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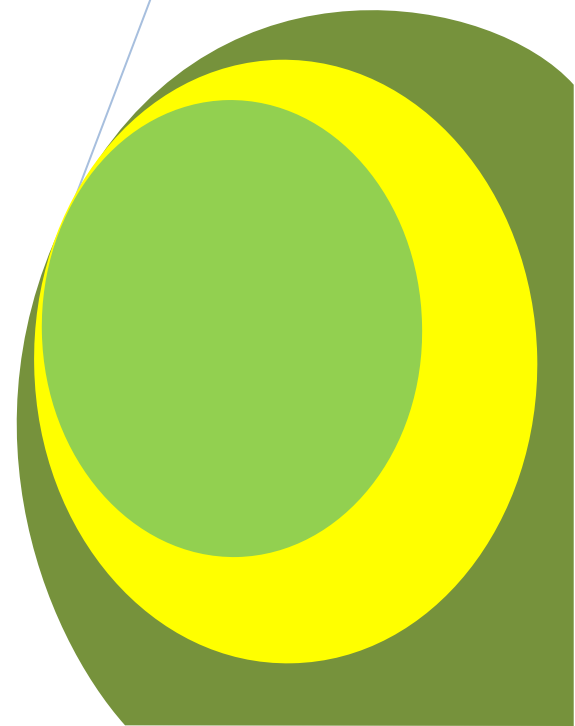
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School Heads and Teachers Perceptions on the Factors Influencing Pass Rate at Ordinary Level in Mutasa District of Manicaland

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School Heads and Teachers Perceptions on the Factors Influencing Pass Rate at Ordinary Level in Mutasa District of Manicaland

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ABSTRACT

The study investigates factors contributing to low ordinary level performance in the Zimbabwe Schools Examination Council (ZIMSEC) examinations from 2010 to 2014 in secondary schools in Mutasa District. The target population consisted of 100 teachers, 50 Heads of Departments (H.O.Ds), and 5 Headmasters. The study followed a mixed methods research design. The questionnaire was complemented by interviews in the collection of data. The study revealed that the school heads input, teacher qualification, experience, and remuneration, student and parental attitude and input, socio- economic and cultural background, location of school, resource availability, curriculum, class sizes and policy guidelines among other factors largely contributed to poor performance at ordinary levels in the sampled schools. The study also revealed that most degreed secondary school teachers lacked proper methodology and preferred average to above average learners leaving slow learners to their own peril. The study recommended that the curriculum be more practically orientated, serious considerations should be given to the use of vernacular as a medium of instruction, graduate teacher in service courses on handling mixed classes through the Performance Lag Address Programme (Plap). Plap should be intensified and conditions of service and remuneration for teachers be improved for the nation to have a sustainable human capital development from the education sector. Government should re-capacitate the education system for national development.

Keywords: Students, Ordinary Level, factors, poor performance, public examinations.

LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

O-level:	Ordinary level
ZJC:	Zimbabwe Junior Certificate
NCLB:	No Child Left Behind
ZJMSEC:	Zimbabwe Schools Examination Council
NASH:	National Association of Secondary Heads
H.O.D:	Head of Department
D E O:	District Education Officer
P E D:	Provincial Education Director
PLAP:	Performance Lag Address Programme
CPE:	Centre for Public Education
MPSM:	Master in Public Sector Management

INTRODUCTION

Many authors from the United States, Australia and England have written on teacher qualification, good leadership practices, turnaround programmes, teacher motivation, parental class levels, curriculum review and policy matters as areas needing redress in order to curb the problem of high failure rate at secondary school level. The 'No child Left Behind' Act passed in America in 2002 was a measure to improve on student performance at secondary school level. Adell (2012) argues that poor performance at rural secondary schools is an international problem that has been attributed to the low socio- economic background of the learners. Closer home, the Zambian Education Ministry has expressed concern over poor 'O' level results for a decade now. Vundla (2012) states that the major causes of high

failure rate in South African rural secondary schools include, shortage of trained teachers, inadequate teaching facilities, lack of funds to purchase teaching equipment, poor quality of text books, political interference, automatic promotion of pupils and poor infrastructure. Though some progress has been noted in the mentioned countries no one nation has totally won the war against poor performance at 'O' level and Zimbabwe is no exception. Whilst the national average pass rate at 'O' level since 1998 stands at 14.5% the average of most rural district schools is 4.2% (Chivore 2010). This means that most of the pupils at the rural secondary schools go there to prepare for failure after four years, a very painful reality indeed (Luphahla 2012). The majority of the Zimbabwean population lives in rural areas hence most of the schools are rural. Zimbabwe is a former British colony which gained its independence in 1980 after waging a protracted liberation struggle against the white minority settler regime. In 1979 there were 197 national schools and educational opportunities for black Zimbabweans children were severely limited both in quantitative and qualitative terms (Jolibongo. 2012)). The number of schools had increased to 1502 by 1989 as stated by Leedy. 2009). Enrolment increased by over 200% across the board. The majority of new secondary schools were built in the rural areas first as upper tops. In spite of the noble idea of providing schools to the majority of rural students, there is a widespread outcry across the country about the low performance of candidates from these schools in the Ordinary level examinations.

MATERIALS AND METHODS

This research followed a mixed method research approach which applied both the qualitative and quantitative approaches in a single study or case. The two approaches were used to complement each other to provide a complete analysis of the problem (Burmester. 2009). The mixed methods approach was adopted because the quantitative approach on its own could not adequately explain factors for low academic performance in secondary schools neither could the qualitative design on its own do so. This approach enabled high integration of quantitative data collected through the questionnaire and qualitative data gathered through in depth face to face interviews. Since it capitalized on the complementary strengths of qualitative and quantitative methods, it yielded a comprehensive research product (Anderson. 2011).). The target population was secondary schools in Mutasa District from which a sample was purposively drawn. These purposively sampled secondary schools have consistently obtained low pass rates at "O" Level in ZIMSEC examinations in the past five years, from 2010 to 2014. The researcher first talked to the respondents on the purpose and procedure of data collection and obtained their informed consent. Only teachers interested in participating in the research were involved in the research. The researcher informed them that participation in the research was voluntary and one was free to withdraw one's participation if one changed one's mind at whatever stage of the research. The study population comprised of 40 secondary schools in the District, 40 Heads and more than 485 teachers. Purposive sampling was used to select five low performing secondary schools in Mutasa District. Stratified sampling was used to determine the number of teachers who will participate in the survey at each school. The number of participants was limited to purposively sampled twenty from each school. The questionnaire was preferred as a data collection instrument because of its various advantages and its relevance to the quantitative and qualitative research. Considering the sensitivity of the topic under study, the aspect of anonymity made the questionnaire the most suitable instrument for data collection. Heads and HODs were interviewed, using the interview guide that had seven open ended questions. The researcher interviewed HODS to solicit their perceptions on factors for low pass rate in the schools. Their choice was ideal because of their influence in the control and distribution of human and material resources in the teaching – learning practice. The researcher will interview conveniently sampled HODs using the interview guide composed of eight open ended questions.

