsibility for the improvement of teaching and learning. They need to have the ability to carefully plan for all education-related activities like leadership in terms of instruction and curriculum, assessment, discipline, building the community, analysing budgets as well as spearheading policy issues and innovations.

3.3 Methodology

3.3.1 Phenomenology

In this section, the researcher discusses phenomenology as the theoretical framework underpinning the research design for this study. Phenomenology is a broad word that includes both philosophical views and different strategies to research (Kafle, 2011:181). Phenomenology is one of the qualitative methods which is said to be educational in nature and seeks to analyse and describe individuals' experiences of a phenomenon in their daily living (Creswell, 2013:78). This method is considered appropriate for the study because it will allow the researcher to fulfill its target of seeking human descriptions regarding their experiences on learner performance and teaching in the selected schools.

The purpose of the study is to scrutinise the participants' daily encounters through gathering of their interaction with the world and the way they interpret reality (Reiners, 2012:2). The approach will thus enable the researcher to study the lived experiences of the participants through interacting with them in order to gain insight into the problem that is being investigated. As a research approach, phenomenology facilitates understanding human behaviour in terms of

learner performance and teaching in the selected schools because this approach aims at comprehending the manner in which a phenomenon reveals itself to the mind and making it clearer descriptively (Giorgi, 2012:6).

Yuksel and Yildirim (2015:2) add that ‘phenomenology’ is derived from a Greek word ‘phainein’ which means ‘to appear’ and as a philosophical research method of inquiry; this strategy seeks to investigate particular phenomena in respect of the actual experiences faced by a particular group of people. Phenomenology is suitable for this study, since the researcher seeks to learn from the learners, teachers and head teachers who have had an encounter with learner performance and teaching in the selected public schools.

Additionally, phenomenology is adopted for this study because it is an investigation of lived experiences. In this respect ‘experience’ does not necessarily mean cumulative evidence or knowledge. Instead, it refers to what takes place to us, rather than what is built up and learnt or understood by us (Friesen et al. 2012:1).

The value of employing phenomenology for this study also lies in its investigation of the actual happenings undergone by the stakeholders as described by the stakeholders themselves for the purposes of studying carefully and emphasising the most important aspects of the actual daily experienced events (Quinlan, 2011:310).

Historically, phenomenology is divided into three main categories: Husserl’s descriptive or transcendent phenomenology; Heidegger’s interpretive hermeneutic or existential phenomenology; and the Dutch (Utrecht) school of phenomenology encompassing a combination of descriptive and interpretive approaches (Sloan & Bowe, 2014:19).

Husserl’s descriptive or transcendent phenomenology is traced as far back as the works of the German philosopher, Edmund Husserl (1859-1938) with his Mathematics and Scientific foundation, before he diverted to education in philosophy (Creswell, 2013:78; Kafle, 2011:181). Husserl developed a theory known as ‘Transcendental or Husserl’s phenomenology’ built on the principle of describing experiences as they are experienced by the subject (Davidsen,

2013:320). In his theory, Husserl came to a conclusion that scientific and empirical methods were not ideal for studying humans in psychology considering that human reactions to situations were not predetermined or constant but rather linked to meaning (Eddles-Hirsch, 2015:252). This approach allows the researcher to profoundly search into the consciousness and discover what lies in the phenomenon through what Husserl called bracketing, in which the researcher deliberately puts away any preconceived ideas and views so as to gain a clearer insight into the phenomenon (Eddles-Hirsch, 2015:253).

Additionally, Padilla-Diaz (2015:102) posits that Husserl's phenomenology is founded on the principle of '*epokhe*', a Greek word which entails suspending or suppressing judgements and putting oneself as a researcher in the position of the encounters of the phenomenon being studied for the purposes of being objective in the data analysis process. This approach entails that the researcher puts aside any preconceived ideas, individual perceptions or personal conclusions on teaching and learning for the purposes of arriving at an objective analysis of data which participants present to the study (Padilla-Diaz, 2015:103). In other words, the observer would go beyond the "phenomena and meanings being investigated to take a global view of the essences discovered" (Sloan & Bowe, 2014:5).

Over the years, according to Reiners (2012:1), the phenomenological movement has changed to emphasise interpretation of experiences in what is known as hermeneutic or existential phenomenology mostly propounded by Martin Heidegger (1889-1976), Husserl's student and other philosophers like: Maurice Merleau-Ponty, Emmanuel Levinas, and Jean-Paul Sartre (Friesen et al. 2012:2). While Heidegger agreed with Husserl that investigating human behaviour requires a humanistic approach, he objected to the idea of bracketing, because he believed it was not feasible to avoid presupposing and applying personal views in the research process, since the researcher needs to be deeply involved with the phenomenon in order to understand the experience (Eddles-Hirsch, 2015:253). In other words, Heidegger observed that identification of essence requires involvement of the researcher rather than just depending on the description of the participants of the phenomenon. Sloan and Bowe (2014:6) also posit that it is not possible for any researcher to investigate 'things in their appearing' to establish their essences while separated from the things. According to Sloan and Bowe (2014:6), using language as well as

interpreting of an individual's 'meaning-making' and their attribute of meaning to a phenomenon is one of the fundamental principles of Heidegger's phenomenology.

Over the years, through the works of Van Manen, the philosophy began focusing on combining descriptive and interpretive (Dowling & Cooney, 2012:22).

For the sake of this study the researcher used Heidegger's phenomenological hermeneutics and his ideas of lived experiences, considering that from this strategy, the researcher would be able to gain insight into the problem of learner performance because, it allowed the researcher to focus on issues relating to teaching and learning as they appear in public secondary schools in Zambia, Copperbelt in particular, rather than depending on assumptions or theories outside the lived experiences of all the affected people.

3.3.2 Social constructivist-interpretive framework

This section discusses social constructivism, the philosophical worldview that underpins this study. Creswell (2014:26) reveals that social constructivism emerged from the works of for example, Berger and Luekmann's (1967) 'The Social Construction of Reality', and Lincoln and Guba's (1985) 'Naturalistic Inquiry' in which, according to Spencer, Pryce and Walsh (2014:85); it was argued that human understanding and knowledge are socially constructed because human beings create their own reality as a result of social interactions, relationships and experiences. The researcher adopts this worldview because the study is interested in addressing a social problem in which the researcher seeks to answer why, a number of public secondary schools in the Copperbelt region of Zambia recorded poor performance. Chong and Yeo (2015:260) add that constructivist design was developed by Charmaz (2008) who was of the view that constructivist design was advantageous in dealing with why questions as well as maintaining social life complexity.

Creswell (2014:26) adds that social constructivists assert that human beings search for an understanding of the world where they live and operate with a focus on the views of the participants. A constructivist worldview was considered appropriate for this study because it

enabled the researcher to understand what is happening in the Copperbelt region through the selected participants' views and perceptions about learner performance and teaching. The aim of the study is in line with the principles of constructivism, which are founded on the doctrines of idealism and humanism. Walliman (2011:21) says that constructivism posits that our worldview is as a result of the mind because it can only be experienced individually through how we view things under the influence of our “preconceptions, beliefs and values”.

The other reason why using this philosophical approach is appropriate for this study is that the researcher agrees with the principle of idealism, namely, that reality is not independent of the mind since it can only be known through the human mind and through meanings that are constructed socially. Since human perceptions are derived from the individual mind, it was possible for the researcher to capture the different realities as revealed by the selected participants: learners, teachers and head teachers on learner performance as a social phenomenon (Ritchie et al. 2013:5).

In line with the above statement, Spencer et al. (2014:85) confirm that reality is not fixed because it is dependent upon the context and society and it is, therefore, possible for several realities to exist at the same time. This worldview is suitable for this study because the researcher focuses on exploring and understanding the social world using the personal perspectives of the participants where explanations can only be given from the point of view of meaning instead of cause (Ritchie et al., 2013:24).

The other reason the researcher considers constructivism useful in this study is its potential to facilitate interaction with the participants on their cultural and past encounters in respect of learner performance, and allows the researcher to capture the meaning of their experience and interpret it to explain what surrounds learner performance and teaching in public secondary schools in Zambia. Davidsen (2013:319) advances that constructivists are of the view that history and culture play a critical role in providing knowledge and that such knowledge can be constructed inter-subjectively.

The above statement is in line with the argument by Dumont et al. (2012:3) that learning is viewed as an activity that is determined by one's context and "is actively constructed through social negotiation with others". Hence, the researcher will be able to learn and construct meaning through the planned semi-structured and focus-group interviews in which the researcher will communicate and interact with the selected participants on issues that relate to learner performance and teaching.

The various descriptions of the selected participants regarding their daily life encounters will provide a foundation for interpreting what is happening in public schools on learner performance and teaching as a phenomenon, influenced by the researcher's background in teaching which will enable her to position herself in the research, acknowledging the manner in which her personal interpretation flows from her own cultural and past experiences (Creswell, 2014:26). This is acknowledged by Eddles-Hirsch (2015:251) who posits that phenomenologists hold the view that the daily human encounters of life provide a basis for interpreting the world.

The use of this approach is also based on the fact that Heidegger's hermeneutic phenomenology is interpretive in nature and focuses on developing a deep understanding of a particular experience (Reiners, 2012:24). This approach has the potential to facilitate investigation of meaning of experiences associated with issues of learner performance and teaching because interpretive phenomenology leads to a thorough interpretation of the meaning as well as structures of a specific phenomenon in respect of first-hand experience (Matua & Van Der Wal, 2015:24). Thanh and Thanh (2015:25) support that interpretive researchers often aim at gaining an understanding of a certain situation and their main tenet is that reality is socially constructed. The researcher interacted with the learners, teachers and head teachers who were selected for their potential to provide rich information relating to learner performance and teaching in the selected schools.

The above discussion relates to the argument by Education, Research and Consultancy Center (ERCC) (2010:2) that qualitative researchers employ interviews with open-ended questions for the purpose of gaining insight into people's attitudes, personal views and collective or individual behaviour. According to Matua and Van Der Wal (2015:24), drawing on Heidegger's

phenomenology for this study not only lies in achieving a deeper understanding of learner performance and teaching but also unveiling the hidden meanings as lived and experienced by the learners, teachers and head teachers in public secondary schools in Zambia.

Matua and Van Der Wal (2015:24), confirm that an interpretive study does away with merely increasing knowledge about a phenomenon by providing loose descriptions in preference for gaining a wide and detailed comprehension of the meaning of the phenomenon. Through this approach, the researcher will broadly and deeply study the nature of learner performance and teaching in public secondary schools, thereby giving insight into the possible approaches to dealing with the identified problem. This is because phenomenology considers reality to be individualistic and subjective (Padilla-Diaz, 2015:103). Therefore, the researcher can best understand the nature of learner performance and teaching by directly dealing with teachers, learners and school head teachers who are considered to be key informants on the challenge of poor performance in their schools rather than the researcher making assumptions about the phenomenon.

Another reason for employing constructivism paradigm using phenomenology is the fact that phenomenological methods are philosophical in nature and employ strategies where the researcher tries hard to grasp the extent to which human actors in respective societies give a sense of purpose to or explain the meanings of the things that happen in their area (Msabila & Nalaila, 2013:34). It is founded on the idea that reality comprises of objects and occurrences as the human consciousness understands them and are not detached from the consciousness of humans.

Daidsen (2013:318) adds that using phenomenological research enables one to generate a theoretical account that allows one to elicit the effect as well as the significance of the experiences that individuals could have gone through. The idea of constructivism through phenomenology is important in order to bring out, make known or clearly show common features of human life that make up our actions, specifically the experienced circumstances (Magrini, 2012:2).

As mentioned in chapter 1, the Zambian government has over the years tried to provide an environment that would improve learner performance, such as reducing class size, providing learning materials and upgrading teacher qualifications, but not much success was recorded (MESVTEE and JICA, 2011:14). The researcher is of the view that, investigating the lived experiences may provide an answer to the problem.

Heidegger's phenomenology suggests approaches to data collection methods like face-to-face interviews and open-ended questions, which will allow the researcher to provide an opportunity for the participants to freely voice out their lived experiences (Chan, Fung & Chien, 2013:4). The researcher will seek clarification, where necessary in order to gain a clearer insight into their description (Turner, 2010:756). Additionally, the small sample of 24 participants of diverse status (head teachers, teachers and learners), allowed the researcher to spend as much time as possible to collect rich information from a group that was purposively selected on account of its observed capacity to inform the study.

Undertaking a phenomenological study is necessary in order to address the challenges of poor learner performance in public secondary schools in Zambia since the problem relates to the researcher's area of specialist teaching. Friesen et al. (2012:1) advance that the development of interest in phenomenological studies can be linked to the focus on daily concerns; for example, education as a public and professional endeavour and it is usually taken up by researchers deeply rooted in their individual subject areas.

3.4 Research methods

3.4.1 The qualitative approach

Research methods refer to the techniques that are employed in gathering information required for the study (Quinlan, 2011:217). Research methods include the different tools that the researcher uses to collect the required information for the study, the manner in which the data is gathered, sorted and analysed to arrive at some conclusions (Walliman, 2011:7).

The purpose of this section is to outline and discuss the research methods that were employed to generate information that would be used to answer the research questions and deal with the research objectives. Qualitative approaches attempt to deal with questions that relate to the question ‘why’ and are used in the exploration of purpose, context and meaning (Teijlingen, 2014:5). According to Ritchie et al. (2013:24), qualitative researchers explore and understand the social world through the participants’ and their own perspectives; and explanations can only be offered at the level of meaning rather than cause.

Ritchie et al. (2013:3) note that particular methods of generating information like observation, semi-structured and in-depth interviews, as well as focus- groups are associated with qualitative research. Qualitative research is usually linked to particular types of data that encompass words or images instead of numbers (Denzin and Lincoln, 2011:3) and they are characterised by “data that are detailed, rich and complex” (Ritchie et al. 2013:4)

Canadian/American Spinal Research Organisations (2015:1) argue that qualitative research, which is purely applied to social sciences, employs an unstructured approach of gathering information which primarily seeks to investigate qualities that can be observed rather than numbers. It aims at responding to questions concerning the behaviour of human beings with a focus on the ‘why’ and ‘how’.

Rovai, Baker and Ponton (2014:4) add that qualitative strategies often use specific facts and examples to establish laws and accepted beliefs founded on the premise that reality is socially constructed and variables cannot be easily determined, are complicated and many sided, the matter of the subject being the most cardinal thing and that the gathered information will comprise the point of view of the participants.

3.4.2 Data collection methods

In view of the foregoing, the study comprises 12 semi- structured interviews and 2 focus- groups consisting of 6 participants each, coupled with documentary analysis of each school’s mission statement and vision, students’ record of assessment, schemes and records of work and well as

school policy on Continuing professional development and learner performance. The researcher is of the view that being able to employ systematic procedures in phenomenology, like the semi-structured and focus-group interviews, supplemented by documentary analysis, a process which is referred to as triangulation of methods (Creswell, 2012:239; Elmusharaf, 2013:30), will allow gathering of individual participants' views in their own language (Creswell, 2012:506). Triangulation of methods is the use of multiple data collection instruments in order to make use of the strengths of particular approaches to best explore a phenomenon from several viewpoints (Given, Winkler & Wilson, 2014:5). Using more than one data source in research "can extend and enhance the research process" (Biggerstaff, 2012:183). Using more than one data source can also be linked to the assertion that flexibility plays a very important role in qualitative research (Banister et al. 2011:200-201; Frost, 2011:11-12) where not only one method is used to collect data, but a combination of them. Ritchie et al. (2013:2) argues that there is no one accepted method of carrying out qualitative research because this is dependent upon, for instance, the researcher's view regarding the characteristics of the social world, the aims and objectives of the research and the nature of the research participants. The researcher is therefore preoccupied with the establishment of how the participants feel about a particular phenomenon rather than making assumptions that may not be well-founded.

Englander (2012:27) supports the use of the traditional face-to-face interview and asking for a documented account of the experience because in general, they are the two approaches for gathering information on the lived experiences of a phenomenon and, in turn, they will enable the researcher to collect the information that will lead to an understanding of what is being studied.

In the next section, the researcher provides an explanation for each of the tools that were used for the study.

3.4.2.1 Semi-structured interviews

An interview is an approach to gathering information in which the researcher asks a series of questions based on a specific subject area and the interviewer looks for responses that are open-

ended (O’Leary, 2012:194). Though time consuming, subjective and sometimes too emotive to allow free sharing, the interview is ideal to use because the researcher is directly in contact with the concerned parties and could seek immediate clarification where needed (Shergill, 2010:59). As recommended by Scotland (2012:14) and Padill-Diaz (2015:104), the researcher will use two semi-structured interviews with eight teachers and four head teachers comprising open-ended questions rather than closed ones. The selection of this instrument will allow the researcher to interact directly with the teachers and head teachers who are considered to have rich information on learner performance and teaching as social phenomena. World Health Organization (WHO) (2016:1) advances that semi-structured interviews are flexible interviews characterised by written lists of questions or topics that a researcher uses as a guide in a face-to-face interaction with the intended group. The researcher prepares a set of questions covering the topic under investigation which a specific group of people are expected to provide answers to. The researcher will normally refer to the list of questions for guidance but he or she is at liberty to adapt the questions where necessary.

The use of open-ended questions is in line with the recommended data collection methods in interpretive research where, as argued by Creswell (2014:4), the focus is exploration and comprehension of “...the meaning individuals or groups ascribe to a social or human problem”. The open-endedness in the interview allows the interviewees to provide as much detailed information as they wish and allows the researcher to ask probing questions as a way of follow-up (Turner,2010:756). Open-ended interviews aim at learning about individual behaviours, experiences, opinions, perspectives or thoughts on specific issues under investigation (Van Esch & Van Esch, 2013: 226).

According to Sloan and Bowe (2014:12), interviewing the selected individuals for the study provides the researcher with information for transcript analysis. Eddles-Hirsch (2015:254) advises that in-depth interview transcripts are the sources of information in a phenomenological study because the participants’ descriptions of the event allow the researcher to gain insight into the essences of the investigated phenomenon.

In this study, the researcher is also interested in the participants' personal description of learner performance and teaching as experienced individually and therefore, using semi-structured interviews with individual participants is necessary to allow the researcher collect individual descriptions. Englander (2012:15) posits that semi-structured interviews are among the most recommended instruments used to collect data in phenomenological qualitative researches, because such studies are preoccupied with other people's subjectivity and therefore they provide an opportunity to gather subjective descriptions. Getting descriptions of a lived experience from different people is a subjective exercise because experiences will differ from person to person and situation to situation, thereby requiring an approach that is open in nature.

Rao (2012:63) argues that semi-structured interviews do not follow a strict pattern, chronology or language in asking questions because the interviewer could ask a new question based on a response given to a previous question in order to seek clarification, thereby making the approach flexible. The interview is open rather than closed so that where possible the researcher could make changes as long as the answers being sought can be obtained from the interviewee. Quinlan (2011:310) notes that the type of knowledge derived from studies that are phenomenological in nature is based on the personally and subjectively lived experiences, because they target individual experiences through a detailed one-to-one interview. Therefore, semi-structured interviews stress the role of the human encounter in knowledge production (Cohen, Manion & Morrison, 2011:409), and they allow human interaction which forms a basis for qualitative human sciences research (Englander, 2012:14).

Scotland (2012:12) posits that interpretive data collection methods such as open-ended interviews, focus-groups and open-ended questionnaires are important since they provide insight into human behaviour, explain actions from the perspective of the participants and allow participants to freely express themselves rather than dominating them. Thus, the use of open-ended questions, through the use of interview guides, ensures flexibility and allows free expression by individual participants on their particular experience of a phenomenon. Rao (2012:64) notes that, semi-structured interviews are meant to collect points of view, personal perceptions and beliefs, and to reveal the links and connections in the information that could go unnoticed under more mechanical interrogation such as surveys. Semi-structured interviews also

allow for as much time as possible for one to express themselves regarding their personal world of experiences.

The interview guide that is used in a semi-structured interview guarantees a systematic flow of themes which the study aims to address and because of its provision to seek clarity, where possible, the researcher has the opportunity to derive as many perspectives as possible from the participants' lived experiences thereby, providing rich information for the study (Scott & Garner, 2013:283).

3.4.2.1.1 Organisation of the semi-structured interviews

The interview guides which were used for both teachers and head teachers (Appendices I and H) are divided into four parts: background information, key factors related to good performance, key factors related to poor performance, and recommended strategies for improving learner performance.

In the first part of the interview (background information), the researcher asked questions that relate to the participants in order to gain insight into the participants' qualifications and how long they have been in their various capacities. This was intended to help the participants to settle down and be at ease with the interviewer. As recommended by Punch (2012:174), creating rapport and asking general questions at the beginning of the interview rather than controversial ones, is important in ensuring participants feel at ease in the interview process.

In the second and third parts, the researcher focused on factors that relate to good performance and those that relate to poor learner performance, respectively. The researcher was interested in establishing the views of the teachers and head teachers on factors that affect learner performance either negatively or positively. Szombatova (2016:2) suggests that the key aim of a semi-structured interview is to determine the current ideas regarding particular topics or to reveal current insights into them. In order to fulfill this goal, the researcher outlined a number of questions that helped to reveal the opinions of the participants on the area of focus.

This is important because, according to Quinlan (2011:303), the idea of using semi-structured interviews in a phenomenological study is to derive the individual lived experience on a particular topic and as such, the set of questions need to elicit rich information on learner performance and teaching in public secondary schools in Zambia. Szombatova (2016:3) emphasises that interviews are the most outstanding techniques in understanding perceptions and daily encounters of people because they “merely make the accounts of practices accessible”.

In the final part, the researcher attempted to draw out personal views on what can lead to improved performance and any other comments they wished to make about the topic being investigated. O’Leary (2012:205) advises that in closing an interview, it is necessary to ask the respondents if there is anything else they would like to add to whatever has been discussed regarding the subject matter to ensure coverage of a comprehensive range of information.

3.4.2.2 Focus-group interview

This section discusses the two focus-group interviews that were conducted with some Grade 12 learners from the school council and debate clubs in two of the four selected schools. A focus-group is a form of interview with between six and twelve participants (Check & Schutt, 2012:205) where a researcher asks the group to take turns to answer a set of questions related to the study. This method of data collection is used to collect vital information simultaneously, in a short time from members of the population who are experts on a specific topic (ERCC, 2010:18; Quinlan, 2011:289; Scott & Garner, 2013:229). Sagoe (2012:2) advances that the principle underlying use of focus-groups is that group activities assist people in the exploration and clarification of their views in a manner that is not easily accessible in an individual interview. Lam, Lee and McNaught (2012:16) emphasise that focus-group interviews are interactive in nature; are capable of soliciting a vast and wide range of information; and allow consideration of extreme individual ideas, but should not allow any participant to dominate the discussion. Furthermore, ambiguity can be eliminated since the facilitator has the opportunity to ask for clarification where necessary.

Lam et al. (2012:16) also comment that focus-group interviews create an opportunity for exploring a topic in detail and provide additional evidence concerning why people think in a particular way by capturing examples, stories and feelings of the participants.

