

A Comparative Study Between High and Low Performing Schools in Social Studies

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Abstract

The merging of Civics, Geography and History subjects into Social Studies subject has recently received mixed perceptions among educationists, learners and society. As a result, various schools have performed differently at grade nine national examinations from the time the subject was introduced. This present study was to compare school academic performance of grade nine Social Studies examination results between high and underperforming government schools in Chibombo District, Central Zambia. The study adopted the comparative research design and targeted 10 high and 10 underperforming government schools. Five thousand eight hundred twenty 5,820 candidates' results were analyzed to generate research findings. Three research objectives and four hypotheses guided the study. A data analysis statistics form was used to collect data for the study. Data collected was analyzed to calculate percentages, mean and standard deviation, while t-test of group and independent samples were used to test the null hypotheses at alpha 0.05. The findings revealed that, teachers who taught Social Studies were not qualified and not Social Studies specialists, textbooks and classrooms were not adequately available. The findings also revealed that school performance was not highly influenced by the type of teacher qualification. It was also revealed that there was no significance between type of textbooks used to teach Social Studies and school performance in 2015 with exception of 2016 and 2017. Differences in teacher qualification and school performance in Social Studies do exist in government schools. Equally, differences in resource allocation and school performance do exist in government schools, but the Ministry of general Education should train teachers to specialize in Social Studies, as well as adequately allocate instructional resources equitably to schools. Apparently, teachers teaching Social Studies in government schools find it difficult to teach some one or two disciplines that they were not trained in. Further, the kind of textbooks that are available and being used in schools are too shallow to match curriculum demands.

Teacher qualifications refer to resources that teachers bring with them to the classroom and are considered important in establishing who should teach. It is about teachers' coursework, grades, subject matter education, degrees, test scores, experience, certification, and credentials. On the contrary, resource allocation refers to equitable distribution of human, material and time resources to schools. Based on this understanding, teacher qualifications and equitable resource allocation are almost universally impacting on students' academic performance in Chibombo district schools. In view of this, students' performance refers to learner test scores achievement in the learning process. However, one most interesting concern would be why students' academic performance in Chibombo district schools is poor. What then is responsible for the poor students' academic performance in Social Studies

Grade 9 examinations? Therefore, the aim of this research was to evaluate students' academic performance in Grade 9 examinations with reference to teacher qualifications and resource allocation in government schools in Chibombo district. Chibombo district is located in Central Province of Zambia, north of Lusaka town (i.e., the Capital City of Zambia). The district consists of 162 schools out of which 87 (53.70 per cent) are Government Schools, 12 (7.40 per cent) Private Schools and 63 (38.90 per cent) Community Schools. Of the 87 Government schools, 58 (66.67 per cent) constitute Grade 9 Junior Secondary School level education.

The 2015 Grade 9 candidates were the first cohort to write the Social Studies examinations under the revised 2013 school curriculum which was implemented in 2014. This was followed by the 2016, 2017 candidates, and onwards. In addition to the traditional examinable subjects at Junior Secondary Level, the 2015, 2016 and 2017 examinations saw the introduction of new subjects namely; Integrated Science, Computer Studies, Musical Arts Education, Design and technology, Art and Design, Social Studies and Business Studies. This was implemented to conform to the demands of the Ministry of General Education of 2013. However, the following traditional subjects had been retained. They included English Language, Religious Education, Home Economics, Ibibemba, Cinyanja, Chitonga, Silozi, French, Kiikaonde, Luvale, Mathematics and Agricultural Science.

Being the first examinations in three consecutive years based on the 2013 Revised School Curriculum, stakeholder expectations had been high about the performance of students on these examinations. It was observed that not only did the performance in Science-related subjects and Mathematics continue to pose a challenge to most learners but also does Social Studies. One notable observation about these examinations was the poor quality pass rate of about 0.75 per cent in Social Studies across all government district schools in Chibombo district. According to research findings from the Provincial Education Office, Central Zambia, this could be attributed to the impact that teacher qualifications and resource allocation in schools in relation with the introduction of Social Studies as a new subject as opposed to the 2007 School curriculum whose subjects namely Civics, Geography and History culminated into a combined Social Studies subject at Grade 9 school level.