RESULT AND DISCUSSION

Data captured through the questionnaire was presented using figures and tables while that sourced through interviews was presented in narrative. Data was then discussed in response to the research questions. The following themes were examined: social demography, school pass rate, impact of socio-economic factors, leadership and management, teacher related factors, student related factors, and policy issues.

Schools pass rates at "O" Level ZIMSEC examinations

Respondents were asked to provide statistical data on the pass rate of their schools from 2010 to 2013. The results are graphically presented below.

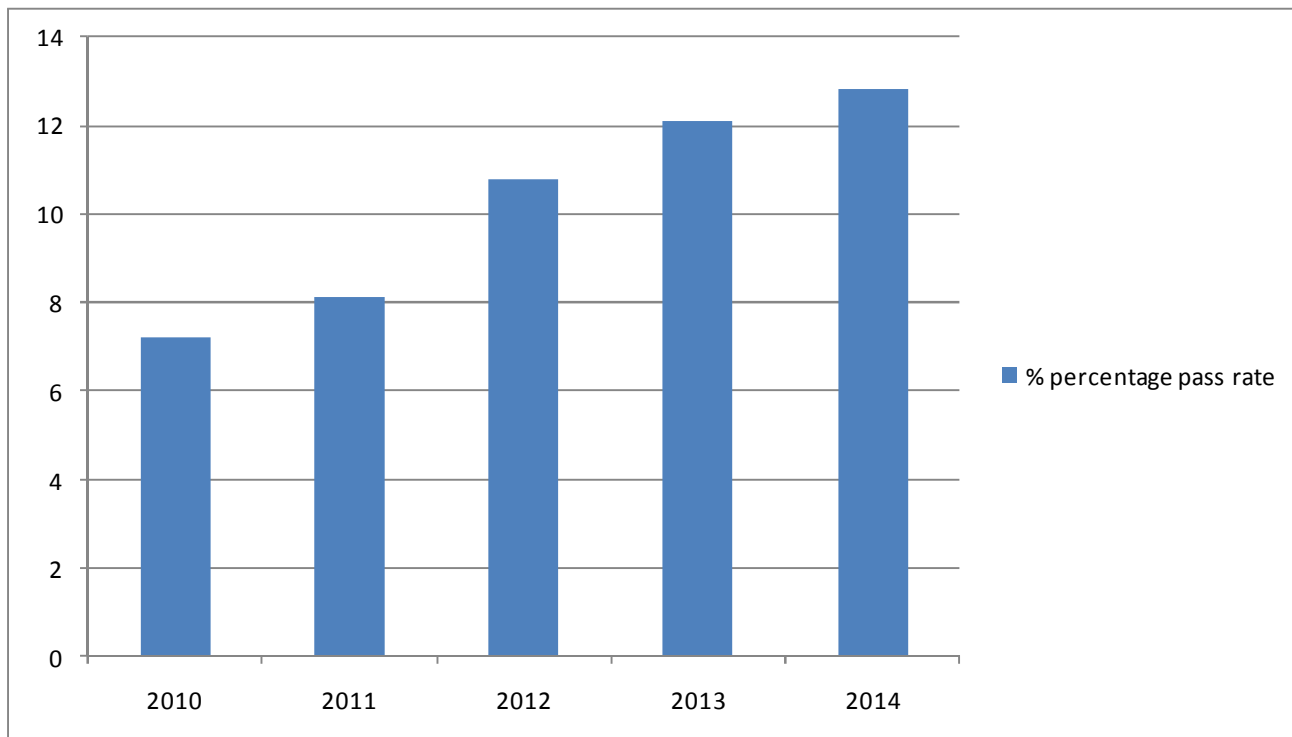


Figure 1: Average pass rates of sampled schools in O-level examinations from 2010 to 2014

Figure 1 above shows that the average pass rates for the sampled schools over the stated years were low even when compared to the national pass rates of the stated years. In 2010, the average pass rate was 7.23%; 2011 - 8.11%; 2012 - 10.12% ; 2013-12.1% and 2014- 12.8%. Such was the magnitude of the problem of high failure rate in some rural schools which prompted the researcher to investigate the causes of poor performance in an examination the whole nation attached so much importance on. These statistics portrayed the need to identify the causes of poor student performance at ordinary level examinations in rural secondary schools for which possible solutions were proffered. Research revealed that leadership, teacher qualification, remuneration and experience, resource provision, class size, socio-economic status, gender stereotyping, curriculum realignment, parental involvement and enabling policies among others were shouting deficiencies within the education sector.

Socio-economic factors that influenced student performance

Participants were asked to pin point the most socio - economic activities on which welfare of students' household depended to support the educational needs of their children. Results are graphically presented below.