In this study, the researcher used the focus-group interviews of learners from the highest and lowest performing schools in order to collect descriptions of their lived experiences within their schools on learner performance and teaching. This is in line with the argument by ERCC (2010:18) that focus-groups play a significant role in collecting data regarding what is really taking place, the reason for what is happening, the feelings of the participants concerning the situation, as well as the existence of particular possibilities for exchange. Scott and Garner (2013:99) observe that, focus-groups have the potential to provide numerous lessons from the similar and contradictory viewpoints, practices that are common and collective norms of the participants on a given topic.

Quinlan (2011:289) argues that focus-groups are used in cases where the researcher intends to direct the attention of the participants' focus on a specific phenomenon, thereby generating insight into that phenomenon. The use of the focus-group interview is appropriate in this study because focus-groups allow for investigation of complicated, deep, personal perspectives that are rich and detailed (Scott and Garner (2013:99). Focus-group interviews with some Grade 12s from among members of the school council and debate club were considered to be a valuable technique for learning about the lived experiences on learner performance and teaching because the learners are directly affected by any kind of school activity and so they are capable of giving a clear insight into the phenomena. This is confirmed by ACAPS (2012:14) with the assertion that focus-group discussions are useful where one needs to identify cultural norms and comprehend issues that affect a group or part of a group within the affected population. This suggests that the selected participants can easily talk about learner performance and teaching in respect of the various school cultures because they are affected by the phenomenon.

The use of focus-group among the selected Grade 12 learners is important in providing additional information on the challenges surrounding learner performance and teaching in public secondary schools as there appears to be limited information about it (MESVTEE, 2014:9). Berg

and Lune (2012:172) suggest using focus groups to study a new topic or the one which may not have a lot of information.

Phenomenological researchers are advised to avoid being biased on a phenomenon by putting aside their personal beliefs, feelings and preconceptions (Creswell, 2012:477). Focus-groups allowed the researcher to learn from a collection of participants several feelings, beliefs and preconceptions which the researcher interpreted to gain insight into the phenomenon. Englander (2012:15) argues that apart from emphasising examination of what a phenomenon looks like from a personal perspective, phenomenologists also seek to know how a phenomenon is interpreted from an inter-subjective point of view. Therefore, collective discussion can generate multiple opinions which can create confidence in the findings of the research and at the same time increase the validity of the research.

The researcher was of the view that the focus-group interviews would bring out many points relating to the lived experiences of the learners and could be used to interpret the possible reasons for poor performance among learners in public secondary schools.

3.4.2.3.1 Organisation of the focus-group interviews

As already mentioned, the researcher purposively selected Grade 12s from among the school council and debate clubs, because the researcher was of the view that they have the potential to inform the study because of the duration of their stay and diverse involvement in many matters of the school. The focus-group interview guide (Appendix J1), like the head teachers' and teachers' interview guides, was divided into four major parts which the researcher used to draw as many responses relating to the subject matter as possible. The researcher ensured that the participants were at ease and none of them felt out of place in the discussion.

3.4.3 Document analysis

Document analysis refers to the process of gathering, examining and interrogating different types of written texts (O'Leary, 2012:223). It is said to be an approach in social research that allows

the researcher to gather important documentary proof that substantiates and authenticates facts and is founded on critically reading and reviewing a range of documented data as primary information (Punch, 2012:184).

In this study, the researcher used document analysis to supplement the focus-group and semi-structured interviews. Koshy (2011:89) advises that examining documentary evidence like policies, planning records for teachers and work for students can be included in the collection of information to supplement other sources of data. The researcher is of the view that the focus-group and semi-structured interviews that will be used in data collection may not allow for the collection of all the important and relevant information that will help in investigating learner performance. Banister et al. (2011:204) argues that any approach to research has the potential to be biased and cannot be value-free because we are influenced by the social world which is constructed socially. Using more than one method to collect data enhances the validity of the data the various methods are capable of providing more detailed information than would be collected from a single approach (Biggerstaff, 2012:183).

Documentary analysis or documentation as described by Bhattacharjee (2012:107) is one of the most commonly-used techniques in interpretive research where a combination of documents such as memos, yearly reports, financial statements and websites are used “to cast further insight into the phenomenon of interest or to corroborate forms of evidence”. Williamson, Given and Scifleet (2013:427) add that document analysis involves meaningful interpretation and description of the topics and themes evidently available in the documents’ contents when framed in line with the study research objectives.

In this study, the researcher focused on the following documents from the selected schools: mission statements and vision, learners’ records of performance, records of work, school policies on learner performance and CPD, because they allowed the researcher to generate the context for the study and to penetrate through the reality which may not be the same as claims that are made by the participants (Koshy, 2011:90).

The use of documents in this research is supported by the assertion that qualitative researchers can triangulate data sources and complement evidence directly collected from human participants by referring to a wide range of data sources that are available on a particular subject (Given et al. 2014:6).

The researcher will examine and interpret each school's vision and mission statements in order to relate them to the phenomenon under investigation. Creamer and Ghoston (2012:110) posit that there is a need to study mission statements, visions and curricula of institutions because they represent the institutions' vision and purpose. The researcher can then derive various meanings from the words and phrases used in the vision and mission statements in order to generate additional information for the study.

The records of work, learners' performance records, programmes on continuing professional development and policy on learner performance analysed in this study allowed the researcher to capture various human behaviours and gain insight into the subject of learner performance in the selected sites. Ary, Jacobs and Sorensen (2010:29) posit that analysis of documents helps researchers in the analysis and interpretation of recorded information as a technique for comprehending human behaviour. Bauer, Bicquelet and Suerdem (2014:4) comment that documents are created by a specific group of people wishing to put across their way of thinking and they usually provide a defense or explanation regarding a particular situation.

In order to extract information from the identified documents the reality surrounding learner performance in the selected schools, the researcher designed an analysis guide (Appendix K), divided into four parts. The parts included records of learners' performance, school policies on CPD, schemes and records of work.

3.5 Selection of Participants and Sampling

In this section, the researcher discusses the procedure that the researcher used to select the participants.

The study was conducted in four selected public, co- education, day secondary schools in the Copperbelt region of Zambia where a total of 24 purposively selected participants using expert sampling and snowballing were employed. That is: 4 head teachers, one from each school, 8 teachers (one male, one female longest serving teachers from each school) and 12 learners from the school Council and debate club among Grade 12s (equal gender) .

The four head teachers were included because, by virtue of their administrative positions, they had rich experience of learner performance and teaching in their schools and were capable of providing rich information on the study. They would be able to speak on the nature of the school as a whole, thereby providing the bigger picture at school level. The longest-serving teachers were also included in the study because they could describe individual experiences with regard to the classroom, departmental and general environment of their respective schools. The Grade 12s from the school council and debate club were also included as a source of rich information because of their long stay in secondary school, their involvement in numerous debates on cross-cutting issues and their role in linking their fellow learners with teachers and the school administration.

The number was based on the suggestion by Quinlan (2011:310) that phenomenological research is detailed in nature and it usually employs a minimal number of participants sometimes referred to as a 'sample'. This is because it is not practical to study everyone or everything, but, rather, a particular site or group of people should be selected from which the required information would be collected (Punch, 2012:187).

Furthermore, the number of participants selected for this study is based on Englander's (2012:21) argument that in a phenomenological approach, it is not the number of people which matter, but rather the quality of responses obtained from participants in the study. World Health Organisation (2016:2) and O'Leary (2012:114) suggest that sample size in qualitative research is not meant to be representative of the population from which the sample is drawn, but to generate validity, meaningfulness and insights from the study through information richness coupled with researcher's qualitative analysis of the information collected: a sample size of at least ten (10) participants and but fewer than forty (40) would be considered large enough.

The study was carried out in the Copperbelt region which is one of the 10 regions or provinces that make up Zambia. The region was selected because for many years, it has been one of the poorly performing regions in the Grade 12 National examination (ECZ, 2016, 2015, 2014, and 2013). The researcher purposively selected four schools from the two parts of the region Southern and Northern. The highest and lowest performing, co-education, day, public secondary schools in each region that had been in existence for more than 15 years were selected for the study.

The choice of the sites, participants and the size was influenced by Berg and Lune (2012:47) who emphasise the need to identify locations that are accessible as well as availability of the target population. The researcher observes that the four schools could easily be accessed and at the same time, the participants would be available to provide the required information. Apart from that, the province was located within the researcher's reach and had a reliable transport network that allowed the researcher to easily move in and out of the four districts.

3.6 Data collection procedures

The purpose of this section is to discuss the procedures that the researcher followed to collect the information from the target participants. Berg and Lune (2012:47) advise that data collection in phenomenological research calls for use of research protocols that are appropriate as well as identification of research sites and participants that are suitable.

In this study, the researcher adopted the five steps in data collection suggested by Creswell (2012:205): identification of participants and research sites (described above under sampling), gaining access to the participants, determining the kind of data to be gathered, development of the instruments and administering the process of information collection ethically.

3.6.1 Gaining access

The second step in the data collection process is gaining access to the sites and participants, where the researcher requires permission at different levels to get access to the sites as well as participants themselves (Creswell, 2012:210). The researcher first sought clearance from the University of South Africa Ethics Board/Committee (Appendix A). As per the requirement with the University of South Africa policy on research ethics, the researcher applied for and received ethical clearance from University's College of Education Ethical Committee to carry out the research. According to University of South Africa (2014:3), the purpose of the policy on research ethics is to make known to the researcher his or her duties in carrying out research ethically and uphold discipline in terms of all the required processes and the rights of the involved parties. It is therefore mandatory that the researcher receives clearance before embarking on the research. Walliman (2011:45-46) observes that research that involves people and how they relate to one another and the world requires adherence to ethical standards to avoid any harm arising from carrying out or reporting the research project since such research "impinges on the sensibilities and rights of the other people".

The researcher obtained permission from all the stakeholders involved in the research: the Copperbelt Educational Officer (Appendix B); the District Educational Board secretaries of the four selected districts (Appendix C), the head teachers of each selected school (Appendix D), the teachers, learners and head teachers (Appendix E & F) and their parents (Appendix G). Creswell (2012:24) advances that gaining access through gatekeepers or officials is one of the techniques for showing respect to the research site with disruption which is minimal. The term 'gatekeepers' means individuals who in respect of their positions of power are acknowledged as the passage to gaining entry to the sites of the research (UNISA, 2014:2).

The next step after the approval of the gatekeepers was the holding of preliminary meetings with the participants at least seven days before starting data collection to lay a foundation for collecting data. Englander (2012:27) posits that preliminary meetings are important to the researcher as they facilitate and create trust with the selected candidates, fulfilling the demands of ethical adherence as well as the process of completing consent forms. The researcher met the

prospective participants in their respective sites to seek their permission to participate in the research as well as asking them to fill in the consent forms. This meeting was important because it helped the researcher to prepare a schedule that fit within their programmes.

That aside, as advised by Creswell (2012:205), the next step is the development of the research instruments. As already mentioned in the preceding sections, the researcher conducted semi-structured interviews with four head teachers (Appendix H), and eight teachers (Appendix I), two focus group interviews with learners (Appendix J) and a documentary analysis guide (Appendix K). The instruments were selected on account of their potential to help study human behaviour (Scotland, 2012:8).

3.7 Pilot study

The instruments were subjected to a pilot study at one school to ensure suitability for the study. A pilot study, as observed by Crossman (2016:1), refers to a small, preliminary study carried out by the researcher to assist in arriving at the most appropriate approach for the final research, improve the questions, map out strategies that could best be used and approximate the resources require both financially and materially in completing the research. A pilot study allows for adequate planning in terms of time and resources to reduce unforeseen expenditures and time usage.

Schade (2015:1) suggests that a pilot study assists in perfecting the study, yielding results that are reliable, checking the phrasing of the questions, and sometimes can provide more information for the study. The pilot study allowed for improvement of the instruments and created confidence in their use since the researcher was able to identify possible oversights in the preparation of the instruments. The pilot study involved one head teacher, two teachers and four learners.

Following the pilot study, the actual data collection began by first informing the participants on the subject under discussion, the aims and objectives, their role in the research and the need to be as open and free as possible. The researcher also assured the participants that the information

would purely be used for academic purposes and it would be kept confidential in a password-protected folder. At the same time, they were informed that they were at liberty to contact the researcher if need be and they would be able to access the results once the thesis had been accepted by UNISA.

3.8 Data processing and analysis

This section gives an account of how the collected data were processed or analysed. Flick (2013:3) argues that data analysis is a very important stage in qualitative research because it determines the research outcomes. Qualitative data analysis is said to be the process of classifying and interpreting linguistic material to prove statements regarding “implicit and explicit dimensions and structures of social meaning” (Flick, 2013:5). Creswell (2012:171) advises that in qualitative research, the data analysis process includes making reference to the raw information obtained in the field, organisation and preparation of the data to be analysed, reading through the whole set of data, coding the data as well as identifying and interpreting themes. Therefore, the aim of data analysis is to gain insight into the phenomenon under study through the various responses drawn from the participants. Qualitative data analysis, as described by Henry (2015:25), takes a lot of time and focuses on a detailed analysis of meaning and themes.

Quinlan (2011:420) says that one of the functions of qualitative data analysis is to come up with a profound, detailed and a holistic profile of a phenomenon being studied. The researcher must be able to develop an understanding of the phenomenon under investigation by interpreting and synthesising the collected data. This demands the use of techniques of analysing data that enable the study participants’ voices to be heard (Frost, 2011:145). Quinlan (2011:421) advances that qualitative data is not numerical and can be presented in any way such as images, paintings, photographs or stories. Its analysis is not fixed and includes, for example, reading all data collected (in this case, interview transcripts) and writing down all the major ideas or issues that may emerge from the data, until there no more new ideas emerge. Punch (2012:194) adds that there are diverse viewpoints and approaches to qualitative data analysis, because studying social phenomena, which is the major preoccupation of qualitative research, provides rich knowledge

and is a complex process; addresses different questions; and can be elaborated from different dimensions.

Being an interpretive phenomenological study, data analysis was based on the principles of Heidegger's phenomenological approach. Smith (2011:22) advances that Interpretive Phenomenological Analysis (IPA) is a research methodology which is qualitative in nature and seeks to gain insight into the subjective occurrences of the participants by means of individual interpretation of their daily experiences and the meanings they attach to them. In this case, the researcher has the task of comprehending the daily encounters of the participants in respect of learner performance as a phenomenon and the meaning they attach to these encounters (Callary, Rathwell & Young, 2015:63).

Reiners (2012:2) advances that in Heidegger's phenomenological studies, data analysis involves the use of a cyclical approach characterised by continuous reviewing and analysing both parts of the text as well as the text as a whole.

In order to interpret the data collected from the semi-structured and focus-group interviews and the selected documents for analysis, the researcher followed the six steps suggested by Creswell (2012:172-176).

In the first step, the researcher organised all the raw data that were collected in the field: the responses from all the interviewed participants as well as the mission statements, school visions, records of work and learners' record of performance, and school policies on CPD. This step is also acknowledged by Koshy (2010:112) who argues that there may not be a single approach to analysing qualitative data, but the need to be systematic is key to effectively analysing data, and this begins with organising and outlining the various categories of collected information.

In the second step, the researcher read through all the collected information in order to "obtain a general sense of the information and to reflect on its overall meaning" (Creswell, 2012:172). Koshy (2010:112) also comments that this stage provides a general impression of the contents of

the collected information and it reveals the extent to which it relates to the ultimate goal of the research.

In the third step, the researcher proceeded to coding, which is described by Creswell (2012:173) as organisation of the material into text segments prior to bringing meaning to data. Punch (2012:199) describes coding as a process of assigning codes or putting labels onto pieces of the data for the purpose of attaching meaning to the data segments, and, in turn, serves as a basis for storing and retrieving information, as well as summarising the information into categories, themes and patterns. Attaching labels to the various parts of the collected information helped the researcher to reduce all the participants' descriptions of their lived experiences of learner performance to specific themes that would lead to understanding of the phenomenon under investigation. This step was necessary to allow the researcher, as recommended in hermeneutic phenomenology, to interpret the identified meanings that relate to the phenomena with a focus on gaining insight into the meaning of the daily encounters and interpretively engaging with data (Sloan & Bowe, 2014:9).

The fourth step focused on generating descriptions of the setting and the people involved in the study. Creswell (2012:175) advises that following the coding process is the generation of the setting or people's descriptions and groups or topics for analysis. He goes on to say that the identified themes are the key findings in qualitative research and they are usually used as the headings in the findings section of the research.

In the fifth step, the researcher used narrative descriptions to present the outcomes of the analysis.

The sixth step focused on making interpretations or meaning of the information which as described by Creswell (2012:176) involves stating the lessons derived from the study.

3.9 Trustworthiness

Trustworthiness as observed by Anney (2014:275) seeks to address five main questions:

- how a researcher can create confidence in the results;
- how to arrive at applicability of the results in another context;
- whether the results would be similar if the study was repeated with similar participants in a similar environment;
- how the results are entirely drawn from participants; and
- whether the results were influenced by the researcher's biasness, motives and desires.

This means that every research must aim at providing answers to all the above questions as a way to prove trustworthiness. Elmusharaf (2013:2) describes trustworthiness as the manner in which the truthfulness or worthiness of the research findings can be judged. In other words, trustworthiness refers to the criteria that one would use to determine whether the findings of the research are true or not. These include credibility, transferability, dependability and conformability (Anney, 2014:272).

3.9.1 Credibility

Credibility can be defined as the capacity of the research to answer the research question precisely, where the findings are not merely a product of mistakes in the research design, misconceptions, or factors that may not be known (Elmusharaf, 2013:30). Additionally, Anney (2014:276) argues that credibility confirms whether or not the results of the study are derived from the original data gathered from the participants and is a realistic interpretation of the participants' ideas. Credibility facilitates confidence in the reported findings of the study through adherence to the recommended credibility strategies such as lengthy interactions, perseverance in observations, using more than one method, using verbatim extracts, debriefing colleagues, and critiquing and checking by members (Anney, 2014:276).

In order to ensure the research is credible, the researcher spent time at the selected schools in order to build positive relationships with the participants. Barusch, George and Gringeri (2011) advance that prolonged engagement demands that the researcher spends enough time at the research sites building relationships and co-constructing meaning with the research participants.

The researcher recorded discussions and interviews although the original names and institution were withheld as a way of accumulating sources for reference.

3.9.2 Transferability

The second measure of trustworthiness in qualitative research is transferability. Transferability according to Sikolia, Biros, Mason and Weiser (2013:2) entails the extent to which the study results may be applied to a different context. Transferability, as observed by Frambach, Van der Vleuten and Durning (2013:410), can be attained by making research findings meaningful to others through clearly describing the research, the sampling strategy, and literature from different settings.

Transferability, as observed by Anney (2014:277), is facilitated through provision of thick description and purposive sampling. In achieving transferability for this study, the researcher provided a detailed account of the qualitative phenomenological design founded on Martin Heidegger's interpretive approach. In this description, the researcher emphasised that the role of the researcher was to describe and interpret the lived experiences of the participants with regard to learner performance in public secondary schools in Zambia. The researcher indicated that the study is undertaken on the Copperbelt Province. The researcher also purposively selected participants who had the potential to inform the study because of their experiences in their different capacities.

The researcher also provided a description of the actual instruments that were used in data collection: semi-structured, focus-group interviews and data analysis of school motto, mission statements, school policies relating to and students' assessment record sheets

3.9.3 Dependability

According to Cohen et al. (2011:140), dependability relies on participants thoroughly evaluating the research results, interpretations and recommendations to ensure that they are adequately backed up by the information derived from the research participants. It entails critically examining what comes out of the research, the way the data are interpreted and finally the recommendations that emerge from the research. This involves, as observed by Anney (2014:278), critically revisiting the collected data in its raw form, engagement of more than one person in data analysis and comparison of results; coding the data twice for the sake of comparison; and asking peers to review the results.

3.9.4 Conformability

Conformability or confirmability suggests the extent to which findings are affected by personal interests and biases. If the research is confirmable, it should be possible to see that conclusions are grounded in the data (Walle, 2015:141). This can basically be achieved through for example triangulation, a good interview approach, confidentiality and ensuring the researcher provides his or her analysis (Anney, 2014:279).

3.10 Triangulation

Triangulation as described by Hales (2010:14) is a method of merging information from various sources to investigate a specific phenomenon of social nature for the purposes of ensuring the conclusions are strengthened and minimising the possibility of having interpretations that are not true. It is a process of bringing as much data as possible from different origins so as to be sure about the findings of the research, and avoiding interpretation that are misrepresented.

Triangulation in this case is necessitated by the fact that studying human behaviour is a complex exercise that may not be achieved through one single method. Murphy (2011:3) acknowledges that drawing on multiple viewpoints in research increases credibility. In this research, the researcher made use of different methods which included semi-structured and focus-group

interviews with different groups of participants, and documentary analysis. According to Lauri (2013:3), using multiple sources not only guarantees a clearer view of the reality of a particular phenomenon, but the researcher can be more confident about what he or she is doing. At the same time, it has the potential to convince others the value or benefits of the research, thereby facilitating trustworthiness.

Reis et al. (2017:277) identify four forms of triangulation: data triangulation, investigator triangulation, methodological triangulation and theory triangulation.

Data triangulation entails collection of information from various sources or not at the same time (Reis et al. 2017:276). Through data triangulation, the researcher is able to confirm the research findings and correct any misunderstandings by comparing one with others to ensure validity and reliability of the results. In this study, the researcher used triangulation of data collection from three different sets of participants: teachers, head teachers and Grade 12 learners from the school councils and debate clubs. This strategy provided as many sources of information as possible to provide proof of the reality regarding the phenomena being investigated.

The second form of triangulation is investigator triangulation, a process of employing other researchers, observers, interviewers or analysts of data in the study to avoid being biased as one collects, reports or analyses information from the investigation. Data triangulation also increases the possibility of making the research process rich (Sixsmith, and Daniels, 2011:6), while also improving credibility through debriefing colleagues, critiquing and checking by members (Anney, 2014:276).

In this case, the researcher worked in consultation with the supervisor, an expert in the field of philosophy of education and qualitative research, who provided guidance for the research. Through this, the researcher was able to correct mistakes that had the potential to misrepresent the results. The researcher also requested the input of two colleagues who recently completed their doctoral studies in the department of education. The identified colleagues were able to participate in the reviewing of the perceptions, insights and analyses.

Thirdly is the methodological triangulation which numerous data collection approaches are employed (Reis et al. 2017:277). It may include, for instance, the use of an interview coupled with document analysis or focus group discussions (Mills, Eurepos & Wiebe, 2010). The researcher conducted semi-structured interviews with teachers and head teachers and focus-group interviews among Grade 12 learners, and used documentary analysis. This is influenced by Creswell (2012:239) who posits that triangulation of different sources of data facilitates accuracy in the study. The researcher can then be sure that the information collected is correct if there is consistency in the outcomes from all the data sources.

3.11 Ethical considerations

This section discusses ethical measures for the study as proof of having carried out the research honestly. Graham and Fitzgerald (2010:134) describe ethics as a collection of values and beliefs that direct how research is approached. Powell, Fitzgerald and Taylor (2012:8) state that research ethics are the guidelines regarding the approved and recommended way of doing research such as the bureaucratic systems of regulation, management and governance. In other words, these refer to right or wrong conduct on which the process of research is founded.