A total of 4,105 candidates sat for the 2015 Grade 9 Social Studies examinations in government schools in Chibombo district. In 2016, a total of 5,366 sat for the Grade 9 Social Studies examinations in government schools in Chibombo district, representing an increase of 1,261 (30.72 per cent) from the 4,105 who sat the 2015 examinations. In 2017, a total of 5,458 sat for the Grade 9 Social Studies examinations in government schools in Chibombo district, representing an increase of 92 (1.71 per cent) from the 5,366 who sat the 2016 examinations, as shown in figure 1.1.

Table 1.1 Grade 9 Candidature in Social Studies Examinations from 2015-2017

YEAR	TOTAL NUMBER OF STUDENTS SAT
2015	4,105
2016	5,366

Increase	1,261
% Increase	30.72
2017	5,458
Increase	92
% Increase	1.71

Source: Provincial Educations Office, Kabwe, Zambia. (2018)

The ten (10) high performing district schools studied were: Kafushi, Katuba, Kapopo, Kayosha, Nanswinsa, Moomba, Musoka, Mumangwa, Muwanjuni and Shifwankula. On the contrary, the ten (10) low performing district schools studied were: Chikula, Chinyongola, Chiyuni, Ipongo, Kabile, Namayani, Malambanyama, Muntamba, Shimbilo and Shimukuni.

The differential academic performance of students in Zambia is continually a source of worry that has attracted research interests to educators, government and parents. This is so due to the importance that education attaches on the national development of the country. Various researches indicates there is fallen standards of education in Zambia's institutions of learning, (National Policy Document on Education, 1996). Teacher qualifications and equitable resource allocation are believed to be significant school-based factors in student learning. Various researchers have indicated that teacher qualifications and equitable resource allocation matters a great deal in terms of student performance.

Public rural school districts face special challenges in educating grade nine students. To begin with, these districts have disproportionate shares of qualified teachers and at-risk students as compared to public urban school districts. Secondly, the Ministry of General Education tends not to allocate resources equitably. In other words, resource allocation is biased towards urban school districts. Thirdly, teachers prefer to work near homes so that they gravitate towards more affluent urban school districts. Fourth, the introduction of Social Studies subject at junior secondary level has disproportionately disadvantaged both the educators and the students. Buddin and Zamaro (2009) postulates that, this sorting means urban school districts are often supplied with highly qualified teachers and quality resources while rural schools are allocated teachers with low qualifications and weak academic credentials to instruct students. Finally, poor teacher qualifications and biased resource allocation often leave the students with poor academic performance scores at junior secondary examinations level.

These concerns attract greater concern of various stakeholders in the education system especially parents, educators and policy-makers. The concern derives from poor students' performance scores especially in public rural school districts. Not only does parents and the government agree that their huge investment on education is not yielding the desired results, but also teachers complain of students' low academic performance at both internal and external examinations, (Unama et al, 2013). The poor performances of students in Social Studies subject in public examinations since the time the subject was introduced in 2015 have left a number

of questions to be answered.

It is in frantic search for solution to this problem that researchers are now searching on characteristics of a teacher and resource allocation in district schools. Various studies have shown that teacher qualification, ability and experience, as well as resource allocation are associated with increase in students' performance. Teachers are among the key players in enhancing students' performance who at the same time holds the key to sealing the gaps in students' performance. Therefore, teachers should possess some characteristics that would make them effective teachers. Adegbile and Adeyemi (2008) posits that assigning experienced and qualified teachers to low performing schools and students is likely to pay off in better performance gaps. This assertion strongly indicates that subject matter (competence), teachers' qualifications, teachers' teaching experience, teachers' attitudes, teaching skills and teacher-student relationship are strong variables indicating students' performance.

Conversely, school resource issues are of concern to all levels of the education system-national, provincial, district, and school. Indeed, every child's future and that of the society in general, depends mainly on the quality of the education system. As expectations rise for students and teachers to perform highly, as well as for schools to guarantee the success of all students, the critical question that arise is how best to support this reform through effective and efficient allocation of resources.

Various researches have been carried out in an attempt to help broaden the understanding of the role of school resources in students' performance and how their distribution and use might be improved. However, the relationship between resources and student performance is still not clear.

Three separate studies on factors affecting the effective implementation of Social Studies in schools seem to suggest that resource allocation to school districts and teachers' qualifications have a negative significance on the development of students' lifelong experiences. Wambui, Negumbo and Usulor, separately studied this topic on factors affecting Social Studies implementation in schools in a collegiate context in the studies which involved 9 principals, 142 teachers and 13 256 students from 11 schools.