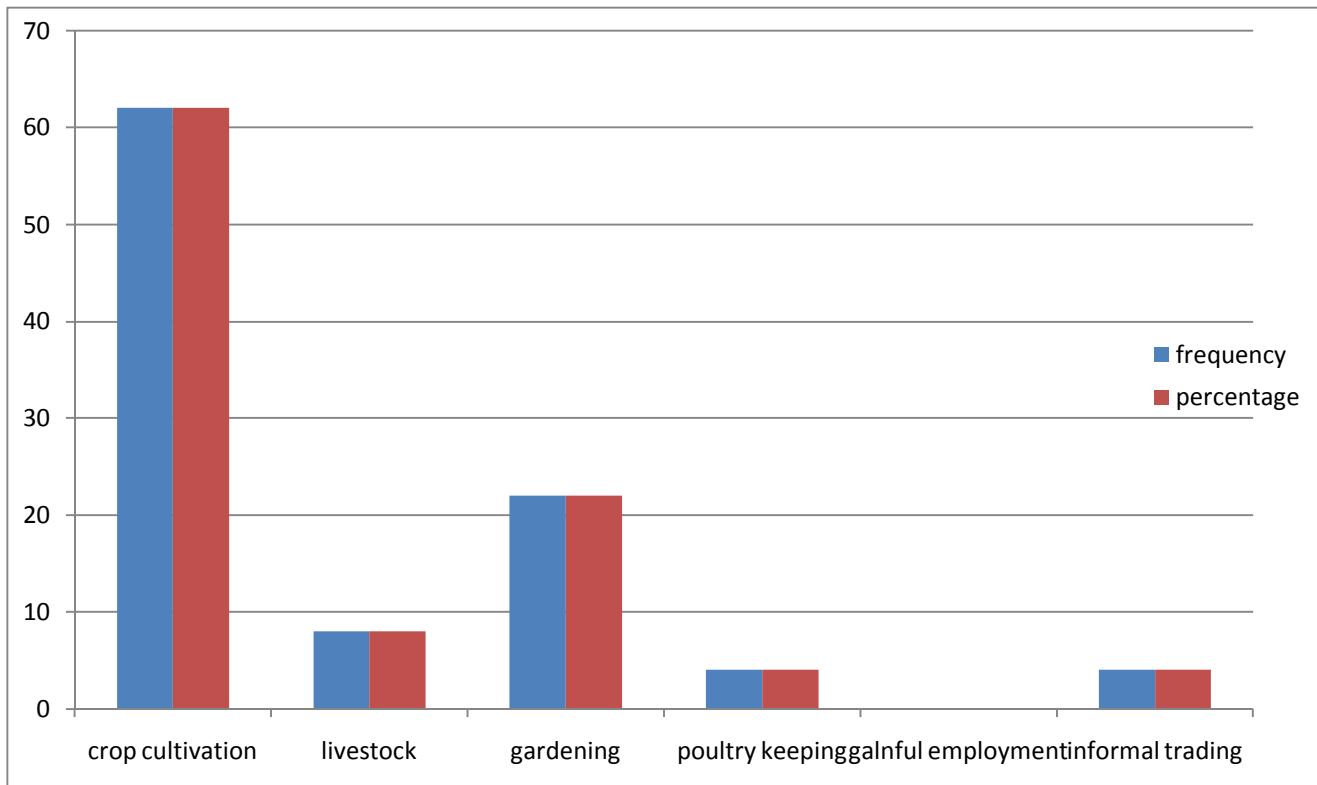


Figure 2: Main economic activities on which welfare of student's household depends

Figure 2 above shows that 62 respondents did crop cultivation as an economic activity and no one did piggery. No one was gainfully employed. School Heads confirmed this and said that households in rural areas had very limited financial resources due to their socio- economic background. Most parents failed to pay school fees on time and to provide their children with extra learning materials or to organize private tutoring for their children especially during holidays, it was an uphill task. The administrators stressed that this compromised student performance. These findings could mean that households encountered hardships in securing adequate resources which affected parental involvement in the education of their children.

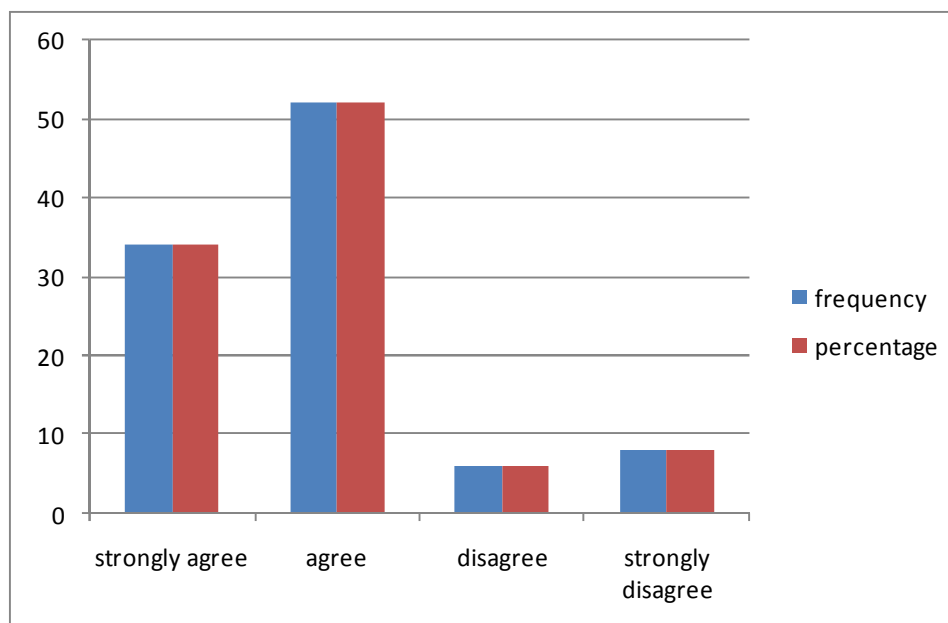


Figure 3: Students Health and access to adequate food

Figure 3 above shows that 86 respondents registered positive impressions on the view that students had adequate food and were in good health. Fourteen respondents recorded negative impressions on the view. In face to face interviews with school heads, it was revealed that the schools had no problems with students in terms of their health. They stressed that in actual fact, due to daily movement to and from school, they had developed a high level of physical fitness and there is not much difference with students in boarding schools. This implied that poor health cannot be considered a main factor for low performance of students at the rural day secondary schools.

Figure 4 shows that 69 respondents indicated that most parents were involved in payment of school fees for their children while 34 respondents indicated that they were involved through buying of uniforms. Only 13 respondents indicated that they would buy supplementary books and learning materials. The HODs confirmed that pattern of parent behaviour by most parents of children in rural day schools. They asserted that given the scarcity of the US dollar, very few parents had the capacity to offer their children extra- learning materials. Parents relied on what the school offered. This meant a compromise in the level of performance of children in their education.