O'Leary (2012:40) observes that every researcher has a moral obligation to ensure that the integrity and welfare of individuals and cultural groups during the research process is maintained, through conscientiousness, equity and honesty. Walliman (2011:42) advances that ethical issues in research focus on two aspects: the researcher's personal values associated with sincerity, openness and individual integrity; and how the researcher treats the participants in terms of informed consent, confidentiality, anonymity and courtesy. Ethics also applies to the manner in which a researcher approaches the selected candidates before, during and at the end of the study. Scales (2012:3) adds that ethical issues in research include taking individual entitlements into consideration, namely, the security and welfare of each individual that is associated with the research, informed consent, the relationship between the researcher and the participants, confidentiality, and adherence to ethics both in terms of timing and approach.

In order to fulfil the demands for ethical measures the researcher first applied for ethical clearance, whose approval (Appendix A) will lead to the commencement of the data collection

process. The principles of University of South Africa research ethics demand that the researcher gives a detailed explanation of the research title, problem statement, research questions, aims and objectives of the research, research methodology and design in accordance with the guidance of the University (UNISA, 2014:4). As indicated in the data collection process section, as recommended by Creswell (2012:210), the researcher asked for permission to conduct the research at regional, district, and school levels (Appendices B, C, D).

The identified participants were initially individually and were provided with information (Appendix E) about the research which included the name of the researcher, institution, supervisor, title and aim of the research. It also included the purpose of the invitation, their role in the study, conditions for their participation and benefits, confidentiality, data storage, payment, ethical approval, research feedback and provision for them to acknowledge having read and understood the conditions for participating in the research. O' Leary (2012:41) acknowledges that the ethical guidelines of any research include ensuring that participants give their informed consent to participate in the research and that they can only do this if they fully understand what their participation entails. The researcher took time to explain what was involved in the study and she ensured that those who expressed interest in participating filled in the consent slip (Appendix F) as evidence of having voluntarily agreed to be part of the research.

Related to informed consent is getting permission from parents of the Grade 12 learners because they were either 18 years or below and as such, they were considered to be children. Koshy (2011:81) advises that research which involves children require that informed consent be obtained from both the children and parents (Appendices F and G).

Confidentiality in this research was upheld through ensuring anonymity of both the participants and the research site. Quinlan (2011:79) posits that confidentiality entails that individuals' or institutions' contributions to the research remain confidential through maintaining anonymity. In line with the suggestions by Chong and Yeo (2015:263), the researcher protected the identity of the participants and research sites by using pseudonyms during the recordings of the interviews and focus group discussions, safely locking up the collected data and storing all the electronic data on a computer protected with a password.

Quinlan (2011:75) emphasises that suspicions of plagiarism could greatly compromise the integrity of the researcher's work. The researcher thus ensured that all literature used was properly referenced.

3.12 Conclusion

In this chapter, the researcher provided and discussed reasons for employing a qualitative research design using the interpretive phenomenological approach. The use of semi-structured face-to-face and focus-group interviews, with documentary analysis was preferred for the study. Data collection procedure included identification of participants and research sites, gaining access to the participants, determining the kind of data to be gathered, development of the instruments and administering the information collection process ethically. Data analysis and processing procedures were discussed in the order of their occurrence.

In the next chapter, the researcher presents the findings from the semi-structured interviews, focus-group discussion and documentary analysis on the nature of learner performance and teaching in public secondary schools in Zambia.

CHAPTER 4

RESEARCH FINDINGS, ANALYSIS AND DISCUSSION

4.1 Introduction

In the previous chapter, the researcher provided a detailed description of the research design and the justification for its selection. The previous chapter also revealed that a phenomenological study usually uses a non-probability purposive sampling method. In view of the focus of the study, there were 12 semi-structured interviews and 2 focus-group interviews comprising 6 learners per group, based on a sample that was made up of four head teachers, eight teachers and twelve learners giving a total of 24 participants. The research was carried out in four schools in the Copperbelt Province of Zambia.

This chapter provides feedback on the findings of the research, followed by analysis and discussion of the findings in order to address the research questions that guided the study: *'What is the nature of learner performance and teaching in public secondary schools in Zambia?'*

For the purposes of logical presentation of the research findings, analysis and discussion, the researcher divides the chapter into five sections:

- The first section represents demographic profiles of participants represented by symbols: 'P' for participants, letters 'A', 'B', 'C', 'D' for the school name, 'FG' for focus-group and finally the numbers represent the position of the participant in the particular school. Therefore, head teachers are represented as: PA1, PB1, PC1, and PD1. The teachers from each school are represented by symbols: PA2 and 3: school A; PB2 and 3: school B; PC2 and 3: school C; and PD2 and 3: school D. The 12 focus-group participants who were only drawn from school B, the lowest performing, and school D, the highest performing, are represented by symbols: PBFG1, 2, 3, 4, 5, and 6 for school B and PDFG1, 2, 3, 4, 5, and 6 for school D. The actual details of all the participants are outlined in table 4.1 of the first section.

- The second section presents research findings from the semi-structured interviews with the four head teachers from each of the four selected schools for the study and the eight longest serving teachers (two from each school, both male and female) and the two focus-group interviews, six learners per group of equal gender among the selected Grade 12 learners from the debate club and school council.
- The third section presents document analysis (school vision and mission statements and record of learners' performance).
- The fourth section provides comments on the findings in respect of both the main and sub-questions that guided the study.
- The fifth section summarises the key issues.

4.2 Demographic profiles of participants

As discussed in chapter 3, the participants for this study included four head teachers, eight teachers and twelve Grade 12 learners from among the debate club and school council. As shown in Table 4.1, all the head teachers and teachers possessed the minimum qualification for secondary school teaching, namely, the Secondary Teachers Diploma and had been in the teaching service for over ten years in their respective public secondary schools. All the twelve learners interviewed were drawn from among the Grade 12 debate clubs and school council.

Table 4.1: Demographic information of the research participants

| S/N | Code | Description | Sex | Age group | Years employed | Qualifications | School performance status |
|-----|-------|--------------|--------|-----------|----------------|---|-----------------------------------|
| 1 | PA1 | Head teacher | Male | < 50 | 35 | - Secondary Teachers' Diploma - Pursuing Bachelor of Arts with Education | Least performing Copperbelt South |
| 2 | PA2 | Teacher | Male | < 40 | 20 | - Certificate in Zambia Primary Basic Course - Special Education - Secondary Teachers' Diploma - Bachelor of Arts with Education | Least performing Copperbelt South |
| 3 | PA3 | Teacher | Female | > 40 | 15 | Secondary Teachers' Diploma Pursuing Bachelor of Art with Education | Least performing Copperbelt South |
| 4 | PB1 | Head teacher | Male | < 40 | | - Secondary Teachers' Diploma - Bachelor of Arts with Education - Pursuing Masters in Education | Least performing Copperbelt North |
| 5 | PB2 | Teacher | Male | < 40 | | - Secondary Teachers' Diploma - Pursuing Bachelor of Art with Education | Least performing Copperbelt North |
| 6 | PB3 | Teacher | Female | < 50 | 30 | - Bachelor of Art with Education - Pursuing Masters in Arts in Education | Least performing Copperbelt North |
| 7 | PBFG1 | Pupil | Female | 17 | | | Least performing Copperbelt North |
| 8 | PBFG2 | Pupil | Female | 17 | | | Least performing Copperbelt North |
| 9 | PBFG3 | Pupil | Female | 16 | | | Least performing Copperbelt North |
| 10 | PBFG4 | Pupil | Male | 17 | | | Least performing Copperbelt North |
| 11 | PBFG5 | Pupil | Male | 20 | | | Least performing Copperbelt North |

| S/N | Code | Description | Sex | Age group | Years employed | Qualifications | School performance status |
|-----|-------|---------------------|--------|-----------|----------------|--|------------------------------------|
| 12 | PBFG6 | Pupil | Male | 18 | | | Least performing Copperbelt North |
| 13 | PC1 | Head teacher | Male | < 40 | 24 | - Secondary Teachers' Diploma - Bachelor of Arts with Education | Highly performing Copperbelt South |
| 14 | PC2 | Teacher | Female | < 40 | 23 | - Primary School Certificate - Diploma Business studies | Highly performing Copperbelt South |
| 15 | PC3 | Teacher | Male | | 15 | - Secondary Teachers' Diploma in Accounts - Pursuing Bachelors of Arts with Education | Highly performing Copperbelt South |
| 16 | PD1 | Deputy Head teacher | Male | <40 | 22 | - Primary school Teacher certificate - Secondary Teachers' Diploma - Bachelor of Arts with Education | Highly performing Copperbelt North |
| 17 | PD2 | Teacher | Female | < 40 | | Secondary Teachers' Diploma | Highly performing Copperbelt North |
| 18 | PD3 | Teacher | Male | <50 | | Secondary Teachers' Diploma | Highly performing Copperbelt North |
| 19 | PDFG1 | Pupil | Male | 17 | | | Highly performing Copperbelt North |
| 20 | PDFG2 | Pupil | Female | 16 | | | Highly performing Copperbelt North |
| 21 | PDFG3 | Pupil | Male | 17 | | | Highly performing Copperbelt North |
| 22 | PDFG4 | Pupil | Female | 16 | | | Highly performing Copperbelt North |
| 23 | PDFG5 | Pupil | Male | 17 | | | Highly performing Copperbelt North |
| 24 | PDFG6 | Pupil | Female | 17 | | | Highly performing Copperbelt North |

4.3 Presentation of findings from the semi-structured and focus-group interviews

This section presents and analyses findings that were obtained from the semi-structured interviews conducted with four head teachers plus eight longest serving teachers as well as focus-group interviews with twelve Grade 12 learners from among the members of the debate club and school council. The section is divided according to the major and sub-category themes that emerged from the collected data.

4.3.1 Participants' views on the nature of learner performance and teaching in public secondary schools.

Following the general information about the participants, the researcher asked every participant to provide a description of learner performance and teaching in their respective public schools. The purpose of this question was to gain general insight into the participants' descriptions of the nature of learner performance and teaching in their schools.

The participants diversely described their lived experiences in respect of learner performance and teaching in public secondary schools, but generally, they expressed dissatisfaction with the many challenges that characterised those schools. Four major themes emerged from the participants' descriptions: (1) socio-economic factors; (2) the nature of the teaching and learning environment; (3) personal factors; and (4) policy-related issues. The section that follows below provides in detail the four major themes and the sub-categories that emerged from the descriptions of learner performance and teaching generated from the participants.

4.3.1.1 Theme 1: socio-economic factors

The first major theme to emerge was the view that learner performance and teaching were extremely challenged by a number of socio-economic factors, namely, (a) high poverty levels (b) illiteracy, and (c) lack of parental involvement and control, participants: (PB3, PA1, PA2, PA3, PC1, PB2, and PD3). The section below provides summaries of the sub-categories.

High Poverty levels

High poverty levels emerged as one of the major socio-economic factors that affected learner performance and teaching in the selected schools (cf. UNESCO, 2014:195; UNICEF, 2014:51). PA1, PB3, PC1, PD3 and PB2 indicated that high poverty levels deprived many families of access to basic needs which in turn affected their concentration to learning as well as creating challenges to teaching them. PB3 particularly observed that some learners reported to school on empty stomachs and, as argued by scholars like Maslow (1943), their concentration to learning is likely to be compromised.

In relation to high poverty levels, PB1 and PD1 commented that some families could not afford to pay the required school fees. The learners were often sent away from school for non-payment of fees and by the time they paid they would have missed what had been taught in their absence. In some cases, like school 'A' (PA1 and PA3) where farming was the major source of livelihood, some learners were compelled to work in the fields during the farming season either before they left for school or during the time they needed to be in school, thus reporting late or being totally absent from school from time to time. At the same time, the farming activities they depended on for economic survival were not sufficient to meet the school requirements.

Participant PD2 also noted that the massive retrenchment of miners in the Copperbelt region left many parents unemployed and incapable of successfully supporting their children financially. This in turn has created a challenge on the provision of learners' basic school needs, thereby affecting learners' concentration in school.

The following quotes serve to support the preceding views:

"...some learners come to school on empty stomachs, others have various challenges at home, and that affects their performance" (PB3).

"...this is a rural place, even the so-called farmers are just peasants producing as little as five bags in a year...they have little money... yet, they need enough money to meet learners' requirements so when it comes to user fees for example, most of them fail to pay and once the learners'

requirements are not met, they tend to lose interest in school.... As a school we do not keep them if they do not settle their fees but tell them to go home and look for money...” (PA3).

“Many parents on the Copperbelt have been retrenched from the mines and their economy has been affected. This has negatively impacted on the flow of school fees and the general welfare of learners as most learners cannot afford the basic needs for their academic sustainability” (PD2).

Illiteracy levels

The second emerging socio-economic factor from the semi-structured interviews was high illiteracy at family level. The participants revealed that many learners came from communities where illiteracy levels were quite high and their communities did not understand or appreciate the value of education. PA1, PB2, and PC1 observed that it was difficult for the learners to commit themselves to working hard in school because they did not see the value of going to school. It was specifically observed by PA1 that learners whose families were illiterate did not receive enough support for academic excellence because they were not motivated to apply themselves academically.

This finding relates to the literature such as Murdock (2009) in Oyserman and Destin (2010:1002) and UNESCO (2012:102), which indicates that low literacy has extreme economic and social influences at individual and household level such as preventing adults from undertaking tasks like assisting children with homework. This potentially affects the performance of the learners especially when the family is the only available source of academic assistance.

The following comments made by some participants support these findings:

“The feeding schools for most of our Grade 10 learners are located in low-density areas where I think education is not valued... even the activities that happen don’t encourage children to work hard... you find

that most of those that drink and stay away from school come from those areas and they cannot read and write so there must be something wrong with the junior secondary schools that feed our senior secondary classes” (PC1).

“Here, most parents are illiterate... do not see very much value in the education of their children... a child that produces money is a better child than who wastes money being paid for in this school...even getting fees for these children is very difficult no matter how much they are chased away... parents will still not pay... the child psychologically is affected...misses lessons...parents simply say I do not have money...just wasting time at school” (PB2).

“This is a rural place and most parents are really not learnt, very few appreciate the education of their children....When children go back home, parents do not take time to check their work , due to illiteracy...they have never been to school themselves” (PA1).

Parental involvement

The third sub-category emerging theme from socio-economic factors relating to learner performance and teaching in public secondary schools is the issue of limited parental control and involvement in the academic life of most learners (cf. Garcia & Thornton, 2014:1; Khajehpour & Ghazvini, 2011:1205; Usher & Kober, 2012:4). The participants from the semi-structured interviews (PB2, PD3 and PA1) stressed that poor performance among learners was a result of most parents’ inability to guide and support their children, both socially and academically. In particular, PA1 noted that in certain instances, the distances between the school and their homes were too far for the learners to walk everyday as such; they rented accommodation in the nearby villages with friends and only returned home at the end of the week. This meant that learners mostly spent their time without parental control and were exposed to a lot of bad vices that greatly contributed to their poor performance.

According to participants PDFG3, PB2 and PA3 parenting in many Zambian homes is left to women because most of the men, spend their free time away from home socializing with friends

rather than with their families. This means that the task of monitoring children is primarily in the hands of the women who in some cases are too weak to deal with some disciplinary issues and would have to wait for their husbands, who would usually return home very drunk when the children are already sleeping and leave home for work in the morning before the children wake up.

Additionally, PC1 and PD2 also observed that lack of stable employment opportunities for many people in Zambia has given rise to parents constantly searching for jobs in order to support their families. As results of this, many parents are rarely home to provide the much needed parental support to their children and it is evident that schools are not getting enough support from the parents in the education process of the learners.

Verbatim extracts include:

“Many parents are not interested in the education of their children ...no matter how much you tell them their children are not improving, and we need to work together, the answer so far I have got... 'even at home, this child is like this, so there is nothing we can do' . This means parents are not willing to go an extra mile to assist in the education of their children, so children are lost...if parents checked their children's books to see their progress, it would help...very few do that...parents' role been diluted by parents themselves” (PB2).

“Male Parents rarely spend their time at home because even if they have knocked off from work early enough they prefer to socialize with friends instead of spending quality time with their families. By the time they return home, they are too drunk or tired to discuss anything constructive with the children. This leaves the task of parenting to the women who sometimes cannot handle certain issues...” (PD3).

“Most of the learners here, because of the distances between their homes and school and the fact that there are no school boarding facilities, stay in cabins within the compounds. Meaning after normal school hours, learners are on their own and they can do whatever mischief they want

like indulging in beer drinking, smoking, prostitution... nobody is there to control anything. This generally leads to absenteeism and non performance but if this was a boarding school, learners would be controlled and prevented from behaviours that would negatively affect their performance” (PA1).

“A number of parents on the Copperbelt are preoccupied with job hunting in order to ensure there is food on the table.... They are not home most of the time... they can hardly find time to monitor their children’s behaviour...by the time they know what is happening with their children it is too late” (PC1).

4.3.1.2 Theme 2: Teaching and learning environment

The second major theme that emerged from the participants’ views on learner performance and teaching was the nature of the environment in which teaching and learning took place. Most of the participants both in the semi-structured and focus-group interviews illustrated that the nature of the school environment was not ideal enough to support teaching and learning. Among the key emerging themes under this theme were: (a) learning and teaching resources (b) large class sizes and (c) school routine.

Resources

The researcher gathered from both the semi-structured and focus-group interviews that teaching and learning was affected by the limited or non-availability of important teaching and learning resources (PBFG3, PD1, PC3, PBFG1, PBFG6, PA1 and PC2) such as laboratories, books, adequate classroom space and sanitary facilities (Cf. Henard & Roseveare, 2012:25) . Particularly, PBFG3, PC3 and PD1 commented that the absence of books to aid teaching and learning in their schools had been exacerbated by the introduction of the revised curriculum not accompanied by the required books. They observed that this led to gaps in knowledge and affected learner performance.

Sanitary conditions were also cited as a huge challenge to teaching and learning because it tended to compromise issues that relate to health (PBF3, PBF4 and PBF6). In particular, PBF1 noted that lack of water and limited ablution facilities created a challenge to teaching and learning especially for the girl child who needed to freshen up during her menstruation period.

In relation to teaching and learning resources, PB1 and PA1 emphasised that their schools lacked availability of laboratories which prevented learners from getting exposure to experiments, giving rise to overdependence on theoretical teaching and learning. PB1 noted that the national curriculum demanded exposure to both theory and experiments in subjects like science, but normally during lessons, learners had almost no opportunity to do experiments and they only came across the practical part of those subjects in the examination.

The following quotes serve as confirmation of the views raised above:

“... With the revised curriculum, some topics have been replaced by new ones but the material in some cases is not readily available. We did receive some books but not enough to cater for the population....Grants are not consistent and not enough... so we entirely depend on the school fees which we are always struggling to collect...This somehow impacts negatively on making available the required teaching and learning materials” (PD1).

“It is bad because there is no water at this school; the toilets are too dirty for the learners’ health” (PB FG1).

“The other major contributing factor to poor performance is the absence of the library and proper laboratories...have just one improvised laboratory instead of two...so we have a problem when it comes to practical... We do not even have enough classrooms... this incomplete structure you see, we are doing on our own using user fees to try and expand but it is a very slow process, we have tried donors, but to no avail, nobody has come to our aid” (PA1).

Large class sizes

It was brought to the attention of the researcher that individual public secondary schools did not have the mandate to decide the number as well as the calibre of the learners they enrolled in school as this was purely determined by the government (PA1, PB1, PC1 and PD1). This means that as much as public secondary schools desired a particular ideal class size and the calibre of the learners, it was not within their powers to do so. This is because the Ministry gave schools numbers and, in some instances, lists of learners they needed to take on because they needed to respond to some international agreements regarding national educational achievements and targets, (c.f. Anderson & Mundy, 2014:3).

As a result of the foregoing observations, one of the greatest challenges surrounding teaching and learning in public secondary schools was the large numbers of learners in the classes which made it very difficult for teachers to provide the much-needed individual attention for positive learner performance. PC2 and PBFG3 particularly lamented that most of the classes were too crowded to support effective teaching and learning, thereby negatively affecting learner performance. The focus-group participants, (PBFG4, PBFG1, PDFG3 and PDFG5) explained that learning in crowded classes deprived them as learners of the opportunity to receive individual attention from teachers which was cardinal in their performance, and at the same time, crowded classes did not provide much room for academic concentration because they were noisy and disruptive, (cf. Marcus and Page, 2016:51).

Below are examples of the quotes the researcher collected to support the raised views:

“Teaching in a public secondary school has been a very big challenge because there are too many learners in one class. For instance, when I came to this school in the year 2000 I was given the role of Grade teacher for a Grade 12 class which had one hundred and eight (108) learners. You can imagine such a crowd for a class where you are expected to provide individual attention to each learner...it is too much

especially when compared to private schools where there are about thirty in a class that is almost three classes in one” (PC2).

“It is very difficult for a learner to get individual attention because of the size of the classes and the number of students” (PBFG3).

Nature of the school routine

Another emerging theme in relation to the nature of the teaching and learning environment in public secondary schools was the school routine which was said to pay very little attention to the physiological needs of the learners as it did not give learners, for instance enough time for lunch break to enable them to relax, eat and go to the toilet .At the same time, there was minimal provision for extra-curricular activities like sports (PB1 and PC1).

PB1 further added that, in relation to the school routine, there was absence of extra-curricular activities in most schools, yet such activities were very important in supplementing teaching and learning.

Additionally, PC1 observed that the existence of afternoon classes contributed to poor performance in public secondary schools because learners had to knock off at 12:15 hours, which left them with too much time to themselves and created room for engaging themselves in bad vices, especially because parents or guardians were not at home until late in the evenings (cf. Thomas, 2014:46)

The following quotes provide evidence of the findings:

“Can imagine where a child goes into class at 7:00 hours... 10:00 hours, break for 20 minutes and goes back to class until 13:40 hours for 20 minutes lunch only... That does not consider the physiological needs of the child...have for example, only ten toilet pans against over one thousand boys...small tuck-shop... not many learners carry packed lunch...how can they manage to go to the toilet and at the same time buy food in 20 minutes? ...cannot concentrate so...poor performance” (PB1).

“The other challenge I have discovered is that of the school routine, a number of schools have ignored the aspect of sports or co-curricular activities yet if you look at the curriculum framework, it is categorical on that one, where it has said co-curricular activities are very much a part of the school programme and so they should be planned for” (PB1).

“In the initial arrangement, the Ministry of Education encouraged double streams-morning and afternoon sessions...reduced contact hours in terms of learning and teaching time... to give a fair learning time to both sessions meant cutting off some periods from the morning session...classes only went up to 12:15 hours...Coverage was limited and as a result, syllabus could not be completed...when exam time came children were half-baked... would only answer few questions” (PC1).

“When a learner knocks off at 12:15 hours, goes back home, what do they do the whole afternoon?...Will not study, be all over the place... others will go drinking and do other vices...”(PC1).

4.3.1.3 Theme 3: Personal factors

There was a general consensus among the participants in the semi-structured and focus-group interviews that personal factors greatly influenced teaching and learning in the selected public secondary schools. This theme included three sub-categories which were: (a) the calibre of the learners; (b) the calibre of the teachers; and (c) the nature of school leadership. The section below provides details of the overarching sub-categories of the highlighted personal factors.