The study carried out by Wambui in Nairobi concluded that minimum qualifications of teachers and inadequate teaching methods correlate with effective implementation of Social Studies curriculum in junior secondary schools, (Wambui, 2014).

However, the study carried out by Negumbo in Namibia concluded that lack of instructional resources and inadequate methodology were the factors that affected the effective implementation of the Social Studies curriculum in primary and secondary schools, (Negumbo, 2016). The findings from the research demonstrated a strong relationship between resources and student success. Moreover, the results indicated that allocating resources within selected areas and for certain practices might make a significant impact on students' performance. In other words, both the level of resource allocation and their equitable allocation seem to affect educational outcomes.

In another research carried out by Unama et al (2013) on relationship between teachers' educational qualifications and students' achievement, it was concluded that there is a positive relationship between the teachers' academic qualifications and students' academic performance. However, there was one discovery that these studies

showed. Evidence in these studies showed that the majority of teachers had minimum requirement for junior secondary school teaching of Social Studies, which is a diploma, (Wambui, 2014).

Since resource allocation and teachers’ qualifications at junior secondary and senior secondary school may have positive or negative influence on learners, it is vital that efforts are made to carry out a comparative study of why two groups of district schools are performing differently in Social Studies subject at junior secondary level in Central Province. Every child deserves an accomplished teacher-one who is qualified to equip students with the skills to succeed in global community. Accomplished teachers, therefore, base their practice on the fundamental belief that all students can lean and meet high expectations.

This research study explored the evidence for this relationship in an attempt to help identify which teacher qualifications and characteristics should be prioritized in educating and hiring those teachers who are more reliably to impact positively on students’ learning. It further explore the suitable modalities of allocating public resources in support of educational programmes, and the rationale for these investments will likely continue to be made in terms of creating social equity alongside excellence and improved student performance in Social Studies subject in districts schools. Two groups of district schools performed differently in Social Studies subject at junior secondary level in Central Province. What is the problem? Based on this background, and the poor students’ academic performance in junior secondary examinations in table 1.1, the central problem of this study is that government schools in Chibombo district perform poorly in Grade 9 national examinations particularly in Social Studies.

Table 1.2 The Examinations Council of Zambia (ECZ) government schools’ performance in the junior secondary school Examinations in Chibombo district: October/November, 2015-2017: Social Studies

YEAR	TOTAL No. OF STUDENTS SAT	GRADE I		GRADE II		GRADE III		GRADE IV		FAIL	
		75-100		60-74		50-59		40-49		0-39	
		No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%
2015	4,105	26	0.63	398	9.70	598	14.60	1,130	27.53	1,772	43.20
2016	5,366	34	0.63	676	12.60	1,297	24.17	1,664	31.01	1,695	31.59
2017	5,458	54	0.99	898	16.45	1,305	23.91	1,503	27.54	1,698	31.11

Source: Provincial Educations Office, Kabwe, Zambia. (2018)
 Differential in students’ academic performance has raised a lot of concerns amongst educators, parents and the government in the education system. It against this background that the study sought to compare whether high performing district schools were properly allocated with resources while low performing district schools were not. The study also sought to investigate whether high performing district schools had highly qualified Social Studies teachers while low performing district schools had low

qualified Social Studies teachers. The investigations were done by measuring the national examinations results at junior secondary school level in government schools in Chibombo district from 2015 to 2017. Farooq – Berhanu argues that it is important to carry out a research that focuses on the educators' understanding about the factors that contribute in the academic success of students, (Farooq, Chandhry, Shafiq & Berhanu, 2011).

Aim of the Study

This study sought to compare between high performing and low performing government district schools in Social Studies grade nine (9) final examinations from 2015 to 2017 in Chibombo, Zambia.

Through quantitative analysis, this study sought to find out:

1. The academic qualifications of Social Studies teachers who taught grade nine pupils in government schools in Chibombo district;
2. The academic performance of students in Social Studies grade nine final examinations in government schools in Chibombo district; and
3. Whether there was equitable resource allocations between high performing and low performing district schools in Social Studies subject in Chibombo or not.

Teachers' qualifications and resource allocation were used as criteria to measure students' performance test scores in Junior Secondary national examinations between high and low performing districts schools.

In this study in which 20 schools were Studied, 10 of which were high achieving schools and 10 low achieving schools, the findings would help provide evidence in one way or another in this apparent contradiction. Moreover, this study being the first one done in Zambia, would help generalize findings beyond the walls of the world where previous studies have been done.