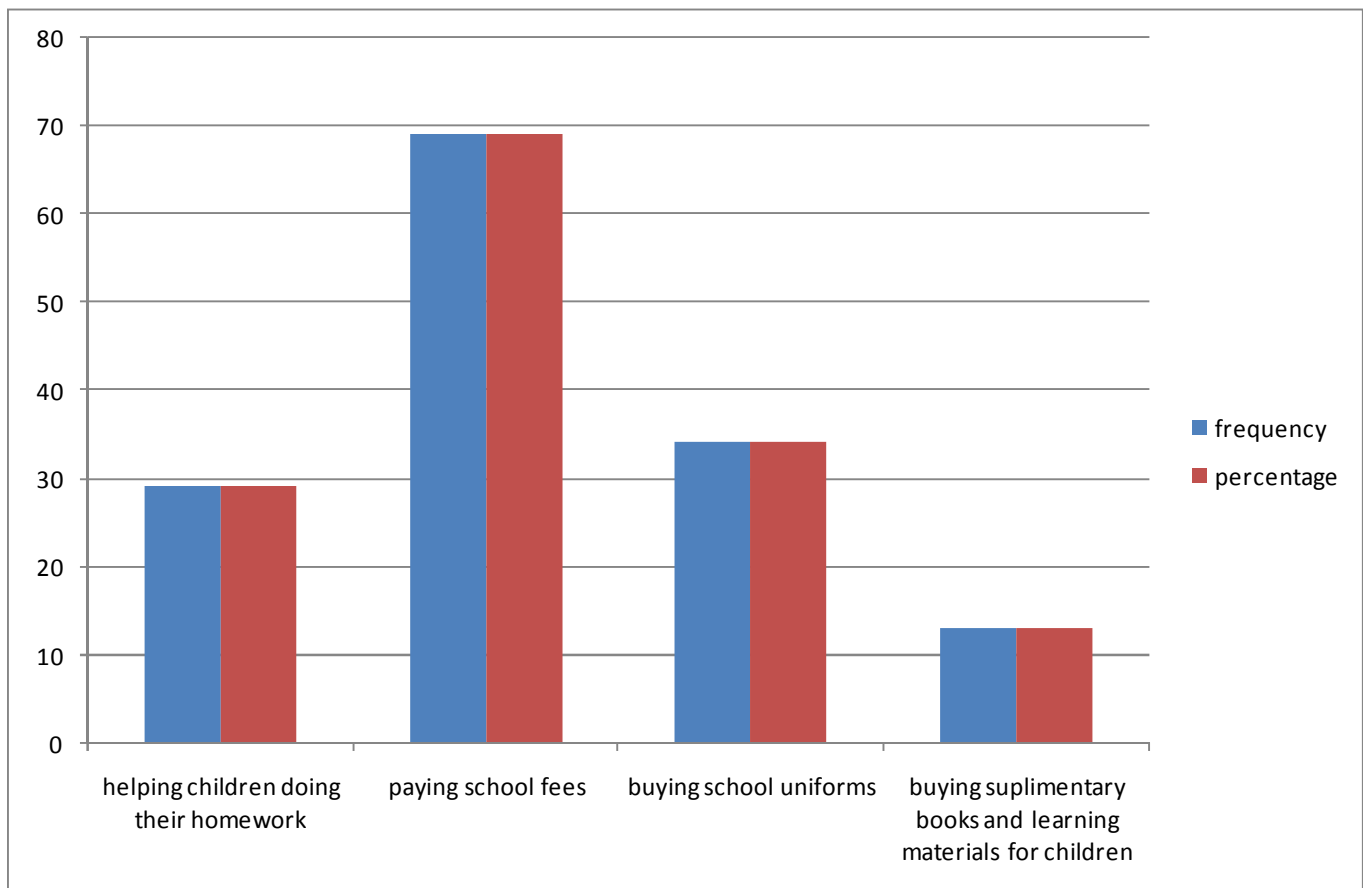


Figure 4: Type of parental involvement in the education of children

Figure 5 below shows that 53 respondents indicated that the school heads used democratic leadership style in running the school and only 4 said that their school heads used situational leadership style in running the school.

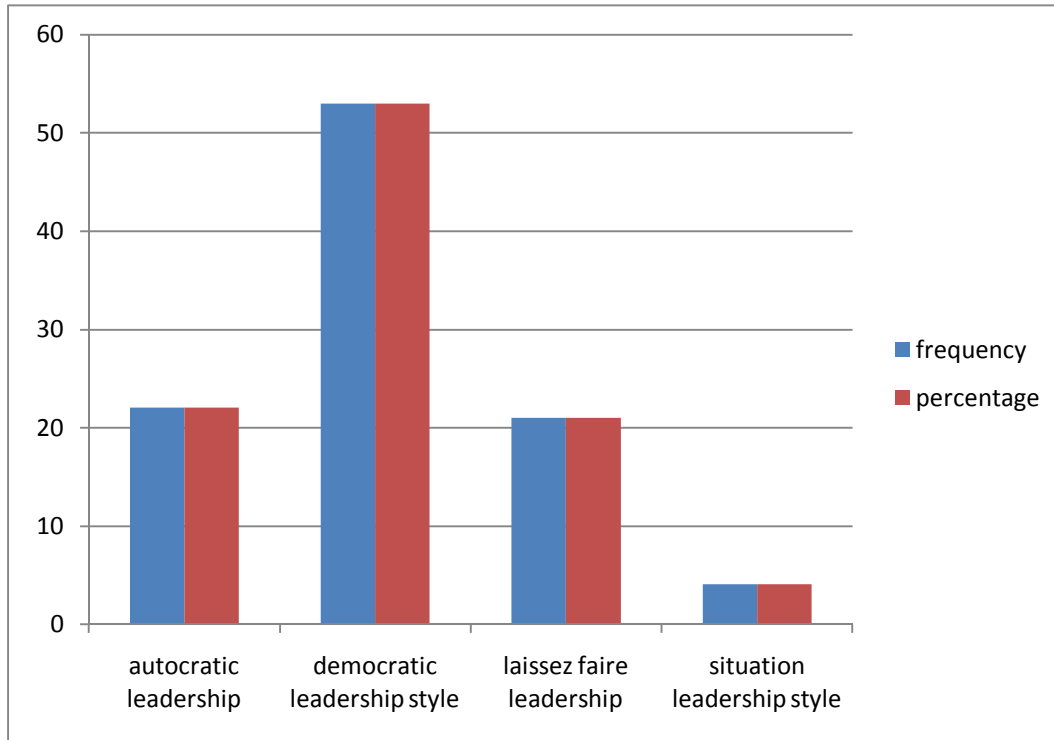


Figure 5: Leadership styles of the school heads in running the school

As shown in figure 5 above, most school heads confirmed that through the use of democratic leadership style, it was possible to exploit the teachers to their maximum potential. The school heads went on to assert that democratic leadership style reduced conflict between school administrators and their subordinates. That suggested that that school heads in the rural day schools were interested in development of relational trust at their work places to create an open climate that resulted in a high level of commitment by staff members in the teaching – learning exercise.

Through in-depth interviews, data was sourced from heads on whether their leadership styles motivated teachers to work hard in the teaching and learning activities. Teacher participants were asked if the leadership style of their heads influenced their implementation of teaching and learning. The data that was collected as presented on figure 5.

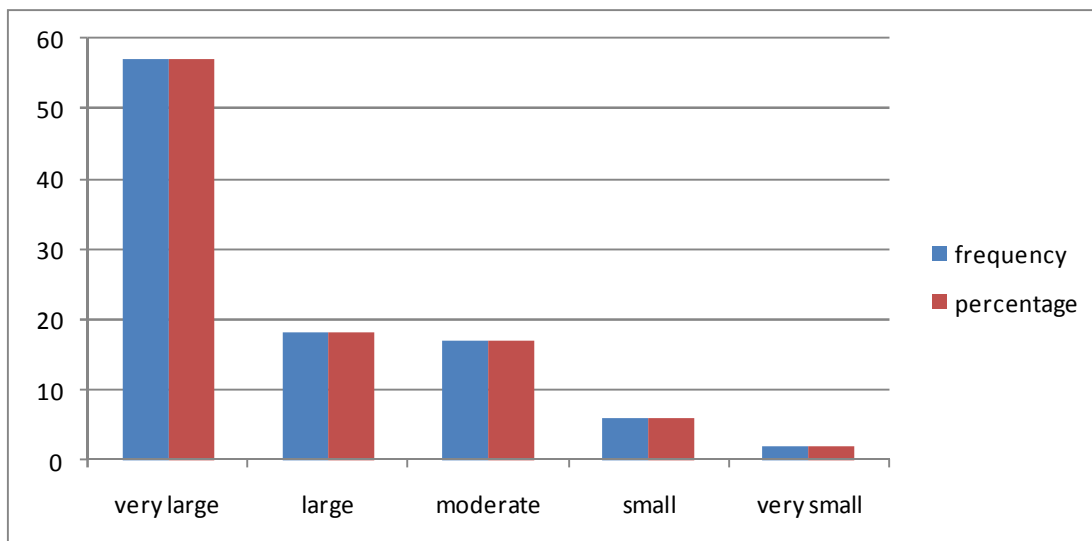


Figure 6: Influence of leadership style of the school head on teachers' implementation of the teaching-learning exercise