The calibre of the learners

The majority of the participants from the semi-structured interviews reported that teaching and learning was greatly influenced by the attitude of the learners towards school (PB3, PC3, PC1 and PD1). The participants were of the view that it was not easy to teach learners who attached very little importance to education, because there was no common understanding of the purpose of being in school (cf. Erasmus et al. 2013:141; Kundu, 2015:157; Usher & Kober, 2012:2).

The participants agreed that a number of learners in their schools lacked the motivation to learn which made teaching extremely difficult. It was noted specifically by PC3 that teaching unmotivated learners was quite stressful on the part of the teacher because learning was a personal matter which required individuals to apply themselves to the demands of acquiring knowledge. Other participants, PD1 and PDFG6 noted that the negative attitude of learners towards school gave rise to high absenteeism among learners which created a lot of gaps in the learning process.

The following quotes provide evidence of the views generated from the participants:

“The attitude of learners in public schools is very bad because learners do not want to be kept in school. If anything, they are just being forced, when they come early in the morning, the job is now on us as teachers, especially those that are on duty to push the learners into class, if you do not do that, they will not get into class by themselves” (PC3).

“Very few learners have interest in school and it appears as if parents just force them to come to school and when they are in school they do not know what they are supposed to do...a good number of them absent themselves from school and they fail to connect and catch up on what is taught in their absence” (PD1).

“Most learners absent themselves from school and also lack interest in school work...because when they are absent, they will not know what their friends would have learnt in their absence...some are told by their parents to work before they go to school and by the time they reach school, the gate would have been closed, they have to go back, others just want to absent themselves, maybe go out and have fun with their friends while their parents think they are at school” (PDFG6).

The calibre of teachers

The nature of teachers was identified as one of the emerging sub-categories of personal factors that contributed to teaching and learning in public secondary schools (cf. Anderson & Munday, 2014:5; Morgan, 2014:454). These ranges from lack of teachers' passion for their work, failure of some teachers to motivate their learners, inability to deliver, to lack of experience to handle the secondary school curriculum (PDFG6, PD1, PB2, PB1). The participants generally agreed that some teachers appeared to have been forced to go into teaching for one reason or another, and as such, they had no passion for their work. From their behaviour, it was quite apparent that they were not interested in their job except to draw a salary for their livelihood (Lunenburg, 2011:2).

It was further observed by some participants that public schools lacked mechanisms to evaluate and eliminate incompetence among teachers (PD1, PB2, PC3, PC1 and PA1). It was noted particularly by PB2 that incompetence and failure of some teachers to deliver were the major contributing factors to poor performance in many public secondary schools.

Other than the observed negative attitude and incompetence, some participants, particularly PBFG6 and PD1, noted that on a number of occasions teachers were absent from class, thereby affecting how much they covered in preparation for the examinations and very little effort, if any, was made for the teacher to compensate for their absence. If they did compensate, they hurriedly ran through the material and learners could hardly understand what was presented.

Lack of teaching experience at secondary level as observed by some participants created a lot of problems for teaching and learning in public secondary schools. PB1 specifically noted that some teachers had been teaching in primary schools for a long time, yet they opted to go for further studies in secondary school teaching instead of maintaining what they had spent most of their life on.

Below are some of the comments to that effect:

“My experience has made me realise that there are two types of teachers, there are those passionate teachers who are able to do anything just to see that their learners pass and those who are not passionate behaving as if they are just forced to be teachers. Non-passionate teachers are not bothered about whether you pass or not and they would even boast that ‘I can never be chased or fired over your failing in a public school...it is up to you to work hard, my salary will always come’” (PDFG6).

“We have those teachers, especially the old ones that have that passion and commitment to work but unfortunately this is lacking among the new teachers... I would say most of them that passion is not there, what comes first is more or less money...are in the system because of their salaries. If we can have those that are there because it is their calling, they can do something to help learners grow” (PD1).

“Incompetence reigns supreme among most teachers... must be redirected back to college to start afresh...this has negatively impacted on the learner... do away with mushrooming of these funny private colleges around...you get into a college without a full Grade 12 certificate, as you train to be a teacher you are also a GCE student learning... your GCE ends at the same time you are completing to be a teacher. What type of a teacher are you producing? (PB2).

“Another factor is that you have people who are upgrading their qualifications, you have somebody who has been teaching in a primary school for example seven years and they get a diploma in secondary school teaching... the first thing they think of is going to a secondary school, and if they are known by someone in authority that teacher who may not have even practised in a secondary school, will be pushed in a secondary school” (PB1).

Leadership

The third emerging sub-category of personal factors influencing learner performance and teaching in public schools was the nature of leadership (cf. Tschannen-Moran & Gareis, 2015:257; West-Burnham, 2010:11). Some participants PA2, PB1 and PB2 noted that public schools lacked a clearly defined policy on the selection of leaders and as a result, it negatively impacted on teaching and learning. The participants stressed that very few, if any, of those appointed to the positions of administrators had qualifications in terms of management, and, in some cases, did not have the capacity to hold management positions. PA2, PB1 and PB2 therefore, strongly recommended that public schools invest in leadership training because leaders in schools were at the centre of driving all the activities that lead to learner outcomes (cf. Vaillant, 2015:4). PB2 noted that, in some instances, you would find that someone who could hardly perform in class was appointed as a headteacher, which is a clear testimony of non-existence of clearly defined guidelines on leadership.

Another finding in relation to leadership in public secondary schools relate to lack of professionalism where leaders have no regards for the common good of the core business of schools, which is teaching and learning (cf. Lofthouse et al. 2010: iii; Pirtle and Doggett, 2013:5). Some participants (PC3, PB2 and PD3) lamented that schools were characterised by what they called ‘shushus or henchmen or bootlickers’ who kept feeding head teachers with lies about some members of staff at the expense of teaching and learning time as well as social harmony. The participants indicated that usually non-performers sought favours from head teachers and they compensated their deficiencies by blindfolding their heads with unproductive information.

The research also revealed that there was no measure of one’s performance in the various leadership position in public secondary schools because the positions were permanent and pensionable (Naylor and Sayed, 2014:15; School Performance Improvement Frameworks 2010:15). As a result of this, leaders got away with non-performance at the expense of the learners and national development (PC1, PD1 and PA2). In particular, participant PB2 noted that it was not fair that once one was appointed as a head they maintained their position until they

retired even when there was enough evidence that they were incapable of facilitating the attainment of the educational goals for Zambia.

The following quotes serve as confirmation of the raised views in the preceding section:

“We need a change of attitude by administrators towards teachers...they keep frustrating teachers which makes them not do their very best...should be refresher courses for them... the way some run these institutions... like their homes...need to know these are public institutions” (PA2).

“The problem with some head teachers is that they favour few individuals who especially like trekking to their offices to spend time on storytelling, instead of being in class and discussing developmental issues for their schools”(PC3).

“Poor administration demotivates the teacher...no provision of teaching and learning material...laissez-faire attitude...straight from class to head of department or deputy head or head...no training...biasness of the selection or recommendation of leadership is the unfair part of it...somebody is useless in class but be the best cream to be chosen as administrators...very supreme in the Ministry of Education. Simply no qualities of leadership but are appointed...” (PB2).

“Some head teachers are so unprofessional that when you differ with them in principle they personalize the matter...what matters is who said what and not what was said...we will never progress as public schools if people become personal instead of being objective...”(PB2).

“If someone is not performing, they must not be allowed to continue because this is a waste of government resources. Some head teachers have continued plundering school resources and bringing down educational standards, yet they retire with a big package as head teachers” (PB3).

4.3.1.4 Theme 4: Policy factors

The fourth major theme that emerged from the semi-structured and focus-group interviews relate to policy factors. Most of the participants indicated that there were a number of policy-related issues which public secondary schools were subjected to that negatively affected teaching and learning. The major sub-categories in relation to this theme included: (a) Learner enrolment and assessment (b) the selection, recruitment and teacher development systems; and (c) highly controlled bureaucratic systems. The section below provides details of each of the sub-categories.

Learner assessment

The participants generally indicated that the manner in which learners were assessed at Grade 10 did not guarantee much in terms of quality (PD1, PC1, PB1, PC3, and PA3) and this negatively affected teaching and learning. PD1 and PC3, in particular, lamented that overdependence on the obtained results in the Grade 9 examination was not ideal considering that on a number of occasions, the examinations were said to have been leaked. PA3 and PB1 noted that it was very common to receive learners at Grade 10 with very high marks and yet they could not even read and write –a clear testimony of high levels of cheating in the examinations. PD1, PC1, PB1, PC3 and PA3 agreed that like private schools, public secondary schools needed a mechanism to scrutinise every learners' performance at Grade 9 level to ensure that the marks obtained were a true reflection of one's academic capacities.

It was further observed by PB1 that abolishing the cut-off point at Grade 9 level in preference for merely 40% in any six subjects really compromised the entry qualifications to an extent where most learners could not cope with senior secondary school requirements. According to PC3, the government was in a hurry to increase access to education opportunities as enshrined in the international agreements like, 'Millennium Development Goals' thereby reducing the selection criteria, for instance, at Grade 10 to just 40% in any six subjects which is not enough to warrant

good performance (Quinan et al. 2014:2; Sayed; 2015:25; UNICEF, 2014:39). The quotes below provide evidence of the raised views:

“The number of learners being offloaded... you may have ten classes meant for Grade 10, at selection point you are told you should select maybe sixty learners as opposed to thirty-five because the idea is to absorb as many learners as possible. So we have a situation where we have even eighty learners in one class and that is a very big challenge against limited infrastructure, and you may wish to know that in secondary schools there is no provision for construction”(PB1).

“As a school, we try as much as possible to control the numbers, but we have no powers because we actually receive lists of those who are supposed to come here from higher offices and there is nothing we can do about it...even if they have not performed well there is nothing we can do” (PC3).

“Leakage aspect at entry point has also contributed to poor performance, we have someone at entry point who scores very highly and we feel with those good results that candidate can do natural sciences, but if you push that learner to that class, it is like more or less you have taken that child to prison but when you dig deeper you would discover the child did not genuinely pass because of leakages where we would have no part to play” (PD1).

“The major factor to poor performance if I may be open with you...the introduction of free education for all by I don’t know if it is 2020 or 2021, it is like that policy would love to accommodate everybody from the streets to get into school even those that seem not to qualify...that situation has actually created these big numbers...” (PC3).

Teacher selection

A number of semi-structured interview respondents narrated that the systems that existed in public schools in terms of selection, recruitment and teacher development did not support effective teaching and learning (PA2, PB1, PC1, PC3 and PD1). There was a general consensus that depending on the teacher certification alone was not enough to support teaching and learning unless complemented with well-defined teacher evaluation standards in order to ensure accountability (Anderson & Mundy, 2014:5; Ingvarson et al. 2014:3; Naylor & Sayed, 2014:8 and Tucker, 2014:4). PB1 observed that there was no provision for public schools to decide who should be recruited in their schools because by appointment to the teaching profession by the Teaching Service of Zambia, one could work anywhere in the country.

Another issue on teacher selection relate to openness to teacher training selection contrary to what high performing schools do, (cf. Anderson and Mundy, 2014:5; Morgan 2014:454). Participants (PB2, PA3, PC1 and PD3) argued that the entry into the teaching profession in Zambia was too porous to facilitate quality in the system. The participants explained that the teaching industry in Zambia had the greatest opportunities for employment with the high levels of unemployment in the country, therefore, everyone, including those who had no passion for it took up teaching because they needed a job. Participants (PBFG5, PA1 and PDFG) added that teaching was a very delicate job which required people who had a heart for it and were prepared to go out of the way to do their best to ensure every child irrespective of their weaknesses, achieved something out of the teaching and learning process. In particular (PC2) observed that the attitude of the recent teachers cannot match that of the older ones who were passionate and committed to their job. (Thomas, 2014; 75; Ling, Pihie, Asimirin & Fooi, 2015:28; Sousa & Tomlinson, 2011:37).

Furthermore, the research revealed that since teaching was the most guaranteed job in Zambia, there was an increase in the number of private teacher training colleges some of which were of poor quality, considering that they focused more on numbers rather than quality to keep their businesses going (PA3, PB1, PC2, PD1). There was a general consensus that government needed

to control teacher training to ensure quality. (Alliance For Excellent Education, 2011:7; Ingvarson et al. 2014:3; Mourshed et al. 2010:73).

The following serve as evidence of the expressed views in the preceding section:

“The fact that teachers in public schools are selected merely on account of their teaching certificates potentially compromises the quality of teaching and learning in these schools because this is not enough to guarantee quality. We have seen many people graduating from Teacher Colleges with high scores yet, when they are employed in these public schools they can hardly perform. This means that the selection system is very weak because it does not allow identification of those deficiencies” (PC2).

“There are some teachers in these schools who we all know do nothing in class, yet nothing happens to them and worse of all are paid for doing nothing. This is not healthy for any education system. There is need to put in place a mechanism to evaluate and assess teacher performance so that those who are incapable of performing are provided with additional training or phased out of the system.” (PDFG5).

“There is need to raise the entry qualifications into teacher training to ensure only high performers take up teaching like is the case for doctors. Currently, the entry qualifications makes it possible for any stranded person to go into teaching and as a result, there has been a rise in private teacher training colleges where owners are more interested in numbers than quality (PB2).

Teacher development

In relation to this sub-category was the issue of teacher development commonly known as CPD which some participants noted was almost non-existent in public schools. PC3 and PB1 specifically observed that there was very little evidence of CPD programmes in public secondary schools to fill in the gaps in terms of efficiency in teaching and learning (cf. (Abou-Assali 2014:1; Ingvarson et al. 2014:3; Jensen, Roberts-Hull, Magee & Ginnivan, 2016:60; Rebore, 2011: 179).

“We have not done much of CPD, when the programme just started we were quite vibrant but as we speak right now a term, two terms elapse without even conducting any of the CPDs.... but if only we can improve on that because I believe that with CPD, the results can improve...nothing happens when you do not attend that is the major problem if there was something that could happen when you do not attend then there was going to be an improvement...you can decide to be there or not it is totally up to you” (PC3).

“Sometimes you would want to have continuous professional development activities in the course of the week; you will be told you can only have such activities during weekends or public holidays. If you say Saturday we have our colleagues who go to church on Saturday and surely people think that is the only time so that again takes away the objectives of your plan” (PB1).

“It is again unfortunate to say that at times we just do the CPDs just for routine purposes ...to satisfy the people from higher offices that this programme is running in school...at times we do not even get back to the pupils we are supposed to deliver the lesson to...after that we do not act...do not do anything” (PC3).

Bureaucratic systems

The research also revealed that, linked to poor performance in public secondary schools, were factors that hinge on bureaucracy and policy-related issues which in one way or another affected the operations of public schools and in turn contributed to poor performance. PA2, PC2 and PB2 noted that public secondary schools were characterised by a bureaucratic system where processes of action such as those relating to teacher discipline and confirmation of staff in a particular position took longer than necessary and often at the expense of learning and teaching time.

In the same vein, PB2 and PA3 were of the view that public schools were subjected to implementation of programmes that did not add value to the Zambian situation and, in some instances, certain policies created inconsistencies into schools' operations in one way or another. In particular, PC2 noted that the Ministry of Education implemented changes which, in some cases, teachers did not understand or even appreciate and, if anything, added very little value to the education of the Zambian child. PB2 was of the view that failure to have an education system that was founded on the national ideology with a Zambian vision led to lack of consistency in terms of policies (Hénard & Roseveare, 2012:25; McGregor & Cartwright, 2011: xvi; Naylor & Sayed, 2014: 27).

It was also brought to the attention of the researcher that on a number of occasions, schools worked under considerable influence from the political world as well as the Ministry of Education which disrupted a number of programmes schools had scheduled within a given period and this contributed to poor learner performance. In particular, PB1 observed that many programmes that schools had planned for a term, for instance, were not completed because, from time to time, schools were instructed to undertake activities that were not part of the individual school plan. This meant compelling schools to make adjustments to fit in the instructed activities, usually at the expense of teaching and learning time.

Below are examples of the comments made in respect of the raised views:

“Even policies in government schools is a contributing factor... this year we are told this, the following year they change so all those are contributing to poor performance...for example they are saying the curriculum is revised...there is a mismatch between the new curriculum and the Examinations Council of Zambia Exams...you are told to teach certain topics, but in the exams those things may not even be there you find even things not in the new curriculum...” (PA2).

“Policy issues have also contributed to poor performance...we have a lot of changes in the education sector...policy-makers will just wake up and tell you ‘the syllabus has been revised’ like merging of Book Keeping and Office Practice...Commerce must go with Accounts... are in the same group...one can either take accounts or Commerce not impose both subjects...learners no choice...subjected to subjects they do not want” (PC2).

“... I do not like to believe the Ministry of Education is a dumping ground for different states policy on education we had AIMS...this JICA thing, the career pathways, I don’t know what next, ... seem not to have any set standard for our education... that be tailored in such a way... no focus that it is intended to do ABC for the learners, it is trial and error. Any country that is funding we follow their way, another country will rise, we follow that particular path, where are we heading to?” (PB2).

“At the beginning of each term, every year, we have syllabuses and schemes of work that we draw hoping we could achieve in the stipulated time...You would just hear there is this meeting where head teachers, heads of department or teachers are wanted and the school is paralysed and meaning that your plans would have to be realigned and adjusted. But if you have such external programmes more than can be accepted in your scheme it becomes extremely difficult to achieve your goals as an institution, even as an individual” (PB1).

4.3.2 Participants' views on how learner performance and teaching can improve in the selected schools

Following the discussion on the participants' views about the nature of learner performance and teaching in the selected public secondary schools, the researcher asked the teachers, head teachers and learners to give their views on how learner performance and teaching in their schools can improve. There was consensus by most of the participants (PA1, PA2, PA3, PB1, PB2, PB3, PC1, PC2, PC3, PD1, PD2, PD3, PBFG6, PBFG5, PDFG4 and PDFG2) that it was possible to improve learner performance and teaching in public secondary schools in Zambia through adoption and implementation of a number of strategies that relate to their needs. The main emerging themes included: (1) parental involvement; (2) construction of more infrastructure; (3) provision of the necessary teaching and learning material; (4) teacher self-efficacy; (5) learner motivation; (6) leadership training for management position; and (7) policy-related proposals relating to learner assessment, learner discipline and implementation of context-based policies.

The section below provides details of the above highlighted main themes that emerged from the participants' suggestions for improving learner performance and teaching in the selected schools.

4.3.2.1 Parental involvement

In relation to the views of the participants on socio-economic factors that affected teaching and learning in public secondary schools, increased parental involvement in the education of their children emerged as one of the key recommendations for improving learner performance (c.f. Gorard et al. 2012:27; Roland, 2015:1). PA1, PB2, PC1, PC3 and PD3 were of the view that parents played a critical role in motivating learners to focus on academic excellence and, as such, their collaboration with schools would go a long way in supporting teaching and learning. PC1 particularly observed that parental involvement helped to deal with the challenges of discipline among learners because if learners realised that their parents would not tolerate misbehaviour, they were more likely to avoid it for fear of their parents punishing them. PC3 noted that parents

needed to develop a close relationship with their children to understand their personal character and mould them into responsible citizens.

Additionally, PD1 and PB1 suggested that as much effort as possible must be made by schools to engage parents in issues that relate to their children's education as well as providing guidance on how as parents they could successfully contribute to their children's academic life (c.f. Khajehpour and Ghazvini, 2011:1205).

The quotes below provide evidence of the raised views:

“Parents are partners in the development of the child, because even at home they should also check whether the child has learnt or not, but this does not happen because majority of parents feel the school should do everything, which is not possible. Like in our case we give them homework where we expect parents to monitor or just signing that work to say ‘my child did this homework’ probably in their presence, but that thing is not happening...we need a change of attitude among parents to support their children academically” (PD1).

“Parents need to know their children's character so that they curb against mischief and avoid leaving discipline matters to the school alone...We have cases where a child misbehaves in school, we call the parents and we try to discuss with the parents and all they say is that my child cannot do such a thing” (PC3).

“Parents nowadays have lost touch with their children... are not following up the behaviour of their children ...they are giving them a lot of freedom to move around and they end up having a lot of peer pressure...we need increased parental control to support schools in terms of disciplining learners”(PD3).

“Administrators should engage parents and communities regularly to share concerns that affect learners because these learners live with those parents and in communities. It is unfortunate that even when we

have end of term tests, parents do not come to collect report forms so parents do not know how their children are performing, when they fail Grade 9 or 10 that is when parents appear and by then it is too late”
(PB1).

4.3.2.2 Construction of more infrastructure

Another major theme that emerged in relation to improving learner performance and teaching in public schools was construction of more infrastructures in order to reduce class sizes and avoid disadvantaging non-examination classes during the examination period (cf. UNESCO (2015:41). The researcher learnt from all four head teachers (PA1, PB1, PC1 and PD1) that large classes that characterised their secondary schools led to doing away with the non-examination classes during the end of year National examinations in order to make room for the examinations. The head teachers commented that learning in their schools in the third term when National examinations were in session, was almost non-existent because the rules of examinations required silence in the environment which was not possible with the large, overcrowded and noisy classes. Therefore, the non-examination classes missed out on learning for about six weeks at the end of every year, resulting in failure to complete the different subject syllabi. PC1 noted that there was a lot of loss of contact hours as a result of the end of year examinations and, as such, he recommended construction of examination halls so that there was no disruption of teaching and learning.

In relation to construction of infrastructure, PA1, PA2, PA3 and PB2 proposed extending boarding facilities because some learners walked long distances to school or they were compelled to camp in the school neighbourhoods where it was impossible to study effectively (cf. UNESCO, 2014:196; Usher & Kober, 2012:6). PA2 further added that increasing the number of boarding schools was important in rural school considering that they were more controlled and allowed even those that lived far away from school easy access.

In relation to infrastructure expansion, reducing class sizes also emerged as a proposal for improving learner performance and teaching in the selected schools. In particular, PD1 suggested

that the number of learners in class should be reduced in spite of the governments' effort to increase access to education for all because large classes negatively impacted on teaching and learning.

The quotes below serve as evidence of the raised views above:

“I would campaign for the construction of new schools to decongest the existing ones and reduce teacher-learner ratio...during exam time there is reduction in contact hours due to space, because Grade 12s take over the entire school.... Non-examination classes leave school in October and only return to school in January the following year, therefore, construction of examination halls would allow the non-examination classes continue throughout the year and finish syllabus” (PC1).

“I would prioritise boarding schools to start with, for those coming from far flung areas so that in the evenings they are properly supervised.... In boarding you are forced to go for prep whether you like it or not and in terms of behaviour boarding schools are very strict compared to day schools where it is just an affair in the morning up to the time they knock off, the remaining period children are just on their own” (PA1).

“In terms of enrolment, as government schools we are given a standard but we would still receive some more and we have no say because it comes from above, but we would still propose that the numbers are not conducive for learning because I feel that a teacher should be able to attend to learners but the numbers are more than he or she can handle or accommodate that will compromise the learning and teaching” (PD1).