Objectives

To compare whether:

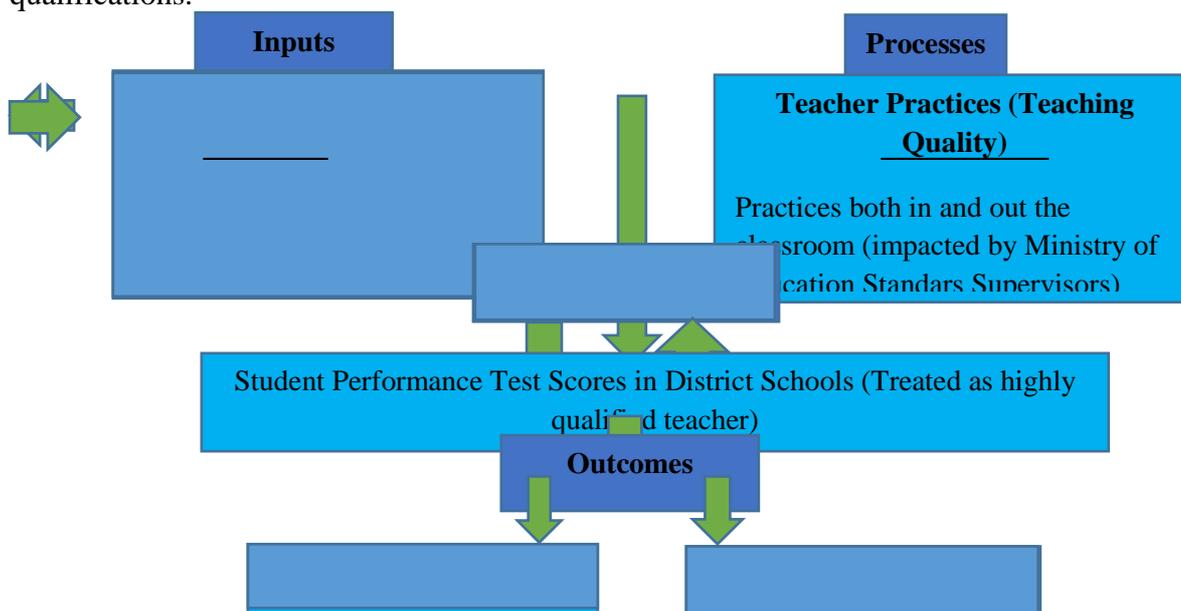
1. Teacher qualifications affect students' academic performance between high performing and low performing Social Studies students in district schools.
2. Resource allocations affect students' academic performance between high performing and low performing Social Studies students in district schools.
3. Teacher qualification and resource allocation will be used as criteria to measure students' performance test scores.

This study was important to carry out in order to improve students' performance in Social Studies at junior secondary school level in Chibombo district, Central, Zambia. The research would further enhance the Ministry of Education and its cooperating partners ascertain the quality of available teachers who teach Social Studies in government schools as well as the need for equitable resource allocation.

Conceptual Framework of Teacher Qualification

Miles and Huberman (2004) defines conceptual framework as a visual or written product which explain graphically or in narrative the main things to be studied (that is, key factors, concepts or variables and the presumed relationships among them). For this study, a conceptual framework for determining teacher qualifications following examining of recent studies and revising older studies was used. This framework consists of three distinct but related ways of looking at teachers' inputs (teacher qualifications), processes (teacher practices), and outcomes (teacher effectiveness) as represented in figure 1.1.

Figure 1.1 shows a conceptual framework relating ways of looking at teacher qualifications.



According to Figure 1.1, the assumptions of the researcher were that, what qualify someone to teach and to influence students' academic performance in district schools are related to certain qualities a teacher achieved in the classroom and was certified during his or her years of study. The second one are those that relate to years of teaching experience, which in this event, are continuous in his or her lifetime. However, the researcher holds the view that degree certificates, formal education, certification and in-field preparation are not throughout lifetime of a teacher because they are obtained once in the lifetime of a teacher.

Teacher practices such as teaching strategies, motivation and interaction are personal to individual teachers and are dynamic in a teacher's life. The assumption is that, teachers with bad teaching strategies, not motivating and encouraging interaction of the learners today may not mean it will be similar next time. The three categories of teacher qualifications, teacher practices and teacher effectiveness influence learning and improved students' performance. In her research, Rice (2008) underscore the importance of teacher quality as being relative to students' academic performance.