Figure 6 above shows that 57 respondents indicated that the influence of the leadership style of the school head on teachers' implementation of the teaching-learning exercise was to a very large extent and 18 respondents said it was to a large extent. It was only 6 and 2 respondents who indicated that the influence was to a small extent and very small extent respectively. This could suggest that the democratic leadership style which was applied by most school heads contributed to teacher low performance and consequently low pupil performance.

Table 1: Rating of influence of items i-iv on teachers' performance on pupils' learning exercise

	Strongly agree Frequency	%	Agree Frequency	%	Disagree Frequency	%	Strongly disagree Frequency	%	Total
i	26	26	18	18	38	38	18	18	100
ii	11	11	15	15	47	47	27	27	100
iii	10	10	16	16	45	45	29	29	100
iv	16	16	26	26	34	34	24	24	100
v	33	33	34	34	18	18	15	15	100
vi	30	30	34	34	21	21	15	15	100

Key for Table 1

Item No.	Item	Rate			
		1	2	3	4
I	The school recruited form ones without considering any particular criteria				
li	The size of 'O' Level classes were small				
lii	The school offered poor accommodation to its teaching staff.				
lv	The school offered teachers rewards for outstanding academic performance				
V	Level of discipline among students in the school is low and demotivating				
Vi	School duties are not well streamlined				

Table 1 above shows that 44 respondents agreed that the school recruited form 1 students without considering any particular criteria and 74 respondents registered negative impressions on the view that the form 4 classes were small. Sixty-seven respondents indicated that the level of discipline among students in the school was low and demotivating to teachers. On the view that school duties were not well streamlined, 64 respondents recorded positive impressions on the view. Sixty seven respondents indicated that the level of discipline among student was low and that affected teaching-learning. School heads confirmed this trend and said that rural day schools generally had discipline challenges. As community schools, government mandated that school administrators to allow all children without any form of discrimination to be granted places to attend lessons. For that reason, in some schools the classes were large. After all, the government still pursued the policy of education for all.

That strongly suggested that the policy of automatic promotion was a significant factor in student performance in rural day schools. It was noted that selection criterion for most schools in the rural areas was based on proof of being in school before. There was a scenario where a student with four units at grade seven was in the same form one class with another with thirty six units under the same roof with the same teacher. The class sizes were even bigger in rural day secondary schools as compared to the best performing boarding schools (Leedy, 2009).

In most interview sessions most respondents registered negative impressions on the issue whilst very few respondents recorded the opposite impressions. Some HODs said in face to face interviews with the researcher that some of their department members applied a number of times to be subject markers only to discover that their application forms ended in the school head's office.

Observed and interview statistics confirmed what was earlier on stated on the effect of the poor attitude of administrators towards professional development of their subordinates. There was a strong correlation between teachers who were involved in marking public examinations in various subject areas and the performance of their students in those subjects. In most of the rural schools very few subject teachers were involved in marking the 'O' level examinations.

Most respondents also indicated that the effectiveness of HOD in supervising professional performance of teachers in the department was below average. Only very few respondents indicated that the effectiveness of HOD in supervising professional performance of teachers in the department was good. This could be one key factor for low student performance at O-levels in rural day schools in the study area. Ineffective supervision of teacher

performance translated to low commitment of teachers in the teaching-learning exercise which yielded poor student performance. The interviews with school heads exposed that HODs were expected to frequently supervise the performance of teachers. School heads went on to say that there seemed to be some resistance by teachers since the withdrawal of incentives. In top-performing schools, the principal and other HODs routinely worked with struggling colleagues to improve their teaching skills. Teachers whose students were not progressing satisfactorily were observed and mentored by the principal/ or effective peers. Typically, they received feedback and advice regarding their teaching and classroom behavior practices. Principals and experienced teachers observed their performance, made recommendations, and helped with creation of personal improvement plans. The sessions and in-service training were often arranged by HODs