4.3.2.3 Provision of the necessary teaching and learning materials

A number of participants from the semi-structured and focus-group interviews (PA1, PB 2, PBFG3, PBFG5, PC3, PD1, PBFG3, and PBFG5) stressed that provision of teaching and learning materials coupled with remedial work was cardinal to improving learner performance and teaching (Thomas, 2014:123). The participants observed that learning in their schools was

hampered by the absence of textbooks for the learners to engage in self-learning and complementing the teachers' lesson delivery (UNESCO, 2014:87; UNESCO, 2015:41). PBF6 specifically commented that many learners had hope that the emphasis on the establishment of libraries in schools would create an opportunity for additional learning materials, but they were disappointed to find library shelves stocked with outdated books whose content did not add much value to their academic life.

PBF3 and PBF5 added that it would be helpful if public schools offered as much remedial work as possible to compensate for the gaps in learning since the required textbooks were almost non-existent in their schools. The participants were of the view that a deliberate policy on remedial work would go a long way in improving their learning and performance generally.

“I recommend that our school increases the number of books and study material to the learners and encourage them to study hard... there is nothing hard in this world one just needs to put more effort” (PDFG4).

“A school where there is remedial teaching particularly the skills of reading and writing in collaboration with languages department is key to improving learner performance...we have quite a number of learners here who cannot read sometimes even up to Grade12, they can hardly read...so, if learners are able to read, then they can write...then those who cannot read should be made to repeat” (PC3).

4.3.2.4 Teacher self-efficacy

Another emerging theme among the views for improving learner performance and teaching is teacher self-efficacy (Beauchamp et al., 2014:61; Sharma et al. 2011:12). Both semi-structured and focus-group interviews participants stressed the need for teacher self-efficacy in view of the fact that teachers are among the key factors in the academic outcome of learners. PA1, PA2, PB1, PB2, PBF5, PC1, PC2, PD1, and PDFG2 emphasised the need to encourage the teachers to have a positive attitude towards their learners irrespective of their poor performance, because every child like a seed had potential to grow depending on how one is nurtured.

Furthermore, PA3, PB1, PB2, PC1 and PD1 proposed increased discipline among teachers, because its absence could potentially affect the behaviour of the learners in the long run. In particular, PB1 noted that unless discipline on the part of the teachers; for example, punctuality, class attendance and moral uprightness, was intensified it was unlikely that teaching and learning would improve.

Additionally, PB2 argued that teachers needed to be encouraged to work towards great teaching through tirelessly setting high expectations as well as creating a supportive environment for individual learner needs.

The quotes below serve as examples of the expressed views on self-efficacy

“Teachers can still strive to improve learner performance irrespective of their poor background. If the teachers are worth the salt they can improve the quality of learners....If they want to see the learners improve, they can do it... is just zeal.... The only problem with many teachers in public schools is that they are already psychologically defeated that they are always getting chaff, so they make no effort to focus on what they can do, instead they concentrate on what they cannot do or control... how can there be improvement? If you believe that from the chaff can arise something else, it is possible to improve. Self-defeatism is not good...sour grape attitude ...after all, these grapes are sour...is not fair on these learners. We can easily make them to be what we want” (PB2).

“The aspect of discipline is a serious factor, because a situation where you have an undisciplined teacher even the children will follow, but children can be controlled if you have a disciplined staff” (PB1).

“Need introduce a system where any teacher who is not working well should suffer a salary deduction for a certain period of time and if there is not improvement after a given time frame, one must be dismissed... will force teachers to remain committed to duty”(PD1)

4.3.2.5 Learner motivation

Participants from both semi-structured and focus-group interviews suggested that their schools needed to work towards increasing learner motivation because a number of learners appeared not to have a heart for learning (PA1, PA3, PB2P, PBFG4, PBFG6, PC1, PC3, PD3 and PDFG2) (cf. Usher & Kober, 2012:6). In particular, PA1 and PD1 advised that schools needed to invest in learner motivation because the extent to which learners were motivated highly influenced their attitude and effort towards academic work. The participants advised that schools could introduce honours and awards ceremonies, career or motivational talks because these were capable of motivating learners to value schooling and in turn, improve their general performance.

PDFG2 advised that learners should be encouraged to develop a habit of collaboration with friends to improve their learning because there was a possibility that exposure to various learning environment would compensate for some gaps in learning (cf. Kochhar, 2014:27).

The following quotes serve as proof of the raised views above:

“I suggest formulation of study groups because sometimes we can learn better in groups ...link up with one or two people who know how to handle certain topics or clearly understood what the teachers in class were talking about so that others can learn from them” (PDFG2).

“From time to time, these learners need to be talked to about the importance of education visa vie life...that without education, life will become very difficult ‘life is cruel especially to the lazy ones, I think life favours the hard-working ones. This is what I have encouraged the teachers to do in this school... The other issue is rewarding of learners that are doing well academically for example after mock examinations, we get the best performing, buy them hardcover books and present to them at assembly so that the others can also strive to work hard” (PA1).

“Motivational talks should be increased... because these young ones do not even understand why they come to school most of them, even some Grade 12s cannot give a straight forward answer if asked why they come to school, it is like they were forced by parents ...just like some people will not give you a proper reason for going to church, yet they are so committed, ...it is a routine thing... they have no proper reason for being in school and that is why sometimes they dodge, do this and that...we need to constantly inspire them” (PA1).

4.3.2.6 Leadership training for management positions

Leadership training for management positions was another suggestion participants made for the improvement of learner performance and teaching in the selected schools (cf. Vaillant, 2015:4). PC3, PDFG2 and PB1 were of the view that management positions like the office of the head teachers, deputy heads and heads of departments were at the centre of managing all school activities, and they therefore, needed management skills to enable them successfully fulfill school core business, teaching and learning (cf. Louis et al. 2010:9). In particular, PB2 observed that there was no training policy for those appointed to the position of management and worse of all, there was no system to handle those appointments, because, in certain circumstances, some people who could hardly perform in class or were known to be indisciplined were appointed to various management positions. The participants therefore proposed that government should put in place clearly-outlined measures for selecting and recruiting leaders who had the qualifications and ability to occupy management positions.

“It is high time public secondary schools attached great importance to training of all those who ascend to any management positions at school level. Management is a skill that needs to be learnt and as such there is no guarantee that if one has been teaching for many years then they have the capacity to be in any position of leadership....These people need management training... this is why we have a mess of some heads, deputy heads and heads of departments” (PB2).

“It is unfortunate that a number of those who are in management positions in these public schools have no trace of any training relating to their management roles. Worse still, one wonders how some of them are even selected when they do not know what they should and should not do as leaders. Imagine an administrator shouting at a teacher in the presence of the learners...threatening to transfer a teacher who differs with him or her in principle...favouring some individuals because of personal relationships....What is that?” PC3).

“We need all who are appointed to management positions to be trained to handle human resource because it is the most important resource in any industry. Some of the problems relating to teacher ineffectiveness relate to the attitude of the managers towards their subordinates...sometimes administrators seem not to mind when their teachers have social problems no matter how much teachers confide in them. Honestly, how can one concentrate on one’s work when one’s supervisor is not ready to listen and assist where possible? (PA2)

“Schools administrators should be empowered to ensure that they push teachers to work towards providing learners with important information for survival and encouraging them to develop a positive relationship with learners that will facilitate academic growth....Some learners are too scared to communicate with their teachers, as a result, their performance is affected” (PDFG2).

4.3.2.7 Policy-related proposals

The concluding proposal that emerged for the improvement of learner performance and teaching related to policy issues which include three sub-categories: revising learner assessment policy, implementation of a firm policy on discipline; and implementation of context-based policies.

Revising learner assessment policy

The participants agreed that the National examinations body ‘Examinations Council of Zambia’ whose assessment results were the major source of reference in selecting and recruiting learners, was extremely unreliable and did not guarantee quality (PA1, PA2, PB1, PB2, PC1, PC3, PD1 and PD3) (cf. Erasmus et al. 2013:241). The participants noted that the National examinations were often characterised by leaking of papers and cheating and, as such, the results that most learners obtained could not be guaranteed as a true reflection of performance. In view of the observed challenges, PA1, PB1, PC1 and PD1 specifically recommended that the Examinations Council of Zambia, being the National examinations body, should strive towards restoring order and integrity in its operations by improving its security system so that the obtained results represent a true reflection of a learner’s performance (cf. Kruger & Van Schalkwyk, 2010:106).

In relation to enrolment, PA2 noted that a number of learners selected at Grade 10 could hardly read or write, thereby being incapable of managing secondary school level work. In view of this, she suggested that public secondary schools should introduce a mechanism of selecting learners with the minimum requirements such as ability to read and write.

Furthermore, PB1 advised that schools should implement the repeat policy so that learners who do not perform do not proceed to the next grade. He was of the view that implementation of the repeat policy would reduce cheating in the examination for fear of poor performers being discovered through the school-based assessment results.

The quotes below provide evidence of the above raised issues:

“The first one goes to the Examinations Council of Zambia, if they can really make sure there is no leakage, then learners would change their attitude. For example, about three years ago (2014) there was no leakage except last year (2016) and learners started changing their approach to their education because they realised that there would be

no leakage. So, if we can tighten up security then everyone will be able to work hard and pass on merit” (PD1).

“...here we get anyone...the learners from our catchment area, teachers write for them... because of too much malpractice...we are getting learners who did not even pass. If you go round, just ask anyone to write a sentence, most of them will fail. Our friends in mission schools get the cream then the remainder comes to us so it is difficult to really teach learners who cannot read and write, so if we also change the way we enrol, maybe things can be better, it is better those who fail just repeat” (PA2).

“I think as public schools we need to intensify the repeat policy to ensure that those that are not ready to progress can repeat ... But unfortunately, we have parents that are not willing to have their children repeat because they are worried about paying additional fees and so they would say: ‘inga indalamashalafumakwisa?’ (Where will the money come from?) It is better ‘apwishe fye elyoakapone’ (better the child just reaches Grade 12 and even if they fail they will have finished” (PB1).

Implementation of a firm policy on discipline

The issue of learner discipline in public schools resulted in participants emphasising the need for implementation of very strict control measures because uncontrolled behaviours had largely contributed to challenges in learner performance and teaching in the selected schools (PA1, PA2, PB1, PB3, PC1, PC2, PD1 and PD2) (cf. Oliver, Wehby & Reschly, 2011:4). In particular, PD2 observed that the abolishing of corporal punishment which was the most feared and effective way to deal with misbehaviour had left most schools with very weak and ineffective ways to deal with indiscipline. PC1 added that the government needed to rethink abolishing of corporal punishment because, from the Biblical point of view, it was advisable that parents should not “spare the rod” or they risked spoiling their children. The observed levels of indiscipline in the recent past simply confirmed the role of corporal punishment in school discipline.

In relation to discipline, PD1 was of the view that there was a need to intensify attendance on the part of learners because the many cases of absenteeism that went unpunished contributed greatly to poor performance. He further recommended that public schools should put mechanisms in place to ensure that disruptive behaviour was not tolerated at all costs.

“To my understanding discipline to a life of a child is very important to the welfare of a child. If a child is disciplined he or she will know what to do and when to do certain things because that component will translate into good performance and if the school really accords discipline learners will also be serious with their studies” (PD1).

“I propose that there should be some degrees of corporal punishment...Children are children and the Bible also alludes to the fact that if you spare the rod you are going to spoil the child. So, that corporal punishment mated in love for the sake of controlling and shaping this child I think for me I would promote it rather than completely removing it, we are where we are in terms of discipline in schools because this is completely absent” (PC1).

“For the learners, we strictly stick to attendance for sure if someone is absent let us say ten days, you stop that learner from coming to school then it will send a signal to others. Also, introduction of supervised prep where a teacher gets past question papers and selects questions that relate to the covered topic, through discussion or writing individually and the teacher marks and gives feedback” (PD1).

Implementation of research and context-based policies

PA2, PB2 and PC3 emphasised that the Zambian government needed to revisit its approach to policy implementation by focusing on ideas that are appropriate for the Zambian situation rather than being driven by the ideas of other countries. The participants advised that the Ministry of Education needed to carefully plan its policies bearing in mind the needs of the Zambian child

and the country as a whole, rather than simply implementing things because they were donor-funded (cf. Mourshed et al. 2010:18). PB2 advised that the Ministry of Education needed to pay attention to ‘Zambianising’ the education system through careful planning with a focus on the needs of the country to avoid unnecessary changes and inconsistency in the way policies were implemented.

On the other hand, PA3 advised that the government revisited some of its areas of focus such as monitoring and ways of evaluating teaching and learning in schools (cf. Mourshed et al., 2010:14; OECD, 2012:12).

In conclusion, PA1 specifically advised that the government of the Republic of Zambia needed to attach great importance to improving learner performance because if schools perpetually performed poorly, it was as good as running a business without profit. He was of the view that there was a need to pay attention to the factors that had contributed to learner poor performance so that teachers could help deal with the situation.

Another participant (PD1), was of the view that it was time that government began punishing people who absented themselves from work through some kind of deduction from their salaries or even dismissal. The following verbatim extracts epitomise the perceptions:

“Do away with the experimentation of different countries’ educational structures and policies and ‘Zambianise’ our own educational policy... we have our own problems here...categorize the education according to the identified talents for the learners...tailor the child’s education according to the observed abilities and interests of the learners” (PB2).

“ We sometimes would experience an in-flow of officials from the District Education Board Secretary’s (DEBS) office to observe your lessons...some of them have no idea of Mathematics ...someone has never done Mathematics and he is there observing you whatever they write as their critique no one would know...that should not be the case, maybe if there was someone who had an idea of the same Mathematics, I

would appreciate...the only thing they do when they finish is just to castigate some of us...bringing in all sorts of allegations I do not agree with” (PC3).

“...should be a reduction in paperwork...the actual teaching in class should be highly monitored and promoted...you teach three classes in a week you are told ‘we need to see 20 lesson plans in a week, if there are not there you need to report at the DEBS office”(PC3).

“Someone said: ‘a business is not a business if it does not produce profits and a school is not a school if it does not produce good results’. It sounds a very severe remark but it makes a lot of sense...the problem is big...of course, a lot of money is spent, government spends money, parents and its money must be worthwhile... if we gather these children and we do not do anything it does not help” (PA1).

4.4 Findings on the document analysis

As mentioned in chapter 3, it was necessary to use document analysis in this research for the purposes of supplementing the obtained information from the interviews to establish the extent to which the above-mentioned documents reflect values that relate to learner performance and teaching in the selected schools.

As shown in the shown in Table 4.2, the researcher analysed the school motto, mission statement, assessment records and school policies on continuous professional development.

Table 4.2: Summary of the documentary content analysed

| S/N | School | Document analysed | Source |
|-----|--------|--|--|
| 1 | A | Mission statement School motto Assessment Records Schemes and records of work | Head teacher Personal files of the interviewed teachers |

| | | | |
|---|---|--|---|
| 2 | B | Mission statement School motto Assessment Records Schemes and records of work | Deputy Head teacher Personal files of the interviewed teachers |
| 3 | C | Mission statement School motto Assessment Record Schemes and records of work | Deputy Head teacher Personal files of the interviewed teachers |
| 4 | D | Mission statement School motto Assessment Records Schemes and records of work | Deputy Head teacher Personal files of the interviewed teachers |

4.4.1 School motto and mission statement

As discussed in chapter 3, the researcher sought to analyse the school motto and mission statement for each of the four selected schools in an attempt to derive the underlying values and the extent to which they relate to the issue of learner performance and teaching in public secondary schools in Zambia.

4.4.1.1 School A motto and mission statement

School A's motto is 'Excellence through Hard Work', while the mission statement says: "The school shall endeavour to provide an enabling learning environment to the learners for quality and equitable education, embracing intellectual, physical, moral and spiritual growth".

The researcher observes that the school primarily focuses on hard work as a means of achieving excellence. At the same time, the school aims to uphold education of a high quality that is fair and coupled with growth intellectually, physically, morally and spiritually.

From the researcher's evaluation of the emerging themes, the school firstly acknowledges the fact that its role is to provide education to the learners because it is something that is worthwhile to every learner. This means that the school realises that education is a basic human right and as such, it must be made available to all those who go to school A. Furthermore, the researcher interprets that the school intends to see that the kind of education being offered is of high quality and at the same time is not discriminatory in nature, but fair and just.

Considering that the term quality may not have a commonly-agreed meaning, the researcher is of the view that the school, among other things, will focus on ensuring that education meets its intended purpose and has some embedded values that have potential to improve life within the learners' contexts. At the same time, the school acknowledges the diversity of the learners and as much as possible ensures inclusiveness so that no learner is disadvantaged in one way or another.

Furthermore, the researcher interprets the mission of school A as intended to address the development of intellectual, physical, moral and spiritual aspects of the learners. That could mean, at the end of the day, the child who graduates from school A must be differentiated from another one in terms of, for example, their growth, intellectually, physically, morally and spiritually. This could mean that the school aims to accommodate the individual differences learners have and their possible influence in attaining the educational outcomes and, in turn, respond to the individual learners' needs so that everyone potentially benefits from the education.

Additionally, the researcher interprets the school's inclusion of intellectual, physical, moral and spiritual aspects in its attempt to provide education so that when learners leave school, they will be able to use their intelligence for their survival and at the same time, develop the kind of morals and spirituality the school deems to be worthwhile.

The researcher notes that the school makes no mention of the aspect of performance or the involvement of the teacher in the whole process of providing quality, equitable education. In view of the general interpretation of the contents of a mission statement, the researcher concludes that failure to include performance could suggest that the school may not pay much

attention to teachers' levels of performance especially the aspect of equity which emphasises fairness and justice. Therefore, school A's target may be translated as increasing access to education without paying much attention to performance as long as the intended growth can be achieved.

At the same time, the fact that the mission statement makes no mention of the word, 'teacher' could suggest that the teacher may not have a very influential role in the process of focusing on provision of education and the target growth, yet as revealed from the reviewed literature, the teacher plays a critical role in realising educational goals.

While the researcher acknowledges the need for emphasising education as a basic human right, it is very unlikely that it could yield positive results, considering that the teacher who is an agent of education is not mentioned.

4.4.1.2 School B motto and mission statement

In the case of school B, the observed motto was: 'Development through Education' while the mission statement read as follows: 'To provide quality education to the pupils to enable them to make necessary and meaningful contributions in society – the local community, the nation and the international community at large'. The emerging themes are development, quality education and societal contribution.

The researcher observes that, just like school A, school B acknowledges the capacity of education to bring about development in society. However, the researcher observes that school B does not merely focus on ordinary education in terms of enabling learners to make a necessary and meaningful contribution to society, but on the one that is of high quality. As already mentioned in the case of school A, the issue of quality still remains unclear and it is likely to be debatable in terms of its intended meaning. The researcher is of the view that the idea of education is generally to transmit skills and knowledge that are believed to have benefits for society, but adding quality may, to some extent, suggest that there are instances that certain transmitted skills and knowledge do not bring about positive results to the society. While it is

generally assumed that all education is intended to realise benefits both at individual and community level, it is necessary to be aware of the possibility of an education system not bringing about desired results.

Additionally, the researcher's interpretation of the mission statement is that it is only quality education that is capable of empowering learners with the ability to make a contribution to society that is necessary and meaningful. Therefore, the researcher concludes in this case that school B qualifies its definition of quality education as the kind of education that is characterised by aspects that a particular society requires for its survival. In this context, it would mean that if education does not make contributions that are necessary and meaningful, then it is not worth upholding and may end up being a waste of time and resources.

Furthermore, the researcher observes that school B does not only target the local society as the beneficiary of education, but also the nation and the world on a global level. This entails that if the education has to meet the quality characteristics in terms of necessity and meaningfulness to society within the immediate environment and globally, its content must embrace the needs of the different types of society and not only be limited to one particular situation. In respect of school B's view that the education content must extend beyond the immediate environment to the global level the recipients should be able to successfully respond to the needs of society in general.

On the other hand, the researcher observes that the motto and the mission statement make no mention of performance and the teacher. As is the case in school A's motto and mission statement, it would appear that school B pays no attention to the degree of its contribution to society and it could be concluded that it is enough simply to satisfy the desire of the school in respect of the mission statement.

That aside, the absence of the term 'teacher' in either the motto or mission statement could also be indicative of the fact that the school does not emphasise the fact that the teacher is at the centre of any educational attainments.

4.4.1.3 School C motto and mission statement

As for school C, the existing motto at the time the researcher went there was ‘Seize the Opportunity’ while the mission statement was:

‘The mission of School C, in partnership with parents and the community, is to prepare all students to become responsible and contributing members of a diverse and global society. We motivate and enable each student to develop intellectually, physically, socially and emotionally through a rigorous and supportive educational programme within an inclusive and safe environment that nurtures creative and critical thinking, the development of values and pursuit of lifelong learning’.

From the researcher’s analysis, the emerging themes in the two documents of school C include: responsibility, motivation, development, support, education, inclusiveness, safety, creativity, critical thinking, values and lifelong learning.

From the interpretation of the researcher, school C is preoccupied with preparing learners for responsibility and contribution to society both at the local and global level, encouraging and facilitating intellectual, physical, social and emotional development by means of an educational programme that is carefully planned and encouraging, in an environment that is non-discriminatory and secure, and which, at the same time, instills innovativeness and analytical minds, establishment of values and a search for lifelong learning.

In view of the above interpretation of school C’s mission statement, the researcher observes that just like school A and B, the school acknowledges their role in making a positive contribution to society and to the individual intellectually, physically, socially and emotionally. However, the school adds that this requires careful planning and support, in an environment that is inclusive in nature and free from any threats and dangers: it must not prevent anyone from accessing it; the

environment must be secure; it must allow for creativity; and make provision for a critical analysis of issues, values and continuity in terms of learning. This could suggest that, no matter how rich the content of an education system may be, if it lacks focus in terms of planning and the needed support, creates an insecure and non-inclusive environment, displays a lack of innovativeness, does not allow for critical analysis of issues or values, and ignores the need for continuous learning, then it is unlikely that the intended outcomes will be realised. Be that as it may, the researcher observes that, school C embraces planning in its mission statement, because planning provides direction of activities in an organised manner and to some extent, puts measures in place to deal with eventualities. Planning according to Sidhu (2013:33), is one of the administrative aspects that facilitates achievement of the intended outcomes

That aside, the inclusion of the aspect of ‘support’ in school C’s statement could be indicative of its recognition of the need for support in any kind of undertaking. In this context, it could be interpreted that the school has deliberately put in place means of providing support to the learners to allow them to successfully attain the intended outcomes. Although the kind of support available to this effect is not made clear, the researcher observes that provision of teaching and learning materials and monitoring of teachers by the deputy head could be testimony of the focus on providing a supportive education system.

Furthermore, school C makes mention of the issue of inclusiveness and safety in the environment, which the researcher interprets as recognition of possible discrimination of one kind or another and danger which, in turn, may hinder fulfilment of the outcomes. The school appears to be aware of the fact that an education system that is not inclusive and not safe has the potential to disadvantage some learners in the process of providing education, thereby preventing them from accessing education. Furthermore, the school goes on to include critical thinking, which is one of the highly recognised skills of the 21st century.