The framework shows how teacher inputs and teacher processes influence the quality of student learning and performance outcome. Another interesting part is the parameter drawn to the performance outcome. The implication drawn from this is that, what is taught and what the students learned will determine the academic performance. Therefore, it is imperative to argue that a teacher who is highly qualified but deficient in good teaching strategies will always produce poor results. Similarly, a teacher who fail to motivate his or her students while at the same time failing to encourage students' interactions during the learning process will ultimately produce poor results. Therefore, students in Chibombo district need teachers who are not only competent to teach but also those who could use teaching strategies that help in understanding the subject matter. It is equally important to acknowledge that teacher qualifications, teacher efficacy and teacher effectiveness all correlate to sound students' academic performance.

Conceptual Framework of Resource Allocation

Basing on the concept of resource, a conceptual framework for examining resource allocation in district schools was used. This framework consists of three distinct but related variables of looking at resource allocation in school districts (that is, human resource, instructional materials and physical facilities). The adopted model suggests that student outcomes depend on factors external and internal to the school. External factors are support from the wider formal educational system, resource allocation (i.e. both human resource, material resource and physical facilities) as well as inspection by Education Standards Officers. Internal factors refer to the school culture particularly the leadership style and values, to the behavior of teachers as it relates to classroom work, and the condition of students during the academic term time.

The schools rely primarily on support from government, at national and district levels to function. The policies and financing necessary for schools to operate; the definition and standards of the curriculum and the texts; instructional materials and examination system to implement that curriculum; the provision of staff: head teachers, teachers and their training; district level supervision, inspection and support. All of these supporting inputs are external to the school and community.

Figure 2 shows a conceptual framework of resource allocation in district schools.