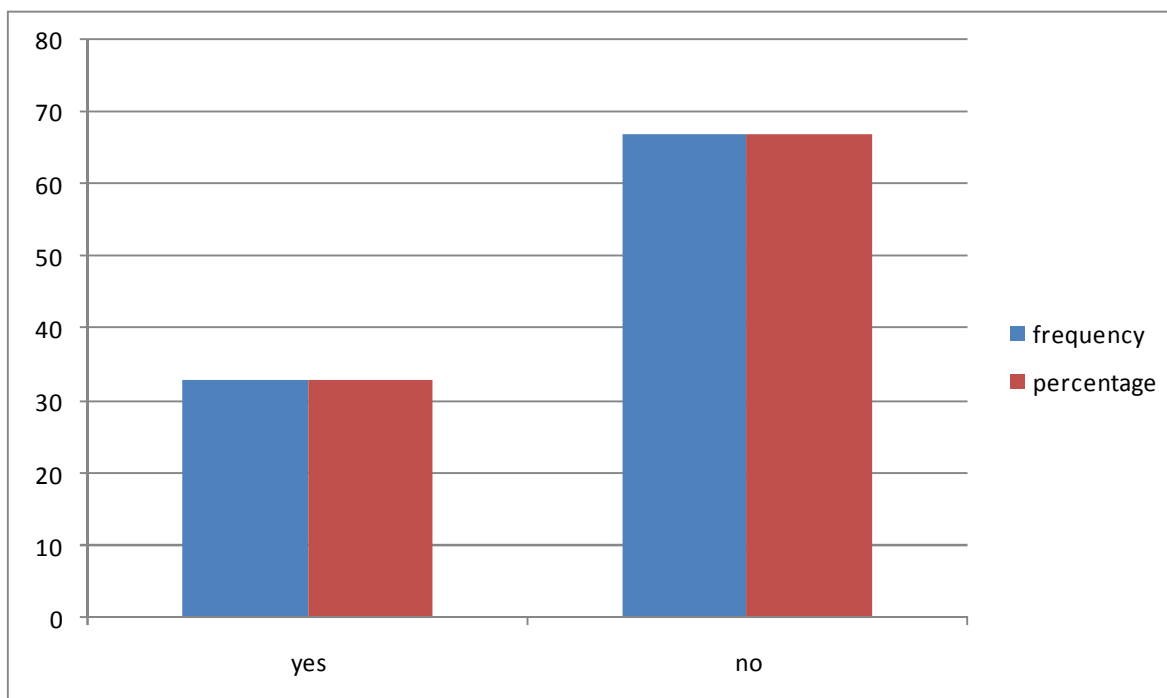


Figure 7: School having enough qualified and experienced teachers

Figure 7 show that 67 respondents indicated that the schools did not have enough qualified and experienced teachers and 33 respondents indicated that indeed the school had enough qualified and experienced teachers. When interviewed, the school heads said that this composition of staff strongly influenced the attitude, preparedness and involvement of teachers in the teaching- learning practice in their schools. The teachers at the school were divided into two groups. There was the submissive group made up of staff who minded their own business. They planned their work and delivered their lessons and their interest was to make pupils pass. The bulks of the teachers was demotivated and made little effort in the teaching- learning situation. Their battle was to frustrate all effort of the administration to improve the pupils' performance. They wished to discredit the administration especially the school head whom they wanted withdrawn from the school.

In view of findings noted in figure 7 above, it should be acknowledged that they were consistent with the view of Mujaji. (2012) who said that another important variable that determined the success of candidates in public examinations and educational performance in general was the teacher's qualification, experience, commitment and effectiveness. Nodoro, V. (2012)) postulated that pupil performance was largely due to teachers' knowledge, skills and attitude. If the teacher lacked some pedagogical skills, expectations and demands, the end result became disastrous (Ndhlela. 2012).).

Teacher related factors

Respondents were asked to rate the extent to which staff turnover affected their schools' performance. Interviews and documentary analysis revealed that the rate of staff turnover was very large at their schools. School heads indicated that the challenge of staff turn - over remained a permanent phenomenon in rural schools. The working conditions in rural schools are not attractive at all and teachers are always scouting for schools that offer them a better living and working environment. High staff turnover was not conducive to good performance and it affected

planning and student academic development. Due to poor amenities, distance from town and lack of electricity, teachers shunned rural schools. This could be a pointer at why the performance was low. Human capital stability was an important requirement for the success of an organization.

Resource and infrastructure

Teachers listed the teaching media they used for lesson instruction and data collected was presented graphically.

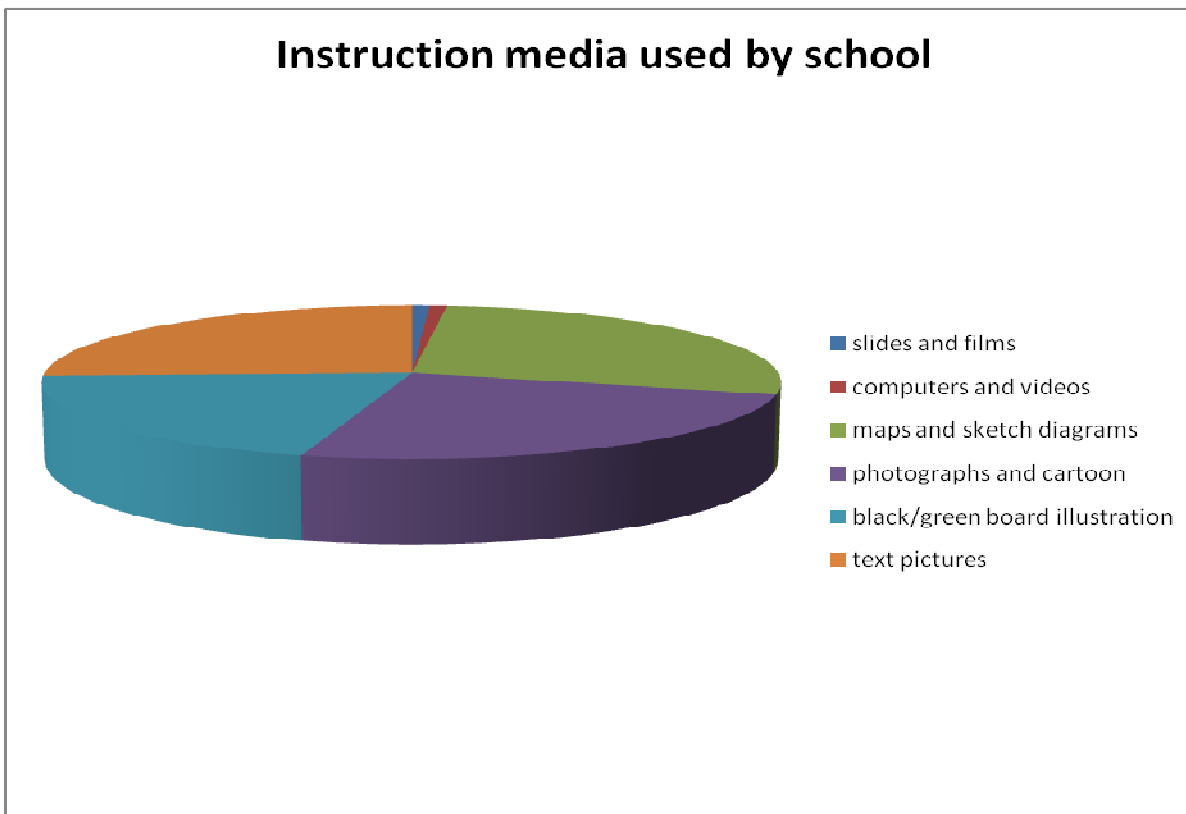


Figure 8: Teaching media used by respondents in lesson instruction

Figure 8 shows that 65 respondents indicated that teaching media used by respondents in lessons instruction were maps and sketch diagrams. Also 4 respondents indicated that teaching media used by respondents in lesson instruction were slides, films, computers and videos. School heads confirmed that their school had lack of educational materials. In some cases, teachers had to improvise. They pointed out that the low tuition was far from adequate to cater for educational needs of the schools. The schools sometime back relied on donors and to date, there was donor fatigue. This could be an indication of inadequacies that the rural day schools had in terms teaching-learning materials and consequent low student performance

Table 2: Teaching methods used by teachers

Teaching methods	Frequency	%
Debates	17	17
Experimental approach	29	29
Lectures	57	57
Panel discussions	16	16
Demonstrations	29	29
Games and simulations	16	16
Text reading	39	39
Field work	11	11
Use of resource persons	5	5

Table 2 above shows that 57 respondents used the lecture method and text reading recorded 39. Methods such as debate, demonstrations, field work, panel discussions, games and simulations registered a response rate of 20% each. This implies that teachers used approaches that did not promote student participation and collaborative learning which may not be the most ideal these days.