Finally, the researcher also notes that school C indicates that it will work in partnership with the parents and the community in achieving the school mission which could be indicative of the fact that the school is part of the community and thus, the community and parents play a very vital role in influencing achievement of the intended goals.

However, in spite of the many positive and important inclusions of school C's mission statement and motto, the researcher observes that, there is nothing in the mission statement or motto that relates to the study. In particular there is no mention of learner performance and teaching as was observed in the case of school A and B, which could mean that the extent of learners' performance may not be an issue as long as they were responsible and contributed to the society, attained intellectual, physical, social and emotional growth, develop creativeness and the ability to think critically, acquired values and continuously thirsted for learning. At the same time, the teacher appears not to feature in all the outlined targets for the learner.

4.4.1.4 School D motto and mission statement

In the case of school D, the motto at the time of the visitation was 'Strive to Succeed' while the mission statement read: 'To produce reliable, self-motivated and hard-working citizens through quality education'.

The emerging themes from school D's motto and mission statement include striving, success, reliability, self-motivation, hard work, quality and education. From these emerging themes, the researcher interprets that the school emphasises perseverance for the purposes of achieving success. At the same time, the school appears to stress the importance of quality education as a means to realising reliable, self-motivated and hard-working learners. As was observed in the case of school A and B, the issue of quality may not be commonly understood as it may vary according to the context it is used. However, the researcher is of the view that in the context of school D, the idea of quality education may mean a combination of skills and knowledge that enable the learners to become reliable, self-motivated and hard-working citizens. This could suggest that if the learners from school D do not develop these characteristics, then the kind of education they receive is not good enough.

In relation to the study, the researcher, observes that the school makes no mention of performance and the role of teachers as was the case with Schools A, B and C.

4.4.2 Assessment records and school policies

As part of the plan for the research described in chapter 3, the researcher also referred to the assessment records for the learners and policies related to learner performance and CPD.

Firstly, the researcher observes that there was not much evidence of each learner's performance records from which one could derive an analysis of each learner's progression. For example, at Grade 10 entry, learners were selected at district level based on the obtained marks as long as they obtained 40% in any six subjects. They were enrolled in a particular class for that academic year and they proceeded to the next grade until they reached Grade 12 and wrote the National examination. Tests were given every term but there was no evidence of reference to individual performance to determine students' progression from one grade to another. For Quinan, Anderson and Mundy (2014:4), classroom assessment can be a vital tool for finding out, following up and encouraging students who may be incapable of keeping pace with their peers. The Centre for Education Statistics and Evaluation (2014:16) adds that making reference to the results from assessment for learning has been proven by international education experts' review of the top world's performing systems to have a positive impact to improvements in learner outcomes.

In relation to learner assessment, PB1 indicated that it was resolved at a 'stakeholders' meeting' regarding the repeated poor performance for the Copperbelt region some time in 2016 that the repeat policy be implemented for poorly performing learners before they proceeded to the next grade. The members were of the view that schools did not do much to ensure learner growth because they did not assess and use assessment results to improve learner performance. He further said that it means that schools have no choice but to keep a record of the learner's performance which they will need to refer to in times of need such as progression from one grade to the next.

On the other hand, PA1 noted that the newly introduced 'repeat policy' was a good idea, but he felt that schools still had to deal with some of the factors that lead to poor performance such as

some learners' inability to read and write, poor availability of quality teaching and learning material and large classes which were among the key factors contributing to poor performance identified in the focus-group and semi-structured interviews.

This means that no matter how many learners are made to repeat, if schools do not put measures in place to improve individual learner performance, irrespective of their individual difference, the policy may not be worthwhile.

In the next section, the researcher discusses the major findings from the semi-structured focus-group interviews and documentary analysis with a view to respond to the research questions as well as addressing the aims and objectives of the research.

4.5 Comments on the findings of the research

The aim of this research was to critically study learner performance and teaching in public secondary schools in Zambia with a focus on the Copperbelt region for the purposes of addressing poor performance in the Grade 12 Nation examinations. As stated in Chapter 1, the researcher was motivated to undertake the study because public secondary schools have consistently recorded poor performance in the Grade 12 National examinations (ECZ, 2016, 2015, 2014, 2013, 2012). This has been a source of worry because assessment results create a vital picture of the achievements of a system of education, and at the same time, serve as the basis for educational decisions, reflecting the core aim of teaching and learning (MESVTEE, 2014:9-10). Hence, students' performance is one of the fundamental educational outcomes in any system of education and, at the same time, reveals attainment of teachers', students' and schools' educational goals (Republic of Kenya, 2013:1).

The researcher employed the constructivist paradigm using phenomenology based on the argument by Msabila and Nalaila's (2013:34), that phenomenological methods are philosophical in nature and employ strategies where the researcher tries hard to grasp the extent to which human actors in respective societies give a sense of purpose to or explain the meanings of the things that happen in their environment. It is founded on the idea that reality comprises of objects

and occurrences as the human consciousness understands them and is not detached from the consciousness of humans.

Polkinghorne (2000) in Davidsen (2013:318) posit that using phenomenological research enables one to generate a theoretical account that allows one to elicit the effect as well as the significance of the experiences that individuals could have gone through. The idea of constructivism through phenomenology was important in order to bring out, make known or clearly show common features of human life that make up our actions, specifically in the experienced circumstances (Magrini, 2012:2).

In this section, the researcher discusses the major findings of the research in relation to the literature on learner performance and teaching in order to provide answers to the research questions and in turn address the problem of poor performance.

4.5.1 Findings relating to the main question

What is the nature of learner performance and teaching in public secondary schools in Zambia?

The findings from this research revealed that learner performance and teaching in public secondary schools in Zambia were negatively influenced by a number of factors which were divided into four main categories as the key emerging themes: socio-economic factors, the nature of the teaching and learning environment, personal factors, and policy-related factors. As revealed by the participants : PB1, PC1, PD1, PA1, PC2, PDFG3, PBFG1, PBFG4, and PDFG6, there was need to address the factors that negatively influenced teaching and learning in order to bring about improved learner outcomes. The following section discusses the main emerging themes.

4.5.1.1 Socio-economic factors

Socio-economic factors which included high poverty levels, illiteracy and lack of parental involvement (PB3, PA1, PA2, PA3, PC1, PB2, and PD3) emerged as one of the overarching

findings on the nature of learner performance and teaching in public secondary schools in Zambia. The researcher learnt from both head teachers and teachers in the semi-structured interviews that public secondary schools were the most accessible schools in Zambia, considering the fact that the fees were not very high, compared with private schools. The participants' comments revealed that public schools were mostly attended by learners who came from low socio-economic backgrounds whose effects negatively impacted on their performance. These findings therefore provided evidence on the effect of socio-economic factors on the outcomes of the learners.

The findings of the research relate to the literature on the effect of socio-economic factors on learner performance and teaching such as poverty which has been identified as one of the major drawbacks to provision of the basic needs and school requisites UNESCO (2014:195). The presence of water, food, clothing and shelter are basic to human survival (Taneja, 2012:26), and therefore, non-availability of these needs has the potential to bring about mental stress, thereby preventing learners from meeting their responsibilities (Thomas, 2014:47).

Illiteracy, the second sub-theme that emanated from the semi-structured and focus-group interviews under socio-economic factors relates to the observation by UNESCO (2012:102) that low literacy levels have extreme economic and social influences at individual and household level such as preventing adults from undertaking tasks like assisting children with homework. UNESCO (2014:4) adds that universal literacy is very important to progression socially and economically while UNESCO (2015:136) confirms that literacy is a strong vehicle for empowering people and assisting them to attain enough skills for life; developing entrepreneurship abilities to deal with current problems; and increasing chances for sustainable development.

Parental involvement as a third sub-theme under socio-economic factors affecting learner performance and teaching is confirmed in the reviewed literature in chapter 2 as per Khajehpour and Ghazvin (2011:1205), Center on Education Policy (2012:9), Anderson and Mundy (2014:4), Gary and Witherspoon (2011:17) and School Performance Improvement Frameworks (2010:16). The participants' views on the lack of parental involvement in the education of their children as

one of the major challenges facing learner outcomes is confirmation of the nature of learner performance and teaching in the selected schools. The researcher agrees with Gary and Witherspoon (2011:6) that family-school-community partnerships are cardinal in assisting students attain their maximum potential, because, as observed by Naylor and Sayed (2014: 27), students' background and societal factors influence learning.

In acknowledgement of the above observations, Gary and Witherspoon (2011:36) argue that it is a well-known fact among educators that the development of the child is not the preserve of classroom interaction alone; therefore, there is a need to amalgamate social services, parental involvement, service learning for students, and learning that is extended and beyond school activities to ensure the success of our children.

4.5.1.2 The nature of the teaching and learning environment

Another overarching finding relating to the nature of learner performance and teaching in public secondary schools is the poor learning environment mainly as a result of lack of learning and teaching resources, poor sanitation, large class sizes and erratic school routines.

For example, PA3, PC2, PB2 and PC1 narrated that class sizes in public schools were sometimes as large as 80 learners instead of the ideal 35 to 40 learners per class thereby compromising on quality delivery. PBFG2 commented that on a number of occasions there was no water in school and even the stored water could only last up to mid-morning, yet learners were expected to be in school up to about 15:00. Furthermore, PBFG3, PC3 and PD1 indicated that there was lack of books to aid teaching and learning and as a result, there were gaps in knowledge delivery and acquisition.

The various descriptions of the nature of the learning and teaching environment reveal challenges in the environment of public secondary schools, which impacts learner performance and teaching in the selected schools. The described reality of the nature of the teaching and learning environment for the selected schools explains why learners perform poorly and relates to some reviewed literature in chapter 2 that explains the influence of the nature of the teaching

and learning environment on the performance of learners. For instance, as observed by Thomas (2014:46), learning as an educational exercise is greatly determined and controlled by the existing learning environment and therefore a conducive learning environment is mandatory to realistic, genuine and productive learning.

In support of the above observations, UNESCO (2016:51) emphasises that improving water, sanitation and hygiene facilities in institutions of learning is capable of positively impacting on health and education results because it creates a safe environment with reduced rates of natural hazards. This is also acknowledged by School Performance Improvement Frameworks (2010:16) as they posit that high-performing schools ensure that their schools are characterised by a learning environment that is secure, non- intimidating, healthy and intellectually stimulating.

It follows from the foregoing that the Zambian government should work towards improving the nature of the learning and teaching environment in order to allow the schools to focus on their core business of providing education that leads to realisation of the educational goals of its society (Kruger & Van Schalkwyk, 2010:3). Erasmus et al. (2013:138) explain that the benefits of a conducive learning environment for learners in terms of resources and support in their environment such as “space, time, finances and encouragement”, can be compared to a plant whose growth depends on “water, sunlight and protection from a harsh climate” which gives rise to the need for public schools to prioritise efforts to improve the environment for teaching and learning.

4.5.1.3 Personal factors

Personal factors emerged as a third major finding from both the semi-structured and focus-group interviews and accounted for the high levels of poor performance among learners in the selected schools.

The calibre of the learners which emerged as one of the sub-categories of personal factors provides part of the reason for the poor performance of the learners in the selected schools. The view of PB3, PC3, PC1 and PD1 that the attitude of the learners towards school was one of the

factors that influence teaching and learning confirm the nature of learner performance and teaching in the selected schools. The sentiments of PA2, PB2, PC3 and PD1 were that it was not easy to teach learners who attached very little importance to education, since there was no common understanding of the purpose for being in school.

The participants' views about the effects of the learners' attitude towards academic performance is consistent with the argument by Usher and Kober (2012:2) that motivation can influence students' approach to school in general; how they relate with teachers; the amount of time and effort they commit to their studies; the extent to which they are willing to seek assistance when they encounter challenges; how they perform in assignments as well as in other areas of educational nature. Kruger and Van Schalkwyk (2010:70) add that the aim of teaching is to facilitate attainment of the educational goals and, as such, the process demands that learners are motivated and are instilled with the willingness to learn. In support of the above observations, Kochhar (2014:46) underlines the fact that learner motivation is one of the most important elements in teaching because its absence prevents learning, while its presence is incapable of preventing learners from learning.

The observed lack of learner motivation therefore explains why many learners in the selected public schools are unable to perform and it calls for an exploration of the reasons behind this undesirable trend. Centre for Education Statistics and Evaluation (2014:3) argue that attainment of desirable results from learners demands consensus in terms of vision among all stakeholders: school leaders, parents, students and members of the community; and collaboration in identifying mechanisms that can bring about the intended goals. Gary and Witherspoon (2011: 6) confirm that the majority of school professionals now recognise the fact that the task of educating students cannot be accomplished by their input alone, because it demands the collective input of parents and guardians, communities and other stakeholders.

On the other hand, a lack of learner motivation could be attributed to the observed limited opportunities by the learners to take subjects of their choice in relation to their personal interests and aspirations. The above-expressed viewpoint on the need for improving student engagement (Taylor & Parsons, 2011: 4) and learning outcomes hinges on instilling desirable behaviours and

a spirit of belonging in students so that they stay in school and “has become both a strategic process for learning and an accountability outcome unto itself”. Fredricks et al. (2011:1) confirm that student engagement has been identified by researchers, educators and policy-makers as an important element in dealing with underachievement, student demotivation and isolation, as well as extreme dropout levels.

The comments from the participants in the focus-group interviews that learners were forced to take subjects that did not relate to their interests and, in some cases, did not lay a foundation for their desired future careers, provides evidence for non-existence of student engagement as well as reasons for poor learner performance. Taylor and Parsons (2011:6) advise that it is worth noting that the world in which the students live is different from that of their parents, due to changes in technology, upbringing, and variations in terms of aspirations, personal demands and preferences in terms of learning. That is why West-Burnham (2010:19) recommends recognition of the learner voice through their views on efficient learning and teaching, learning experiences feedback, students’ lesson observation, including learners in CPD and surveys based on the learning encounters in order to reduce their indifference towards school. Center for Mental Health in Schools (2012: 4) adds that the starting point in engaging students is attaching great importance to responding to the variations in learners in terms of motivation and development and, in the process, enhancing a caring learning environment.

The second issue that emerged under personal factors that relate to the nature of learner performance and teaching in the selected schools was the calibre of teachers. The researcher learnt from both the head teachers in the semi-structured interviews and learners in the focus-group interviews that the quality of the teachers and their attitude towards work in the selected schools greatly contributed to the high levels of poor learner performance (PDFG6, PD1, PB2 and PB1). The sentiments by the participants on the quality of teachers and their negative attitude towards work as factors in poor learner performance relate to the many studies which confirm the impact of teacher quality and self-efficacy on learner performance (Anderson & Mundy, 2014:5; Ingvarson et al. 2014:2; Naylor & Sayed, 2014:4; World Bank, 2012:1). This is because the quality of teaching as revealed by international research is a fundamental element influencing

student learning (Anderson & Mundy, 2014:5) and, at the same time, teacher quality is believed to be the most significant input in education production (Fryer, 2015:374).

The participants' comments about teacher quality relate to the literature such as Naylor and Sayed (2014:4) who emphasise the role teacher quality in influencing students' outcomes that is, a combination of quality in terms of teaching and teachers encompassing individual teacher qualities, skills, knowledge and understanding, classroom practices and above all their influence on the outcomes of students.

The sentiments about teachers' attitudes towards learners also point to the need for encouraging teachers to view themselves as important elements in the education of the learners considering that they are capable of greatly impacting on the motivation of the learners through their teaching strategies, classroom management, involvement with students as well as expectations and the manner in which they think (Usher & Kober, 2012:6). For example, as explained by Usher and Kober (2012:6), teachers who are able to efficiently diagnose and raise student motivation normally target interpersonal approaches with students, connect education with students' value and encourage independence rather than control in their class. Given that many learners are said not to be interested in school and teachers appear to have given up (PA1, PB2, PC3 and PD3), the testimonies about what some institutions have done could be a source of reference for the possibility of changing the teachers' outlook on the demotivated learners.

Additionally, the sentiments about teacher calibre communicate gaps in the existing teacher selection and accountability systems. As revealed by the four head teachers (PA1, PB1, PC1 and PD1), schools have no opportunity to scrutinise the teachers they receive in schools there is no provision for rejecting teachers who are unable to perform, because by virtue of their certificates they qualify to be employed by the government. The participants' comments point to the need to invest in systems that could allow scrutiny of one's ability to deliver rather than depending on teacher certification. Hightower et al. (2011:7) contend that, in spite of the fact that teacher certification is a necessary minimum qualification required for entering into the field of teaching; research reveals that there is not enough evidence to warrant that teacher certificates alone represent the teachers' ability to bring about increased achievements in students. This point to

the need for implementing clear policies on, for instance, teacher selection and recruitment as well as evaluation and accountability processes. For example, Naylor and Sayed (2014:19) claim that monitoring and evaluation of teachers significantly determine the quality of teachers. They further indicate that teacher accountability is fundamental to countering teacher abscondment and seeing to it that teachers put to use the knowledge in the classroom. There are occasions, as observed by Sidhu (2013:29) where people in places of work get away with non-performance and take pleasure in drawing a salary for not doing anything, because there are no strategies for distinguishing between poor or quality outcomes.

Sidhu (2013:30), therefore, calls for reshaping of organisational structures where achievement targets are set for each member and people are rewarded or punished depending on their performance.

The third aspect of personal factors influencing the nature of learner performance and teaching in the selected schools is leadership training for the management staff: head teacher, deputy heads and heads of departments. It was revealed by the participants in the semi-structured interviews that most of the head teacher and their deputies were not trained to handle the management affairs of their schools (PA2, PB1 and PB2). These findings provide evidence of the lack of a deliberate policy on management training. UNICEF (2014:39) confirms that school leadership in public schools in Zambia is “promotional and based on seniority” instead of training or management ability, resulting in deficiencies in terms of administrative and management skills as well as the quality of learning. The participants therefore recommended that government should put in place clear measures for selecting and recruiting leaders who had the qualifications and ability to occupy management positions. West-Burnham (2010:11) emphasises that there is considerable evidence to show that school leaders greatly impact the culture of the school through the collective language they initiate, implement and encourage, and by means of the mechanisms they employ to support and cement new approaches to working.

In view of the above, leaders require various kinds of skills to handle the multiplicity of aspects of the school because, as observed by Pirtle and Doggett (2013:5), efficient leadership at every level of the system of education is elementary to improving student attainment.

4.5.1.4 Policy-related issues

The fourth major theme relating to learner performance and teaching in the selected schools include policy in terms of learner enrolment, teacher selection and development. The existing system of enrolling learners at Grade 10 (senior secondary school) was not adequate to provide positive learner outcomes, because there was over-dependence on the results obtained in the examination yet on several occasions there were reports of malpractice (PA, PA2, PB2, PC1, PD1 and PD3). The participants' comments provide evidence of low entry requirements for the learners which have potential to greatly influence their performance. Mlambo (2011:83) underscores the value of high entry requirements for learners to increase their learning performance and outcomes.

The research also revealed in relation to policy, teacher selection and recruitment which provide evidence of non-existence of well-defined guidelines on how teachers are selected and evaluated. The participants explained that a number of teachers did not seem to be interested in their work which confirms lack of quality; teacher quality is the most influential element in education production (Fryer, 2015:374). For this reason, Naylor and Sayed (2014:5) emphasise that the major approaches to improved student outcomes are centred on developing a quality workforce of teachers aiming at attracting, recruiting and retaining teaching candidates of high-quality, training based on intensive school-based practice, intensive subject specialisation training, and providing individualised CPD.

The third policy-related theme was implementation of foreign policies that do not promote learner performance and teaching in the Zambian context. PB2 and PC3 were of the idea that Zambia really needed to pay urgent attention to identifying what was best for her people instead of just doing what others were doing. This observation relates to the emphasis on contextualising policy to ensure it meets the needs of the target group (Mourshed et al. 2010:18; OECD, 2012:12).

4.5.2 Findings relating to sub-question1

How do the selected Grade 12 learners describe their learning performance experience in their schools?

The findings relating to sub-question 1 indicate that the learners in the selected schools generally describe their learning performance experience as challenging because of the poor learning environment and the attitude of most teachers towards work. The comments from PBFG1, PBFG6, PDFG4 and PDFG5 regarding poor learning relate to the findings pertaining to the main research question and this serves to confirm the need for improving the learning environment a way of dealing with poor learning performance. Thomas (2014:46) emphasises that learning requires a conducive environment structured for the benefit of the student in order to facilitate maximum learning and richness in educative possibilities. School Performance Improvement Frameworks (2010:16) also advance that high-performing schools ensure that their schools are characterised by a learning environment that is secure, non-intimidating, healthy and intellectually stimulating.

Related to the above subject is the issue of the attitude of teachers towards work. Drawing on the comments from PDFG 4, PDFG2, PBFG2 and PBFG3, the attitude of many teachers towards work highly contributed to the poor performance of learners.

4.5.3 Findings relating to sub-question 2

What key factors do the selected teachers attribute to the poor performance of learners in their schools?

The findings of the research pertaining to sub-question 2 reveal that key factors in the poor performance of learners in the selected schools include the quality of learners, lack of motivation among learners and lack of parental involvement. As revealed in the responses in the semi-structured interviews with PA2, PC3 and PD3 public schools were largely characterised by

learners of poor quality because of the low entry requirements at Grade 10 level as influenced by policies such as 'Education for All'. UNICEF (2014:39) reveals that Zambia has in the recent past emphasised access to education for all in an attempt to respond to the global demands of education of every child. However, as observed by Sayed (2013:25), increasing access to education at the expense of quality has potential to undermine the educational goals because learners are likely to leave school without achieving the intended goals.

In relation to sub-question 2, PA3, PC2, PB2 and PD2 observed that many learners in public schools lacked motivation to learn which gave rise to disruptive behaviours and, in turn, affected the performance of most learners. Usher and Kober (2012:2) observe that motivation has potential to influence students' approach to school generally, their relationship with teachers, time and effort devoted to their studies, their willingness to seek assistance when they face challenges, their performance in tests and other education-related issues.

Finally, findings relating to sub-question 2 reveal that there was minimal parental involvement in public schools and this negatively affected the performance of many learners (PD3, PB3 and PA2). Parental involvement which suggests the extent to which parents take part in the child's schooling and life like being up-to-date with classroom events and assisting children with school-related issues (Ireland, 2014:1), has been confirmed through various studies to assist in developing an element of competence, control and inquisitiveness, and a positive outlook towards academics (Usher & Kober, 2012:4).

These findings point to the need for public schools to put mechanisms in place that will actively embrace parents in the decisions that affect their children considering that there is a considerable evidence to suggest that among the major hindrances to increased academic achievement for many students is non-parental involvement (Khajehpour & Ghazvini, 2011:1205). As observed by School Performance Improvement Frameworks (2010:16), it is for this reason that high-performing schools have recognised the importance of high levels of family and community involvement with the view that educating students is everyone's responsibility and not the sole preserve of teachers and school staff. For example, according to Garcia and Thornton (2014:1), in spite of the many changes that have characterised education systems such as the American Education since 1921, family engagement has consistently remained an extremely important

factor in the achievement of learners for its contribution to raising learner achievement, encouraging school attendance as well as restoration of parents' confidence in the worth of education for their children.