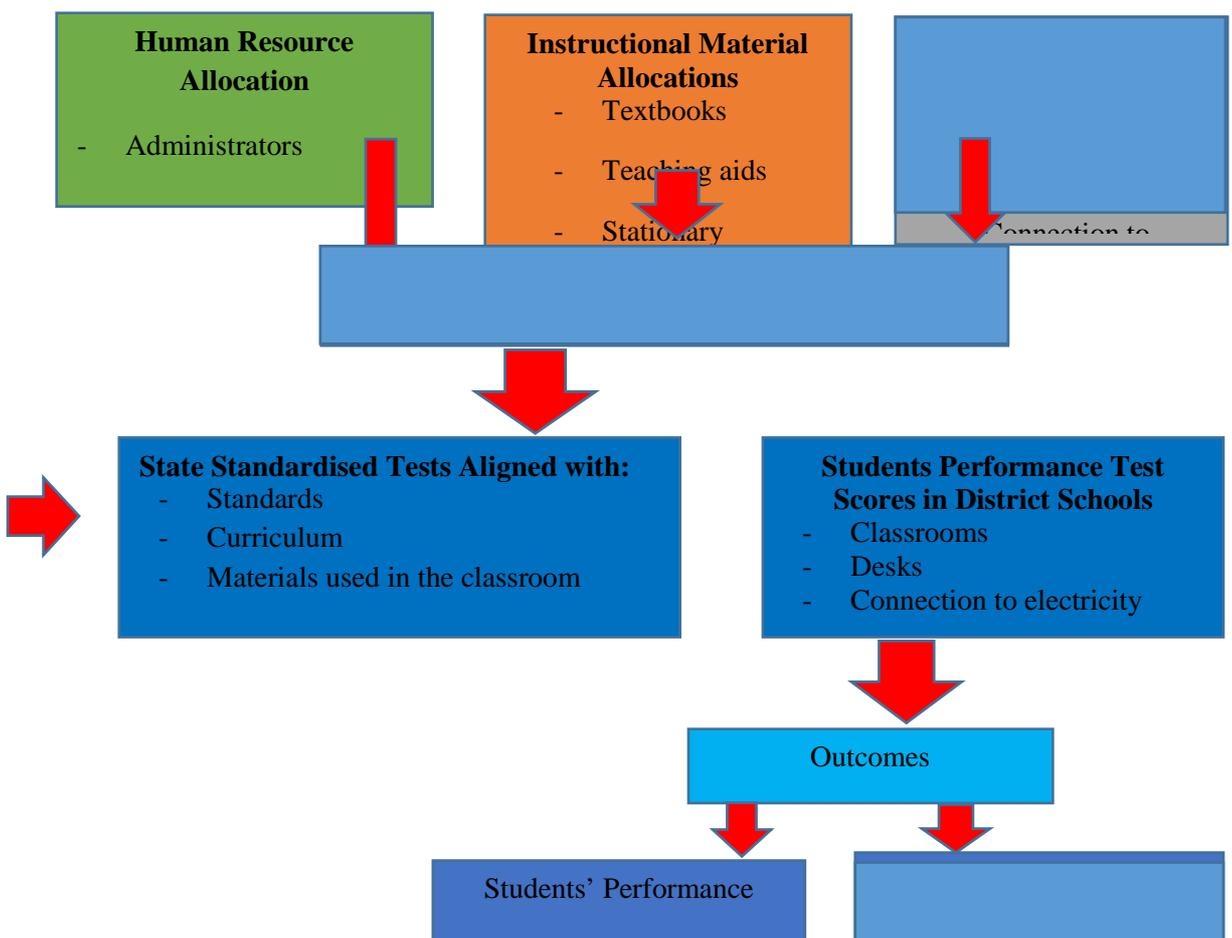


Figure 2 shows the interrelationship between school factors, curriculum implementation and performance of students in government schools. The assumption is that, when school factors are adequately allocated, curriculum is effectively and fully implemented which translates to high student academic performance, high transition to senior secondary education, adequate syllabus coverage and low school dropout rate. Conversely, if school factors are not adequately available in measurable terms, curriculum is not effectively and fully implemented which translates to low student academic performance, low progression to senior secondary education, inadequate syllabus coverage, and high school dropout rate. Therefore, this study concerned itself with performance of district schools in relation to resource allocation (i.e. both human resource, instructional materials and physical facilities) in school systems of Chibombo district.

Effective curriculum implementation demands that school factors among others must be put in place. In his argument, Mwanja (2013) postulate that poor curriculum implementation in turn negatively affects the individuals and the government in their attempt to meet their respective commitments. However, of critical importance, resource allocation practices must reflect an understanding of the imperative to eliminate existing inequities and close the performance gap of students in district schools.

The findings of the study on hypothesis 1 revealed that indicated that there was no significant difference in school performance in grade 9 Social Studies taught by secondary diploma holder teachers between high and underperforming government schools in Chibombo district. In this case, performance was not influenced by teacher qualification. The results indicated that there were no specialists qualified in the three subjects (i.e., Geography, Civic Education and History) that make up Social Studies subject. The implication of the study is that trends in school performance by both schools showed that a number of possible causes might have had contributed to such poor quality pass of students in Social Studies in grade nine national examinations. Notable factors that were identified during course of study included low pupil-book ratio especially in the years 2015 and 2016, and overcrowding in classrooms. Teacher qualification also had contributed to poor results because some teachers that taught the subject were trained in totally different fields. Wambui (2014) contended that adequacy of human resource and instructional materials affected curriculum implementation.

The findings of the study on hypothesis 2 revealed that there was no significant difference in performance in grade nine Social Studies between high performing schools taught by a mixture of degree and diploma holder teachers and underperforming schools taught by diploma holder teachers in government schools in Chibombo district. However, the results also seemed to suggest that relying on paper qualification is not the only way for schools to perform better. Laura (2007) concluded that reliance on paper qualifications as proxies for teacher quality seems to hold sway because quality often has been conflated with the idea of a highly qualified teacher. Hence, SBCDPs do not only improve results but also improves teacher effectiveness for content delivery to the learners. Findings in this documentary indicate that there were no teachers trained to handle the subject. The implication is that there was no institution in the country that offered a Social Studies course for people to train and teach the discipline. This finding is supported by the finding of

Usulor (2014) who found that majority of social studies teachers in secondary schools in Ebonyi state are not qualified to teach the subject.

The findings of the study on hypothesis 3 revealed that in 2015 no school had received Social Studies textbooks to effect curriculum changes. It was noted that the policy did not take into account how some contextual factors influences students' and school academic performance. The challenges of lack of textbooks were evidenced in the learner-book ratio of 0 to 783 in 2015, 1 to 1,415 in 2016 and 1 to 37 in 2017. This finding is supported by Amutenya (2013) who posited that, in order to attain the desired academic gains, schools need adequate resources such as textbooks, computers and libraries to help teachers to implement assessment policy. The implication is that lack of adequate and equitable resource allocation worsens the possibilities for effective implementation of educational policies in the classroom. The researcher contend that results would have greatly improved if schools were supported with Social Studies textbooks. From data collected, teachers handling the subject were relying on ordinary Civics, Geography and History textbooks. Despite the syllabus being put in place, some topics were not found in the old textbooks. However, it is the more reason that even teachers who were trained in very different fields were placed to handle the subject thereby affecting school performance.