Resources and infrastructure

Table 3: Rating the quality of school textbooks available in terms of suitability in Promoting effective teaching-learning of students in the school

	Strongly agree Frequency	%	Agree Frequency	%	Disagree Frequency	%	Strongly disagree Frequency	%	Total
i	36	36	48	48	8	8	8	8	100
ii	33	33	50	50	10	10	3	3	100
iii	50	50	46	46	3	3	1	1	100
iv	32	32	49	49	9	9	10	10	100

Key for Table 3

Reason	Aspect	Ranking			
		1	2	3	4
i	The school has a wide variety of relevant basic text books for pupils				
ii	Resources have no bearing with any environmental issues				
iii	Textbook materials are well organized and sufficiently cover the syllabi				
iv	The language used in the textbooks acquired is simple for pupils to understand and do independent study				
v	The textbooks acquired have illustrations that help students to easily understand concepts				

Table 3 above shows that all aspects considered for rating of the quality of school textbooks available in terms of suitability in promoting effective teaching-learning of students in the school registered a response rate of above 80%. The aspect that shows that text book materials were well organized and sufficiently covered the syllabi registered positive impressions of 96%. That textbooks acquired had illustrations that helped students to easily understand concepts received the lowest favorable impressions with 81%. This implies that the schools had text books of the right quality and the question of text book type is not a relevant factor for occurrence of low O-level performance at the schools under study.

The availability of resources in most cases correlated positively with pupil performance. Most, if not all rural day secondary schools were under- resourced.

Student related factors

Respondents were asked to rate student behavior that affected their performance.

Table 4: Rating student behavior in the teaching- learning activities

	Strongly agree		Agree		Disagree		Strongly disagree		Total
	Frequency	%	Frequency	%	Frequency	%	Frequency	%	
I	26	26	40	40	30	30	4	4	100
li	32	32	30	30	34	34	4	4	100
lii	10	10	46	46	30	30	14	14	100
lv	36	36	33	33	20	20	11	11	100
v	31	31	27	27	20	20	22	22	100

Key for Table 4

Aspect	Ranking	1	2	3	4
i	Students do not regularly attend teaching – learning sessions				
ii	Students do not behave well during teaching – teaching sessions				
iii	Student concentration during study periods is low				
iv	Students show little commitment to assigned work				
v	Student level of independent research is low				

Table 4 above shows that over 60 respondents indicated in all the considered student behavioral aspects that student behaviour was not to expectation. The view that students showed little commitment to assigned work captured a response rate of 69% and that students did not regularly attend teaching – learning sessions recorded a response rate of 66%. These school heads confirmed that student discipline was a worry in their schools. Various type of misbehaviour was witnessed. They included coming late to school, bullying, drunkenness, substance abuse, name calling and theft. Some students even threatened to beat teachers. This could mean that low student discipline was a strong factor for low student performance.

DISCUSSION OF FINDINGS

The research findings revealed that there was a very low pass rate in ZIMSEC “O” Level at selected schools in Mutasa District. The causes for the low pass rate are in concurrence with some of the causes that were raised by other scholars in the review of related literature.

Teacher experience, age and qualifications

This research and research by other scholars revealed that experience, age and qualifications of teachers affected the schools pass rates. However, it is through my personal observation that, although they are usually referred to as inexperienced some young teachers are equipped with modern ways of teaching since they are computer literate and can download latest content on the internet to teach which some old teachers cannot do. It can also be argued that young teachers are more flexible to change unlike experienced teachers who are resistant to change and are so traditional that they stick to their old ways of teaching and rarely review notes that they give to students.

Students’ health and access to adequate food

Research findings revealed that students’ health and access to adequate food were not major factors that influenced the performance of schools. However, in the review of related literature, observation of Saiduddin, R. (2011).) it was stated that socio-economic status influenced parents’ attitude towards children’s education. They went on to say that families of lower socio - economic status generally had parents with lower education levels. As a result, these families had fewer resources to help their children academically. It was rare that such parents created opportunities to offer their children private tutorship or organise some for their children (Bell. 2013). Low income students usually attended schools with lower funding levels which resulted in reduced achievement, low motivation and much higher risks of educational failure when compared with their more affluent counter parts (Lipton. 2007).

Parental involvement in their children’s education

Parental involvement in their children’s education was found to be crucial towards academic performance, but this research depicted that parents were mainly involved in fees payment ignoring the rest of the other activities such as helping their children with homework. This is consistent with the observation of Harris (2013) who attributed poor performance in rural secondary schools to lack of parental support. There is a correlation between parental support in homework activities and performance of pupils. Students with parental support in homework achieved better than those without parental support. Cooper (2009) also found that there was a positive correlation between high achievement and quality time spent on homework.

Leadership styles adopted by school heads in running schools

Research of this study unearthed that the school heads used the democratic leadership style in running the schools. That created a mutual relationship with their subordinates. This was consistent to the views of Schneider (2002) who expressed that school administration entailed respect, competence, personal regard for others, and integrity. They

went on to say that sustained high performance in learning communities was based continuously on mutual relationships at work. This however was inconsistent with the observation of Schneider, F.W., J.A. Gruman and L.M. Coutts, (2012) who maintained that the situational leadership style has proved to be the most effective for productivity in organizations.

Influence of school head's leadership style on teacher's implementation of the teaching-learning activities

Most teacher respondents expressed the opinion that the leadership style that was adopted by their school heads influenced their teaching and learning to a very large extent. The low pass rates recorded at their schools could be clear evidence that the democratic leadership styles adopted by their Heads negatively affected their performance. Shumba, C. (2010) observed that rural schools exhibited gross management deficiencies with very low levels of planning, invisible and unstructured management styles and ineffective implementation of educational policies and the sum total of these challenges has seen quality as a process compromised with low levels of teacher pupil interaction, low levels of pupil participation and little of pupil engagement in the learning process. It was also observed that teachers were very vocal about being involved in and participating in the decision making process (Umameh. 2011). Meanwhile, a climate that encouraged group participation was favorable, most disengaged schools took advantage of the situation which compromise teaching-learning activities.

Head's support of professional development programmes

Research findings revealed that the suppression of staff professional development affected student performance. Heads of Departments were open to say that headmasters who genuinely supported teachers in career advancement were rare to come by. What was important was to provide an education that was in the best interest of the child. Limited professional development of teachers meant that the student in the long run was affected and academic performance lowered. Timothy, B.J. (2010) emphasized that staff development programmes for teachers were pivotal to their effectiveness and efficiency. They helped teachers to improve their instructional competencies and their capacity to curriculum delivery. Through staff development, teachers gained knowledge and skills which when applied in classroom assisted pupils in their performance. According to Jones (1995) it should be understood that quality of education and school results took place in the classroom and a number of factors came into play, that is competent, motivated teachers and schools that strive to provide environments conducive to learning. The fewer the staff development sessions, the lower the level of constructive interaction which compromises performance and the attainment of good results (Timothy. 2010).