4.5.4 Findings relating to sub-question 3

In what way do the selected head teachers describe their experiences of learner performance and teaching in their schools?

Findings from the semi-structured interviews with the selected head teachers revealed that major obstacles to learner performance and teaching include government policy on selection criteria of learners at Grade 10 level and lack of motivation to learn, recruitment and selection of teachers and their attitude towards school.

PA1, PB1, PC1 and PD1 emphasised that some government policies on enrolment of learners at certain levels of education in the recent past has given rise to a very poor crop of learners. For instance, the participants observed that abolishing of the Grade 9 cut-off points in preference for at least 40% in any six subjects as the entry qualification to Grade 10 (UNICEF, 2014:46) has yielded a poor quality of learners which has made teaching extremely difficult. The observed poor entry requirements for learners at Grade 10 level relate to that of the Africa Progress Panel (2012:4) where many children in schools are reported to have been accessing an education of extremely low quality with minimal learning. In support of the above observation, Sayed (2013:9) argues that the emphasis on access and completion overlooks what students really learn and because of this several children in many countries leave school without attaining "literacy and numeracy or other relevant skills".

Another finding relating to the above arguments was that of over-reliance on the scored results in the Grade 9 examinations in spite of the well-documented issues of malpractice characterising the National examinations (PA1.PB1, PC1 and PD1). As reported by ECZ (2014:27), examination malpractices are recorded in both internal and external examination centres which has been a challenge affecting education systems worldwide for a long time. The participants

observed that the absence of other means of confirming the learners' performance apart from the scored results resulted in having a cohort of learners whose prerequisite knowledge was not enough to meet the demands of secondary education. This relates to the literature on learners' pre-requisite knowledge as one of the factors in learner performance (Thomas, 2014:55).

Coupled with the poor quality of learners was the issue of motivation to learn where many learners did not seem to know what they were doing in class. The findings from the comments from the head teachers show that learners in public schools lacked motivation to learn and thus performed poorly (Usher & Kober, 2012:2). Higher motivation to learn has been closely associated with increased academic performance, increased comprehension of concepts, satisfaction with school, self-worth, social adjustment and rates for school completion.

The semi-structured interviews with head teachers (PA1, PB1, PC1 and PD1) also revealed that public schools struggled with a crop of teachers who were either not interested in their work or were not competent enough to deliver their lessons. These findings point to the need for the educational authorities to revisit their selection and recruitment processes in order to ensure quality in the teaching force rather than merely depending only on certification. Naylor and Sayed (2014:8) observe that, while teacher certificates and qualifications are important in teaching, there is no guarantee that they would lead to effective teaching because there is a considerable evidence to suggest that teacher quality encompass several elements like classroom practices, subject knowledge, professional development, teaching experience and teacher-student relationships which, in turn, affect student outcomes. Anderson and Mundy (2014:5) add that quality of teaching as revealed by international research is a fundamental element influencing student learning; thus, policies and practices that hinge on recruitment of teachers, how they are deployed, selected and hired, working conditions and their retention are cardinal. Ingvarson et al. (2014:3) based on their study of experience internationally; confirm that best-practice teacher-education programmes demand best-practice approaches to the selection, preparation and induction of teachers into the profession.

4.5.5 Findings relating to sub-question 4

What are the participants' views on how learner performance and teaching can improve in the selected schools?

The findings of the research regarding sub-question 4 reveal that a number of recommendations are worth considering if learner performance and teaching challenges are to be addressed in the public secondary schools.

To start with the findings from the semi-structured interviews revealed that public secondary schools required paying attention on the selection and recruitment of leaders especially at school level. For example, as commented by PA2, PD2 and PC3, most of the people who were appointed to the position of head and deputy head teachers did not have the qualities to manage school affairs and this exacerbated the challenge of poor performance in schools. UNICEF (2014:39) confirms that school leadership in public schools in Zambia is “promotional and based on seniority” instead of training or management ability, resulting in deficiencies in terms of administrative and management skills as well as the quality of learning. The participants therefore recommended that government should put in place clearly outlined measures for selecting and recruiting leaders who had the qualifications and ability to occupy management position. As observed by Anderson and Mundy (2014:7), research generally emphasises elementary leadership practices related to principal efficiency when enacted in a manner that is skillful, logical and target-oriented so as to develop collective agreements on school goals founded on student learning, teacher knowledge and skills development for teaching effectively; facilitating conditions and relationships at workplace that are conducive for teaching and learning; and successful management of instructional programmes that allow achievement of school goals.

Australian Council for Educational Research (2012:15) confirms that effective instructional and administrative leadership has been identified as a requirement for the implementation of change

processes among high-performing schools. However, as observed by Hénard and Roseveare (2012:25), effective change depends on the level of support within an institution.

Another finding relating to sub-question 4 is the need for public schools to avoid implementing programmes that are not in line with the Zambian needs. Based on the comments from PB2, PC1, PD3, PA 3 and PD1, implementation of programmes that had very little bearing on quality learner performance and teaching like the introduction of certain subjects under the career pathway policy even in situations where there were no facilities to support the introduced subjects, needed to be avoided. These comments relate to the extensive literature on teaching and learning that emphasise change processes that are context-based. For example, as noted by Mourshed et al. (2010:18) sometimes efforts to improve educational systems have been hampered by adoption of systems that have been used in other systems which are not the same in terms of expectations, social and political contexts. In fact, school improvements require integration of three aspects: identifying what is obtaining in terms of student outcomes; exploration of possible interventions for the target improvement and; lastly, adaptation of the identified interventions to the existing situation.

The third finding pertaining to sub-question 4 is the need for public secondary schools to improve teacher professionalism and in-service training (CPD) policies. The participants PB1, PC2, PD1, PB2 and PA1 commented that most of the people who had joined the teaching profession in the recent past were not competent to meet the learners' needs and they generally lacked teaching professionalism. They further added that public schools did not have consistent programmes to provide CPD to enable the teachers keep abreast of the demands of the teaching profession. The comments made by the participants point to the need for public schools to revise the way teachers are selected and recruited and the extent to which they prioritise CPD in order to improve learner performance and teaching. For instance, Ingvarson et al. (2014:3) report that high-performing countries acknowledge that quality teachers are important in quality teaching. As such, they have deliberately adopted policies that attract the most capable people into the teaching profession, making entry to teacher education very competitive and encouraging the most capable secondary school leavers and university graduates to enter into the profession.

Naylor and Sayed (2014:5) agree that approaches to improvement of student outcomes are centred on developing a quality workforce of teachers aiming at attracting, recruiting and retaining candidates of high-quality; training based on vigorous school-based practice; intensive subject specialisation training, and providing individualised CPD.

While acknowledging the importance of carefully selecting and recruiting teachers, in achieving quality education, Jensen et al. (2016:60) note that it is not likely that the initial teacher education could completely prepare a teacher for all classroom situations. Therefore, in-school support for teachers is critical in facilitating subject expertise and filling in gaps in terms of knowledge in the process of adjusting to teaching full-time because this allows teachers to see first-hand the effect of new knowledge on practice and student learning.

Teaching as a professional activity is centred on processes involving making decisions, interpretation of information, and planning as well as implementation of actions to uphold students' learning (University of Queensland, 2012:12). As such, improved teaching is highly recognised as important in improving student outcomes, productivity and competitiveness at national level as well as increased levels of equity, which is significantly important in improving national performance (Ingvarson et al. 2014:2).

The fourth finding pertaining to the participants' proposed recommendation for improving learner performance and teaching in their schools is active involvement of parents in the education of their children. PC1, PA1, PB2, PD1, PBF4, PDFG1 and PDFG6 commented that parents in their schools needed to be actively involved in the education of their learners because this helped in dealing with issues of discipline such as attendance and behaviour and motivating the learners to work hard. The participants were of the view that the high levels of disciplinary cases and negative attitudes towards school among many learners were caused by most parents not being interested in the academic life of their children. In view of these observations, participants suggested that public schools implement policies that relate to active participation of parents in schools as partners in the education of the learners. These recommendations relate to the reviewed literature on recommendations such as:

- Gorard et al. (2012:7) who argue that parental involvement plays a role in the children's attainment and adjustment even after accounting for other available explanatory factors. Roland (2015:1) reveals that research repeatedly indicates that children whose parents are involved in their education usually perform well in school, avoid being in trouble and at the same time stay away from abuse of drugs and alcohol.
- Roland (2015:1) adds that parental involvement in a child's life allows for early identification of problems and measures to deal with the problem.
- According to Hinkle (2013:1) there is considerable research to justify the importance of parental involvement in the learners' education.
- Parental involvement benefits both the learners and schools in terms of positive achievement academically, learners' positive attitudes towards school and good behaviour generally.

The fifth finding that relates to sub-question 4 is the need for higher authorities to avoid external influence in the management of schools. For instance, as commented by PB2, PD3, PC2, PB1, and PA2, teachers were sometimes expected to attend many unscheduled meetings at district or provincial level at the expense of teaching and learning time. The participants explained that some of those meetings at district or provincial level did not add much value to teaching and learning at school level because they were not continuous and involved only a few individuals. The comments point to the need for context-based programmes that relate to the needs of institutions where every member of the institution gets involved. As advised by Mourshed et al. (2010:74), collaborative practices account for one of the important strategies for improving systems because they allow teachers and school administrators to work collectively in the establishment of instructional practices, investigating what is feasible in class, and doing this with extreme care as well as commitment to making better practices individually and collectively.

4.6 Conclusion

In this chapter, the researcher presented, analysed, interpreted and discussed the findings of this research in order to answer the research questions and address the problem of poor learner performance in the Grade 12 National Examination that was raised in chapter one. A number of themes emerged from the analysed data that enabled the researcher to explain the challenges that affect learner performance and teaching in public secondary schools in Zambia. Four key themes emerged as the major contributors to learner performance and teaching in the selected schools: socio-economic factors, the nature of the teaching and learning environment, personal factors that relate to teachers, learners and head teachers and lastly policy-related issues. The next chapter presents the conclusions and recommendations for the research.

CHAPTER 5

CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

5.1 Introduction

In this concluding chapter, the researcher presents the major findings of the study and the conclusions as well as recommendations for the policy-makers, head teachers, teachers and learners regarding learner performance and teaching in public secondary schools in Zambia. Limitations of the study and suggestions for future research are also included before discussing the researcher's final reflections

As outlined in the first chapter, this study belongs to the philosophy of education and focuses on addressing the problem that motivated the study: 'poor learner performance among Grade 12 learners in public secondary schools in Zambia. In view of the importance of learner performance in the educational outcomes of the learners, the researcher embarked on the study: *Learner performance and teaching in public secondary schools in Zambia: A critical study*. The topic was developed for the purposes of critically studying the nature of learner performance and teaching in public secondary schools, Copperbelt region in particular, to establish how learner performance could be improved and making recommendations for sustainable improvements in learner performance for public secondary schools. Predominantly, the topic aimed at developing appropriate strategies to improve learner performance in public secondary schools in Zambia. Learner performance has been proved to rank among the outstanding indicators of quality education, a key factor to national development. A critical study on the prevailing situation in terms of learner performance and teaching in public secondary schools in Zambia in the Copperbelt reveals that there are four key themes that emerged as major contributors to learner performance and teaching: socio-economic factors which mainly included : poverty, illiteracy and lack of parental involvement, poor teaching and learning environment mainly due to lack of teaching and learning resources, large class sizes and school routine, personal factors relating to the calibre of teachers, learners and head teachers; and lastly policies in terms of learner enrolment and assessment, teacher selection, recruitment and development, and highly controlled bureaucratic systems.

Primarily, the aim of the research was to bring out the nature of learner performance and teaching in order to address the problem of poor performance in the Grade 12 National examinations. The target of the study was improvement of learner performance considering that it determines educational outcomes and national development. The objectives of the study included:

- i. Establish how the selected Grade 12 learners describe their learning performance experience in their schools.
- ii. Determine the key factors the selected teachers attribute to the poor performance of learners in their schools.
- iii. Investigate how the selected head teachers describe their experiences of learner performance and teaching in their schools.
- iv. Establish the views of the participants on how learner performance and teaching can improve in the selected schools.
- v. Make recommendations for the improvement of learner performance and teaching in the selected schools.

The study was undertaken in four, day, co-education public secondary schools in the Copperbelt region of Zambia. Schools 'A' and 'B' are the least performing Copperbelt South and North, respectively, 'C' and 'D' the highly performing south and North respectively. The study was based on a qualitative research design using Heidegger's phenomenological approach, with a total of 24 participants: 4 head teachers, 8 teachers and 12 learners who were purposively selected, to give views on their lived experiences in terms of learner performance and teaching in public secondary schools in Zambia. Three methods: semi-structured interviews, focus-group interviews and documentary analysis were employed in the data collection. Based on the collected data from the research, a number of themes emerged which enabled the researcher to answer the questions below that guided the research:

Main Question

- What is the nature of learner performance and teaching in public secondary schools in Zambia?

Sub-questions

1. How do the selected Grade 12 learners describe their learning performance experience in their schools?
2. What key factors do the selected teachers attribute to the poor performance of learners in their schools?
3. In what way do the selected head teachers describe their experiences of learner performance and teaching in their schools?
4. What are the participants' views on how learner performance and teaching can improve in the selected schools?

5.2 Conclusions

5.2.1 Conclusions on the findings from the semi-structured interviews and focus group discussions

In this section, the researcher presents and analyses the findings from the semi-structured interviews with four head teachers and eight teachers and focus-group interviews with twelve learners. Four major themes emerged from the participants' description of teaching and learning which explain why most public secondary schools in Zambia perform poorly. The participants agreed that learner performance and teaching in public secondary schools were influenced by socio-economic factors; the nature of the teaching and learning environment; personal factors; and policy-related issues.

Additionally, the section presented and analysed participants' views on how learner performance and teaching can improve in the selected schools. The main emerging themes included parental

involvement; construction of more infrastructure; provision of the necessary teaching and learning material; teacher self-efficacy; learner motivation; leadership training for management positions; policy-related proposals relating to learner assessment; learner discipline; and implementation of context-based policies.

In the next section, the researcher presents and analyses findings from the documentary analysis from the school motto, mission statement, students' performance record sheets, records and schemes of work and school policy professional development.

5.2.2 Conclusions on school mottos and mission statements

In view of the observations made on the different school mottos and mission statements of the four selected schools for the study, the researcher observes that each school had declared what their outlook of their role as schools was and their intended outcomes. The researcher also observes that three of the schools emphasise 'quality education' as fundamental to their operations. This outlook relates to the principles of school culture which according to Mestry et al. (2012:36) provides direction on the way the general school populous is expected to conduct itself in line with the goals of the institution. Centre for Education Statistics and Evaluation (2014:3) confirms that achieving positive learner outcomes calls for a shared vision among all stakeholders ranging from school leaders, parents, students and members of the community and collaboration in identifying mechanisms capable of yielding the target goals.

However, with reference to the findings from the semi-structured and focus-group interviews, including the researcher's observations, all public secondary schools operated in a similar way. Public secondary schools have no autonomy to decide on the calibre of the learners, teachers or head teachers because this was handled by Ministry of Education in collaboration with the Teaching Service Commission, mainly based on the certificates in the case of learners and teachers and recommendations in the case of head teachers. At the same time, all the schools generally complained about lack of teaching and learning resources, which together with the preceding observation contradict the aspect of 'quality' that three out of the four schools reflected in their mission statements.

The researcher is of the view that while mission statements and school mottos represent institutional vision and purpose (Creamer & Ghoston, 2012:110), achieving quality under the described reality in the selected schools may not be possible because the conditions are contrary to some of the literature on quality education. For example, according to Ingvarson et al. (2014:3) and Naylor and Sayed (2014:5), quality workforces as well as clearly-defined mechanisms for selecting and recruiting teachers are highly recommended in an attempt to achieve quality education.

Apart from that, each school had a range of fees prescribed every year which normally would not exceed one hundred dollars per year, and there were guidelines in terms of its usage. This means that as much as each school felt the need to charge a certain amount of money based on its needs, they were limited to government's prescription of the maximum they could charge and the allocation of these funds. Furthermore, in certain instances, as revealed by PA1, PB1, PC1 and PD1, collecting school fees was not successful because each time schools sent a learner home because of non-payment of school fees, the government would always intervene, despite the fact that government funding was erratic and inadequate to meet the school demands. This does not allow for the provision of the required support for leaders to provide a supportive environment for achieving positive results in school (Hénard & Roseveare, 2012:25).

Thirdly, the researcher observes that the schools' emphasis on quality is hampered by the challenge of well-established CPD mechanisms which the reviewed literature has confirmed is of extreme importance in improving teacher quality (Cator et al. 2014:9; Jensen et al. 2016:60; Ministry of Education, 2015:iii; European Commission, 2013:7). For example, Darling-Hammond et al. (2017:1) confirm that numerous studies have revealed that professional development, if properly established and implemented efficiently, brings about worthwhile adjustments in terms of teacher practice and the outcomes of students. Ministry of Education (2015:iii) underlines that continuing professional development is an important tool for enhancing educational quality as it facilitates building of teachers and teacher educators' knowledge base and competencies.

The comments regarding the mission statements and mottos for the selected schools provide evidence of the desires of the schools; however, the existing conditions as observed by the researcher such as government's control on the selection of teachers, learners and head teachers and erratic funding, overshadow the schools' dreams.

5.2.3 Conclusions on documentary analysis

The findings of all the mission statements vision and assessment records of learners' performance for the four schools were presented, analysed and interpreted. The findings in the named documents relate to the findings from the semi-structured and focus-group interviews, indicating that not much effort is invested in factors that positively affect learner performance and teaching in the public secondary schools. For instance, there is no mention of 'learner performance' in any of the documents to suggest emphasis on raised performance. Additionally, the students' record of performance and policies in all four schools give no evidence of prioritising learner performance since they appeared to serve little purpose. Based on the above findings from the documentary analysis, the researcher was able to identify the many factors that have affected learner performance and teaching in the selected schools.

5.3 Recommendations

With regard to the findings of the study, this section presents recommendations for improvement of learner performance and teaching in general for public secondary schools both for the Copperbelt region and Zambia as a whole.

Findings of the research provide evidence that there is a lack of appropriate policies on how teachers, head teachers and learners are selected and recruited in order to guarantee quality learner performance. Given that among the objectives of the study included establishing factors that affect learner performance and teaching in public secondary schools in Zambia, the identified gaps in selection and recruitment policies confirm the need for making adjustments in this respect. This adjustment demands that policy-makers establish mechanism that will curb against poor quality of teachers, head teachers and learners which have been among the

identified factors of poor performance. If the Zambian education system has to positively contribute to national development, how teachers, head teachers and learners are selected and recruited will require adjustment. For example:

- Schools must attach greater importance to identification and meeting of learners' personal abilities, needs, interests and aspirations through provision of a wide range of subjects that relate to the choice of learners.
- Learners who are selected to Grade 10 must be subjected to aptitude tests not just the Grade 9 academic examinations.
- No learner should be allowed to proceed to the next grade unless they pass a given set of assessments based on the whole performance for a given year not on a once-off assessment.
- Learners who fail to reach a set minimum performance level must not be allowed to proceed to the next grade, but they should be made to repeat and be assisted to grow academically.
- Candidates who are selected for teacher training must have scored very high marks and their interest must be proven through a series of observations before undertaking the teacher training course.
- Entry into the teaching profession must not be based just on certification but also on community involvement with school-age-going children in one's community.
- Those who are appointed to the position of leadership must possess management qualifications and meet an established set of recommended qualities not simply based on seniority or recommendations that have no measurable criteria.
- Leadership positions must be contractual, not permanent and pensionable and performance must be measured based on well-defined criteria.
- Teachers and head teachers who are unable to perform must be removed from their positions in order to increase accountability.
- There must be a very strong bond and interaction involving schools, parents and the community.
- There must be emphasis on discipline among learners, teacher and head teachers to facilitate smooth operation of schools.

- Government must endeavour to provide as much financial support as possible to public schools to ensure provision of the necessary materials that could potentially improve learner performance.
- Government must attach importance to research to ensure implementation of what is ideal for the Zambian context.
- The researcher suggests that there must be specialised training for teacher trainers rather than selecting lecturers from secondary schools without established and defined criteria.
- There must be consistency in specialisation in either early childhood and primary or secondary school teaching rather than moving from primary to secondary.
- There should be increased monitoring for private educational institutions to ensure quality rather than quantity and profit.

5.4 Limitations of the study

As mentioned in the preceding sections, this research provided information that can be employed to establish suitable mechanism to improve learner performance and teaching in public secondary schools in Zambia. Some of the limitations that the researcher identified are:

Firstly, the research was limited to a sample of 24 participants: teachers, head teachers and learners, in just four schools out of the over 100 secondary schools in the Copperbelt region. The results may, therefore, not be applicable to other schools or other areas in the country.

Secondly, the research did not include policy-makers who are key players in the designing and implementation of educational programmes.

5.5 Recommendations for future research

The researcher observed that there is very limited evidence of studies undertaken to establish the extent to which teacher training prepares prospective teachers to meet the demands of handling the 21st-century learner. The researcher suggests that studies be undertaken in terms of

assessment procedures for teacher trainees, their entry qualifications, and interest in the profession.

The study could have had a larger and broader sample to include for instance, District Educational Board secretaries, subject inspectors, Examinations Council of Zambia officials, and teacher trainers whose input would have provide increased insight into the problem of learner performance. It would mean that more studies involving other stakeholders would be worth undertaking to establish whether there are other factors that impact learner performance and teaching in public secondary schools in Zambia.

5.6 Final reflections

The main purpose of this research was to critically study the nature of learner performance and teaching in public secondary schools in Zambia with a focus on the Copperbelt region in order to address the challenges of poor performance in the Grade 12 National examinations. The researcher was of the view that through the use of semi-structured and focus-group interviews with documentary analysis an explanation would be found on the prevailing situation in the public secondary schools. The findings of the research confirm the numerous factors that need to be considered for Zambia to improve learner performance in its public secondary schools.

Findings of the research largely point to the need for the Zambian government to put in place effective mechanisms to select quality teachers and head teachers in the schools because without quality, learner performance and teaching would be affected.

A critical study into the nature of learner performance and teaching confirmed the importance of investing in research to establish mechanisms for implementation in realising positive learner performance. The study revealed that implementing policies that have been used in contexts which are not the same may not yield the expected results, unless modified to suit a given context.

The findings of this research are capable of informing policy-makers and other stakeholders in education on how improvement of learner performance and teaching can be achieved.

Therefore, the study was important in that it added to the scholarly literature regarding learner performance and teaching in schools. A number of themes as well as insights based on the African continent experiences and Zambia in particular have surfaced from the analysed data which provide valuable information relating to learner performance and teaching.

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APPENDICES

Appendix A: Proof of ethical clearance



COLLEGE OF EDUCATION RESEARCH ETHICS REVIEW COMMITTEE

14 September 2016

Ref : 2016/09/14/51509903/31/MC
Student : Ms BC Haamoonga
Student Number : 51509903

Dear Ms Haamoonga

Decision: Approved

Researcher: Ms BC Haamoonga
Tel: +260 955 946137
Email: bhaam2000@yahoo.com

Supervisor: Prof. LG Higgs
College of Education
Department of Educational Foundations
Tel: +2712 429 4733
Email: Higgsg@unisa.ac.za

Proposal: Learner performance and teaching at public secondary schools in Zambia: A critical study

Qualification: D Ed in Philosophy of Education

Thank you for the application for research ethics clearance by the College of Education Research Ethics Review Committee for the above mentioned research. Final approval is granted for the duration of the research.