The findings in this research on hypothesis 4, data indicated that in some schools pupil-classroom ratio was quite a challenge. However, despite this, performance was influenced by classroom space. Supporting this opinion, Cash (1993) argued that physical facilities including classrooms and furniture have a significant relationship with students' achievement. The findings in this research pertaining to hypothesis 4 also indicated that most of the schools under study had at least minimal classroom space to accommodate increasing pupil enrolment levels.

Summary of the Study

The purpose of this study was to compare academic performance between high and underperforming schools in Social Studies grade nine examinations in Chibombo district in relation with teacher qualification and resource allocation, in this case number of social Studies textbooks and number of classrooms from the year 2015 to 2017. The research objectives of the study included: whether teacher qualification affected school performance between high and underperforming district schools in Social Studies grade nine examination results; and whether then number of textbooks and classrooms influenced school performance in social Studies grade nine examinations from 2015 to 2017. The study adopted the comparative research design and targeted 10 high performing and 10 underperforming government schools. The population study consisted 5,820 candidates whose examination results were analyzed to generate research findings. Three research objectives and four hypotheses guided the study.

A data analysis form was used to collect data for the study. Data collected was analyzed using percentages, mean, standard deviation while t-test of group and independent samples were used to test the null hypotheses at 0.05 level of significance. The findings revealed that, most teachers that taught the Social Studies were not qualified and not Social Studies specialists, textbooks and classrooms were not adequately available. The findings also revealed that school performance was not highly influenced by the type of teacher qualification. The null hypotheses tested showed that there was no significant difference between teacher qualification and school performance in 2015 except in 2016 and 2017 where significance was revealed. It was also that there was no significance between type of textbooks used to teach Social Studies in 2015 with exception of 2016 and 2017. These findings were

discussed with appropriate conclusion and recommendations with respect to equitable resource allocation to schools and training teachers specialized to teach Social Studies for effective implementation of the curriculum.

Conclusions

The researcher concluded that the extent of adequacy of human resource trained to teach Social Studies affected curriculum implementation in government schools. The findings indicated that there were no trained Social Studies specialists thereby negatively impacting on school academic performance. The researcher concluded that the adequacy of Social Studies textbooks affected the effective teaching of Social studies in government schools. The researcher further concluded that failure to fully consider the needs of pupils' characteristics affected curriculum implementation. The researcher concluded further that the Ministry of Education's policy of schools procuring textbooks through the District Education Board Secretary's offices affected curriculum implementation.

Recommendations

Basing on the findings, the following were the recommendations for the study:

1. The Ministry of General Education should decentralize the books procurement process to allow individual schools access the right kind of instructional materials. This is because some Social Studies textbooks that are being used in 193 in Zambian classrooms are shallow content-wise. The ministry can do this by closely monitoring the curriculum development center (CDC) and regulate the type of textbooks for recommendation to use in Zambia's schools with of course input by subject teachers on the ground.
2. The government and private sector should work collaboratively to ensure viable conditions of learning are provided for the learners. Cooperation can be enhanced through the formation of committees involving Ministry of general education, NGO and local community leaders.
3. The ministry should train and deploy Social Studies teachers to teach pupils in the discipline. This is because there are no trained specialists in the discipline. This should be done through fast track programme.
4. A similar study should be conducted in other districts of Zambia to determine if the results will replicate what was concluded in this study.

Need for further Research

The following were suggestions for further research;

1. This research focused on comparing the influence of teacher qualification, number of textbooks and classrooms on school performance in Social Studies. Further research should be done on the influence of pupil population on school performance.
2. Further research should be done on trends of school performance in grade nine Social Studies from 2018 onwards so that the right choices for curriculum adjustments are made.
3. Further research should be done in other districts to establish whether the challenges revealed by the study of the said schools were unique to the districts.

4. Further research should be done in private schools to ascertain whether they face similar challenges as faced by government schools under study.
5. Further study should be on the influence of School Based Continuous Professional development on school performance in Social Studies grade nine examination results.

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