Supervision of teachers' professional performance

Research findings revealed that school heads played an important role of teacher supervision and previous research by other scholars also supported this idea. Williams and Kirst (2006) found that leaders of high performing schools in California reviewed a variety of student tests results to evaluate the effectiveness of their teachers. (Larsen 1987). Heads must have a respectable knowledge base with regard to curriculum and to recognize effective classroom instruction and provide programmes that address individual student needs, supervision should be done by HODs who are subject specialists.

Impact of teaching media on student performance

The teaching media used by teachers was not ideal. They lacked resources to improve the teaching media. Okafor, M. (2006) said the quality of teaching media also played a pivotal role in the effective transfer of knowledge and inculcation of required skills, values and attitudes into the learners. It was emphasized that without the adequate use of teaching- learning aids, the quality of lesson delivery was compromised. Professor Sibanda on his official opening remarks of the just ended National Commercial Teachers Workshop in Bulawayo said, " Stop teaching and let the students learn." (Commercial Teachers Workshop Bulawayo 8 -10 April 2015). Cooperative Learning and self discovery were seen to be very effective in enhancing student understanding and acquisition of skills. The approaches cultivated in learners a high level of individual accountability, participation and students got immediate, unambiguous and meaningful feedback (Timothy. 2010).

Availability of resources and infrastructure

The pupil text book ratio was good according to research findings. These results were inconsistent with views raised by most scholars that in most developing countries lack of sufficient financial resources is a common feature. It was

often difficult to procure adequate teaching material resources especially books. There was no substitute to subject literature. Literature use in study paved way to acquisition of research skills among educates (Tuckman 2005). In the Zimbabwean case, a donor agent (UNICEF) donated at least 6 core-textbooks to every student at both Zimbabwe Junior Certificate and Ordinary level in all schools. It was only weak leadership and management systems in most schools that resulted in the loss of most of the books.

Effect of student behaviour on teaching-learning activities

Research findings revealed that poor student behaviour affected the performance of students resulting in a low pass rate. Research has indicated that most rural secondary school students do not put purpose first and this has been linked to attitude and poor family and community support (Adell 2012). Today's youths are exposed to drugs at a tender age due to peer pressure and idleness which affects their concentration and commitment levels. The boys and girls in rural day secondary schools are generally not intrinsically motivated to do well except for a few. Lack of motivation results in some students not attending lessons and avoiding doing homework (Munn. 2009).

CONCLUSIONS

Level of the high failure

- ❖ The magnitude of the problem of high failure rate in the rural day secondary schools prompted the researcher to investigate the causes of poor performance in the O-level examination. The average pass rate in the schools were 2010 - 7.23%; 2011 - 8.11%; 2012 - 10.12%, 2013-12, 1% and 2014 – 12.8%.

Economic factors affecting educational performance

- ❖ These findings could mean households encountered hardships in securing adequate resources which affected parental involvement in the education of their children.

Parental involvement in their children's educational activities

- ❖ The low level of parental involvement in the student teaching-learning exercise compromised the level of performance of students in their education.

Influence of head's leadership style on teaching and learning

- ❖ The democratic leadership style which was applied by most school heads contributed to teacher low performance and consequently low students' performance.

Influence of professional development on teaching –learning activities

- ❖ Ineffective professional development programmes implemented by school administrators crippled teachers' performance which negatively affected student performance.
- ❖ Weaknesses in the internal system of quality assurance in the rural day schools contributed to ineffective teacher performance and consequent student performance.

Effectiveness of teacher supervision

- ❖ . Ineffective supervision of teacher performance translated to low commitment of teachers in the teaching-learning exercise which yielded poor student performance.

Availability of resources and infrastructure

- ❖ The lack of adequate and experienced staff in various subject areas was a significant factor for student low performance.
- ❖ Poor working conditions in rural schools demotivated staff and resulted in high staff turnover, this caused low performance among O-level students.

- ❖ Inadequacies in teaching-learning infrastructure and learning materials in the rural day schools led to low performance among O-level students in rural day schools in Mutasa District
- ❖ The schools had text books of the right quality and quantity, making the issue of text book unavailability an irrelevant factor for occurrence of low O-level performance at the schools under study.
- ❖ . The situation on availability and state of learning rooms was a significant factor for the occurrence of low performance of students.
- ❖ This implied that the rural day schools had the basic infrastructure to promote teaching-learning. It was feared that inadequacies greatly compromised the exercise.
- ❖

Teacher use of teaching media

Teachers' approaches and media use did not promote student participation and collaborative learning. That may not be the most ideal, thereby contributing to O-level student low performance

Influence of student behaviour on performance

- ❖ The low level of student discipline in rural day schools in Mutasa was a significant factor for low performance at O-level. Forms of indiscipline included coming late to school, bullying, drunkenness, substance abuse, name calling and theft.

AUTHORS' CONTRIBUTIONS

From the conclusions that were made, recommendations were made to benefit the following stakeholders and players in the education fraternity.

- ❖ Efforts should be made to sensitize parents to support their children by paying school fees on time, providing them with uniforms and stationaries, extra learning materials and engaging them in private tutorship
- ❖ School authorities should apply the situational leadership style in which they deal accordingly with subordinates depending on their behavior and performance.
- ❖ The school Heads should be encouraged to supervise functions of HODs so that they maintain inventories of the ETF books donated by UNICEF to guard against text book losses and vandalism.
- ❖ School heads should staff develop their subordinates on their conditions of service and the various statutory instruments that govern the didactic situation in the secondary school.
- ❖ The Zimbabwean government, through the Ministry of Primary and Secondary Education should reverse the policy of automatic promotion of students at O-level and ensure that during the two years of secondary education, students are directed to areas of specialization according to interest and ability.
- ❖ The Zimbabwe government should re-introduce the ZJC examination to close the lull between the grade seven examinations and the ordinary level examination which is too long to maintain a fluent and meaningful continuum for students in their preparation.
- ❖ Workshops should be held to sensitize school administrators on need for implementation of effective professional development programmes in schools to improve on teacher performance which will positively affect student performance.
- ❖ Workshops should be held to sensitize school administrators to strengthen internal systems of quality assurance in schools to ensure effective teacher performance which will positively influence student performance.
- ❖ The employer should introduce a rural allowance and a rural retention allowance to lure and retain staff in the rural day schools.
- ❖ The Zimbabwe government should re-introduce the incentive in the schools
- ❖ Responsible authorities should improve teacher living conditions in schools and develop teaching-learning infrastructure in the rural day schools that fall under their jurisdiction.

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