The application was reviewed in compliance with the Unisa Policy on Research Ethics by the College of Education Research Ethics Review Committee on 14 September 2016.

The proposed research may now commence with the proviso that:

- 1) The researcher/s will ensure that the research project adheres to the values and principles expressed in the UNISA Policy on Research Ethics.*
- 2) Any adverse circumstance arising in the undertaking of the research project that is relevant to the ethicality of the study, as well as changes in the methodology, should be communicated in writing to the College of Education Ethics Review Committee. An amended application could be requested if there are substantial changes from the existing proposal, especially if those changes affect any of the study-related risks for the research participants.*
- 3) The researcher will ensure that the research project adheres to any applicable*



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3) The researcher will ensure that the research project adheres to any applicable national legislation, professional codes of conduct, institutional guidelines and scientific standards relevant to the specific field of study.

Note:

The reference number **2016/09/14/51509903/31/MC** should be clearly indicated on all forms of communication [e.g. Webmail, E-mail messages, letters] with the intended research participants, as well as with the College of Education RERC.

Kind regards,



Dr M Claassens
CHAIRPERSON: CEDU RERC
mcdtc@netactive.co.za



Prof VI McKay
EXECUTIVE DEAN



University of South Africa
Pretor Street, Muckleneuk Ridge, City of Tshwane
PO Box 392 UNISA 0003 South Africa
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Appendix B: Request for permission to conduct research in the Copperbelt region

Mufulira College of Education

P. O. Box 40400

Mufulira

6 February, 2017.

The Provincial Education Officer (Copperbelt),

Ministry of General Education,

P. O. Box 71552,

Ndola.

Dear Madam/Sir,

RE: PERMISSION TO CONDUCT A RESEARCH IN FOUR SELECTED SECONDARY SCHOOLS IN FOUR DISTRICTS ON THE COPPERBELT PROVINCE

I Brenda Cynthia Haamoonga do hereby request for permission to conduct a research in four selected secondary schools in four districts on the Copperbelt Province of Zambia, under the title: *“Learner Performance and Teaching in Public Secondary Schools in Zambia: A Critical Study”*.

I am doing a research with Professor Leonie Higgs in the Department of Educational Foundation in fulfilment of the requirement of the degree: Doctor of Education in Philosophy of Education at University of South Africa.

The purpose of this study is to critically examine the relationship that exists between perceptions of effective teaching and learners’ achievement in public secondary schools in Zambia. In particular, the researcher intends to establish, from a social constructivist view, how these perceptions of a sample of teachers head teachers and learners in public secondary schools in Zambia; relate to established key factors in teaching that impact on learner performance in Zambia.

The Copperbelt region has been selected for the study because the researcher observes that the region, in the recent past has been ranked among the least performing provinces in the Grade 12 National examinations. The researcher observes that, the province has recorded different ranges of performances among schools with almost the same demographic profiles and she is of the view that these differences

will provide rich information on the different experiences regarding learner performance and teaching in public secondary schools. However, being qualitative in nature, the study focuses on a small sample of only 24 participants drawn from four schools: lowest and highest performing co-education secondary schools in both the Northern and Southern regions of the Copperbelt Province going by the average performance of the years 2010 to 2015 Grade 12 National examinations.

The participants include: four head teachers (one from each school), eight longest serving male and female teachers (two from each school) and 12 learners from the school council and debate society (6 from each school, at least equal gender), identified using the non-probability purposive sampling through expert sampling procedures. The head teachers were selected because by their positions in schools, they have a wholesome experience on learner performance and teaching in their schools and are likely to provide rich information on the study. They can speak on behalf of the school as a whole thereby providing the bigger picture at school level. The longest-serving teachers were also included in the study because they would most likely provide individual experiences with regard to classroom, departmental and general environment of their respective schools. This means their experiences in different areas could be a source of valuable information. Finally, the Grade 12s from the school council and debate club were identified as a source of rich information because of their longest stay in secondary school, their involvement in numerous debates on cross-cutting issues and their role to link their fellow learners with teachers and administration.

This study is intended to inform educational policy-makers and the general teaching profession on key factors regarding teaching related to poor performance in public secondary schools in Zambia. As the same time, the study should be able to make research evidence-based recommendations and suggestions for learner performance improvement in respect of secondary schools.

Yours faithfully,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read 'Brenda Haamoonga', with a long horizontal line extending to the right.

Brenda Cynthia Haamoonga (Student51509903).
Senior Lecturer: Mufulira College of Education.

Appendix C: Request for permission to conduct research in the four selected districts of the Copperbelt region

Mufulira College of Education,
P. O. Box 40400,
Mufulira.

6 February, 2017.

The District Educational Board Secretary
Kitwe/Kalulushi/Ndola and Mufulira

Dear Sir/Madam,

RE: REQUEST FOR PERMISSION TO CONDUCT A RESEARCH AT ONE SELECTED SCHOOL IN THE DISTRICT

I Brenda Cynthia Haamoonga do hereby request for permission to conduct a research at one selected day, co-education public secondary school in your district, under the title: *“Learner Performance and Teaching at Public Secondary Schools in Zambia: A Critical Study”*.

I am doing a research with Professor L. G. Higgs in the Department of Educational Foundation in fulfilment of the requirement of the degree: Doctor of Education in Philosophy of Education at University of South Africa.

The purpose of this study is to critically examine the relationship that exists between perceptions of effective teaching and learners’ achievement in public secondary schools in Zambia. In particular, the researcher intends to establish, from a social constructivist view, how these perceptions of a sample of teachers head teachers and learners in public secondary schools in Zambia; relate to established key factors in teaching that impact on learner performance in Zambia.

Kitwe / Kalulushi / Ndola / Mufulira has been selected among the four districts in the Copperbelt Province for the study because the researcher observes that the district, in the recent past has been ranked among the least /highly performing districts in the Grade 12 National examinations. The researcher

observes that, the district has recorded different ranges of performances among schools with almost the same demographic profiles and she is of the view that these differences will provide rich information on the different experiences regarding learner performance and teaching in public secondary schools. However, being qualitative in nature, the study focuses on a small sample of only 24 participants drawn from four schools: lowest and highest performing co-education secondary schools in both the Northern and Southern regions of the Copperbelt Province going by the average performance of the years 2010 to 2015 Grade 12 National examinations.

The participants include: four head teachers (one from each school), eight longest serving male and female teachers (two from each school); and 12 learners from the school council and debate society (6 from each school, at least equal gender); identified using the non-probability purposive sampling through expert sampling procedures. The head teachers were selected because by their positions in schools, they have a wholesome experience on learner performance and teaching in their schools and are likely to provide rich information on the study. They can speak on behalf of the school as a whole thereby providing the bigger picture at school level. The longest-serving teachers were also included in the study because they would most likely provide individual experiences with regard to classroom, departmental and general environment of their respective schools. This means their experiences in different areas could be a source of valuable information. Finally, the Grade 12s from the school council and debate club were identified as a source of rich information because of their longest stay in secondary school, their involvement in numerous debates on cross-cutting issues and their role to link their fellow learners with teachers and administration.

This study is intended to inform educational policy-makers and the general teaching profession on key factors regarding teaching related to poor performance in public secondary schools in Zambia. As the same time, the study should be able to make research evidence-based recommendations and suggestions for learner performance improvement in respect of secondary schools.

Yours faithfully,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read 'Brenda Haamoonga', with a long horizontal line extending to the right.

Brenda Cynthia Haamoonga (Student51509903).

Senior Lecturer: Mufulira College of Education.

Appendix D: Request for permission to conduct research in the four selected schools of the Copperbelt region

Mufulira College of Education,
P. O. Box 40400,
Mufulira.

6 February, 2017

The Head Teacher,
Schools: A/B/C and D,
Mufulira.

Dear Sir/Madam,

RE: REQUEST FOR PERMISSION TO CONDUCT A RESEARCH AT SCHOOL A/B/C/D

I Brenda Cynthia Haamoonga do hereby request for permission to conduct a research at your school, under the title: *“Learner Performance and Teaching in Public Secondary Schools in Zambia: A Critical Study”*.

I am doing a research with Professor Leonie Higgs in the Department of Educational Foundation in fulfilment of the requirement of the degree: Doctor of Education in Philosophy of Education at University of South Africa.

The purpose of this study is to critically examine the relationship that exists between perceptions of effective teaching and learners' achievement in public secondary schools in Zambia. In particular, the researcher intends to establish, from a social constructivist view, how these perceptions of a sample of teachers head teachers and learners in public secondary schools in Zambia; relate to established key factors in teaching that impact on learner performance in Zambia.

School A/B/C and D has been selected among the four schools in the Copperbelt Province for the study because the researcher observes that the school, in the recent past has been ranked among the highly / lowly performing day, co-education public secondary schools (Copperbelt North) in the Grade 12

National examinations. Being qualitative in nature, the study focuses on a small sample of only 24 participants drawn from four schools: lowest and highest performing dayco-education secondary schools in both the Northern and Southern regions of the Copperbelt Province going by the average performance of the years 2010 to 2015 Grade 12 National examinations.

The participants include: four head teachers (one from each school), eight longest-serving male and female teachers (two from each school), and 12 learners from the school council and debate society (6 from each school, at least equal gender); identified using the non-probability purposive sampling through expert sampling procedures. This study is intended to inform educational policy-makers and the general teaching profession on key factors regarding teaching related to poor performance in public secondary schools in Zambia. As the same time, the study should be able to make research evidence-based recommendations and suggestions for learner performance improvement in respect of secondary schools.

Yours faithfully,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read 'Brenda Haamoonga', with a long horizontal line extending to the right.

Brenda Cynthia Haamoonga (Student51509903).
Senior Lecturer: Mufulira College of Education.

Appendix E: Participant information sheet

Mufulira College of Education,
P. O. Box 40400,
Mufulira.
6 February, 2017.

Dear Participant,

A: Introduction

My name is Brenda Cynthia Haamoonga; I am doing research with Professor Leonie Higgs in the Department of Educational Foundation in fulfilment of the requirement of the degree: Doctor of Education in Philosophy of Education at University of South Africa. You are invited to participate in a study entitled: *“Learner Performance and Teaching in Public Secondary Schools in Zambia: Critical Study”*.

B: Aim of the study

The aim of this research is to critically examine the relationship that exists between perceptions of effective teaching and learners' achievement in public secondary schools in Zambia. In particular, the researcher intends to establish, from a social constructivist view, how these perceptions of a sample of teachers in public secondary schools in Zambia; relate to established key factors in teaching that impact on learner performance. At the same time, it will create an avenue for teachers' reflections on their practice to ensure it meets the demands for quality teaching and learning for public secondary schools in Zambia.

C: Purpose of your invitation

You are being invited to take part in this study because your school is one of the four public secondary schools in the Copperbelt Province that have been identified to have valuable information that can inform this study. In particular, you have been chosen from the total of 24 participants for the study on account of your management role/ long service in this school as a teacher/ long stay and your involvement in the

school council and debate in this school as a learner which has potential to provide some rich information related to the study.

D: Your role in the study

Your role is to participate in a semi-structured interview among **the four head teachers/ semi-structured interview among the eight selected teachers/ focus-group discussion among the 12 learners** characterised by a set of semi-structured questions designed to help in the investigation of the study which should last between 30 and 60 minutes.

E: Conditions for your participation and benefits

Your participation is purely voluntary and you are not obliged to consent to participation. Should you decide to participate, you will be availed with this information sheet to keep and be requested to sign a written consent. Your details will be kept as confidential as possible and be used only for academic purposes. However, you may not withdraw when the interview has been concluded.

This study is likely to be of benefit to you as a **leader/teacher/learner** because it will give positive insight into the reality surrounding teaching and learning in your school thereby improving educational provision generally.

F: Confidentiality

There are no foreseen negative consequences arising from your participation in this study except for taking away part of your valuable time to assist with information which can largely be obtained from you.

You are further assured that the information that you will convey to the researcher and your identity will be kept confidentially. You have the choice to request that your name not be recorded anywhere and that no one else other than the researcher should know about your involvement in this study. This means the researcher will make your involvement anonymous by ensuring your answers are given a code number or pseudonym and will be referred to in this way in the data, any publications or other research reporting methods like conference proceedings.

G: Data storage

Additionally, you are informed that hard copies of your answers will be stored for a maximum of five years in a locked cupboard for future research or academic purposes; subject to further Research Ethics Review and approval if applicable, while electronic information will be stored on a password-protected computer. The hard copies will then be destroyed through shredding and soft copies deleted permanently.

H: Payment

The study does not include payment of any incentives except for transport refund in the event that the interview exceeds your normal time for one reason or another and provision of a snack during the interview considering the length of time involved.

I: Ethics Approval

The study has been subjected to scrutiny by the UNISA Ethics Review Committee and legally approved.

J: Research feedback

If you would like to be informed of the final research findings, please contact:

Haamoonga Brenda (+260 966 946137).

Mufulira College of Education,

P. O Box 40400,

Mufulira.

or e-mail: bhaam2000@yahoo.com

You could also contact my supervisor:

Professor Leonie Higgs

Department of Educational Foundation

University of South Africa (UNISA).

Thank you for taking time to read this information sheet and for participating in this study



Haamoonga, Brenda C.

Appendix F: Consent to participate

Consent to participate in this study (Return slip).

I-----, confirm that the person asking my consent to take part in this research has told me about the nature, procedure, potential benefits and anticipated inconveniences of participation.

I have read / been explained to and understand the study as explained in the information sheet.

I have had enough chance to ask questions and am prepared to participate in the study.

I understand that my participation is voluntary and that I am free to withdraw in the study should I decide so, without any obligation to give reasons.

I am aware that the findings of this study will be processed into a research report or journal publications, but that my participation will be kept confidential unless otherwise specified.

I agree to the recordings of the focus-group/interview.

I have received a signed copy of the informed consent agreement.

Participant Name and Surname-----

Participant Signature-----Date-----

Researcher's Name and surname-----

Researcher's signature-----Date-----

Appendix G: Letter requesting parental consent for minors to participate in a research project

Dear parent,

My name is Brenda Cynthia Haamoonga, I am doing research with Professor Leonie Higgs in the Department of Educational Foundation in fulfillment of the requirement of the degree: Doctor of Education in Philosophy of Education at University of South Africa under the title: *“Learner Performance and Teaching in Public Secondary Schools in Zambia: A Critical Study”*.

The purpose of this study is to critically examine the relationship that exists between perceptions of effective teaching and learners’ achievement in public secondary schools in Zambia. In particular, the researcher intends to establish, from a social constructivist view, how these perceptions of a sample of teachers, head teachers and learners in public secondary schools in Zambia; relate to established key factors in teaching that impact on learner performance.

Your child is invited to take part in one of the two focus-group discussions, each comprising six participants because of his or her longest stay in school as well as being involved in numerous discussions on cross-cutting issues through the school council or debate club.

The study which focuses on four selected schools also includes semi-structured interviews with four head teachers and eight teachers apart from documentary analysis of existing student performance records, schemes and records of work, core and extracurricular schedules, school timetable, school policy on learner performance related issues, school programmes on continuous professional development/ in-service training, teacher and learner evaluation information. If you allow your child to participate, I shall request him/her on a date and time to be confirmed to discuss with his or her friends.

Any information that is obtained in connection with this study and can be identified with your child will remain confidential and will only be disclosed with your permission. His/her response will not be linked to his/her name or school’s name in any written or verbal report based on this study.

There are no foreseeable risks to your child through participating in this study except taking away part of his/her valuable time. The study also attracts no direct benefit from participating in this study other than

the general possible results that will emerge from the findings and recommendations. At the same time, your child will not receive any type of payment for participating in this study.

Your child's participation is voluntary and he/she is free to decline taking part or withdraw at any time without attracting any penalty.

The study will take place during the normal school days which shall be approved by the school management without disturbing the normal running of the school.

Apart from your permission, your child must be agreeable to participate in the study and both of you will be asked to sign the assent form which accompanies this letter.

The information collected from the study and your child's participation in the study will be stored securely on a password locked computer in my office for five years after the study after which records will be destroyed.

If you have questions about this study kindly my supervisor:

Professor Leonie Higgs,
Department of Educational Foundation,
University of South Africa (UNISA).

You could also contact me:

Haamoonga Brenda (+260 966 946137),
Mufulira College of Education,
P. O Box 40400,
Mufulira.
or e-mail: bhaam2000@yahoo.com

The study has been subjected to scrutiny by the UNISA Ethics Review Committee and legally approved. You are making a decision about allowing your child to participate in this study. Your signature below indicates that you have read the information provided above and have decided to allow him/her to participate in the study. You could keep a copy of this letter.

Name of Child:

Sincerely

(parent/guardian's name parent/guardian's signature Date

Researchers; name Researchers' signature Date

Appendix H: Interview schedule for head teachers

A: Background information

1. Please, tell me about your academic and professional experience.
2. How would you describe your experience working with teachers in Zambian public secondary schools?

B: Key factors in teaching that relate to good performance

3. In your opinion, what kind of teaching practice that would be related to good learners' performance?
4. In your view, what are the major factors related to teaching that influence learner performance in public schools?
5. How would you relate your teachers' working environment to learners' achievement in your school?
6. How would you describe the ability of the employer to evaluate individual teacher performance in respect of learners' achievement?
7. In your view, do you think the existing teacher evaluation systems in your school relate to learners' performance?
8. How would you describe teacher motivation in relation to learner performance in your school?
9. In your personal opinion, how would you describe the extent to which teachers' knowledge of learners contribute to learner achievement in your school?

C: Key factors related to poor performance

10. What in your opinion would you consider as key factors related to poor performance of learners in your school?
11. Please, describe in your view the manner in which the above factors contribute to learners' poor performance.
12. How would you describe the extent to which teaching practice in your school would play a role in learners' performance?
13. Please, describe particular strategies in your view that would assist in doing away with factors that relate to learners' poor performance in your school.

14. Describe why you consider the above strategies to be ideal in dealing with poor learner performance in your school.

D: Recommendations concerning teaching that could improve learner performance

15. If you were asked to make recommendations for learner improvement in your school, what issues would you give priority?

16. Please, describe the extent to which your recommendations would have positive impact in school improvement?

17. In your opinion, describe particular approaches that other public schools have adopted that have yielded positive results in terms of learner performance?

18. With regards to your experience, describe how improved learner performance in public secondary schools in Zambia would be a reality one day?

19. What would be your advice on teaching and learner performance in public schools?

20. Please, give any additional matter that we might not have dealt with in our discussion.

The End

Appendix I: Interview schedule for teachers

A: Background Information

1. Please, tell me about your academic and professional background.
2. How would you describe your experience teaching in public secondary schools?

B: Key factors in teaching that show linkage with good performance

3. What is your personal description of good teaching practice?
4. What in your view are the key characteristics that make teaching effective?
5. Please, tell me what you think the role the teacher plays in learners' performance?
6. In your view, does teacher's extra effort add any value to learner achievement?
7. In your opinion, would use of different teaching methods to different learners based on their diverse abilities improve learner performance?
8. Please, describe particular experiences either in the past or present with regard to your employers that you feel have negatively affected your input in teaching?
9. In your opinion, describe how learners' inadequate background to different subjects is overcome by teachers' more effective teaching approaches.
10. Please, describe the role the school administration would play in influencing teaching in schools?
11. Kindly describe the extent to which learners' social, economic, cultural and intellectual differences would influence learner performance?

C: Key factors related to poor performance

12. In your opinion what major factors could be attributed to poor performance in your school?
13. How would you describe your ability to influence the performance of your learners positively?
14. In your view, describe the extent learners' poor performance could be linked to their prior knowledge?

D: Recommendations concerning teaching that could improve learner performance

15. What in your opinion would you consider as the kind of approaches to teaching in public secondary schools in Zambia that could improve learner performance?

16. If you were to make changes to teaching practice to ensure improved learner performance as observed in your school, what would you regard necessary to achieving your goal ?
17. Please, describe particular lessons you would draw from outside public secondary schools that could be applied in learners' achievement in your school.
18. Kindly add anything you think has not been dealt with in respect of the study.

The End. Thank you for your participation.

Appendix J: Focus-group discussion interview guide and interview process

Appendix J1: Focus-group discussion interview guide

A: Introduction

1. Please, tell me briefly about yourselves and academic experience in this school.
2. What in your personal opinion counts as good teaching?

B: Key factors in teaching that show linkage with good performance

3. What in your view would you regard as key characteristics of teaching practice that could lead to good performance?
4. In respect of your school, kindly identify particular teaching practices that have in one way or another led to good performance.

C: Key factors related to poor performance

5. What would be your description of key factors that relate to your poor performance as a learner at your school?
6. In your opinion, what would be a way out to overcoming the identified key factors to poor performance in your school?

D: Relationship of the perceived factors to international research findings

7. Kindly describe how your identified key factors to good performance in your school, relate to the many international research findings on critical factors that improve learner achievement?

E: Recommendations concerning teaching that could improve learner performance

8. If you were to develop a set of recommendations for the kind of teaching practice that would improve learner performance, what major inclusions would you make?
9. Why would you consider your recommendations a possibility to improvement of learner performance?
10. Would you have any additional issues to teaching practice and learner performance in general, in respect of your school?

The End. Thank you for your participation.

Appendix J 2: Interview process

Welcome: I wish to welcome and thank you sincerely for having accepted to be part of this focus-group interview. You are expected to share your views on the subject of ‘teaching practice and learner performance in schools’. It is hoped that you will faithfully and honestly express your personal view irrespective of the view others will put up on the matter. The discussion will be tape recorded, but the information collected will be purely used for academic purposes and will be kept confidential. The discussion will take between forty-five and sixty minutes.

Rules:

- You are expected to speak one at a time.
- Must respect one another’s views.
- There are no wrong or right answers.
- You are free to seek clarification where necessary.

Appendix K: Data collection: documentary analysis guide

A: Learner performance Record

1. Is there evidence to uphold values of learner performance in:
 - a. Schemes of work
 - b. Records of work
 - c. Assessment record
2. What outcomes and values do they communicate in terms of teaching and learning?

B: School Policy on Teaching, professional development

3. What documents exist on teacher practice?
4. What teacher offences attract punishment?
5. How far can teacher go in disciplining learners
6. Is there existence of a programme for continuous professional development (CPD)?
7. What conditions are attached to CPD attendance?
8. Is there policy on marking and assessment?
9. What pedagogical strategies does the school uphold ?

C: School Curriculum

10. How is the organisation and management of school curriculum?
11. What core and extra curriculum activities exist in school?
12. What is the teachers' role in both core and extra curriculum?
13. In what way does the school curriculum reflect improvement of teaching and learning?

D: Professionalism

14. What documents exist to show individual teacher's performance in school?
15. What is the school policy on outstanding teachers?
16. How does the head teacher deal with non-performers?
17. What channels for dealing with teacher grievances exist?
18. In what way does the school support teacher upgrading?

The End