



**TEACHERS PRESENT IN SCHOOL BUT ABSENT IN CLASS:  
UTILIZATION AND 'SILENT EROSION' OF LEARNING TIME  
IN THE IMPLEMENTATION OF THE CURRICULUM  
IN MONGU DISTRICT OF ZAMBIA**

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**Abstract:**

Curriculum implementation in Zambia is faced with a lot of challenges ranging from poor funding, lack of appropriate and adequate teaching and learning resources, lack of qualified teachers in some subjects such as computer studies and sciences, poor school infrastructure especially in most rural areas, low teacher morale and lack of specialized teaching and learning resources for learners with special educational needs. However, one important curriculum implementation resource that research seems to ignore is learning time is utilized. The purpose of this study was to examine secondary school teachers' utilization of learning time in the implementation of the curriculum. The researchers used a concurrent embedded design of the mixed methods research approach. A questionnaire and interview guides were used to collect data from teachers and secondary school head teachers respectively. While a focus group discussion guide was used to collect data from learners. Data was then analyzed using themes and descriptive statistics. The findings revealed that although teachers would be present in school, they spent most of the time attending to non-classroom teaching activities such as organizing learners in sports, staff meetings and invigilation of national examinations. It was also revealed that the times that they would be in class, teachers would most of the times start the lesson about eight minutes late. Researchers in this study concluded that several non-teaching factors affected effective utilization of learning time in the implementation of the curriculum. It was therefore; recommended that there should be proper review of how learning time was being managed in the schools in the province.

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## 1. Introduction

Scholars like Onyeachu (2008) have argued that, no matter how well a curriculum of any subject is planned, designed and documented, its implementation is what will bring it to life. The reason put forward is that, the problem of most curriculum programmes are mostly clearly noticed at the implementation stage. The focus of curriculum developers therefore, should not only be concentrated on the quality of design and development but also on the implementation process. In order to have relevant and high quality education, comprehensive and deliberate efforts should be put in place to ensure that effective curriculum implementation is achieved. One of the signs to effective curriculum implementation is seen by how teachers utilize time that is meant for learning. Mulenga (2018:20) defined a curriculum as;

*“All the selected, organized, integrative, innovative and evaluative educational experiences provided to learners consciously or unconsciously under the school authority in order to achieve the designated learning outcomes which can be achieved as a result of learners’ growth, maturation and learning meant to be best utilized for life in a changing society.”*

Even from the definition of a curriculum such as the one put forward by Mulenga (2018) there are indications that time is of importance if learning outcomes are to be achieved since these are planned for. In the definition it is stated that learners should be provided with educational experiences. In order for this to happen quality time to be spent on learning is of essence. Thus, all efforts should be focused on effective time utilization because for every activity to lead to quality education such activities are time dependent as Lubasi (2019) had put it. The study being reported in this paper focused on teacher utilization of learning time by analyzing factors that disrupted learning in schools, since learning time provides the learner with the opportunity to acquire worthwhile and desirable knowledge, skills, values and attitudes needed in their everyday lives.

The amount of time that learners spend on learning activities has a strong bearing on how much they learn and eventually affects their academic performance (Ministry of Education, 1996). More effective time management, supported by adequate professional development of teachers, translates to improved quality of teaching and learning of the learners (Gettinger, 1995). Additionally, more engaged time for learning, allow broader and deeper coverage of curricula, as well as more individualized learning support. However, studies show that students’ official annual learning time in most parts of the world is almost never completed in classrooms and the losses can be tremendous (Benavot, 2004). In Zambia, the Ministry of General Education through the 2013 Curriculum Framework stipulated the number of hours and periods that schools

should teach specific subjects. Failing to account for proper use of time in learning means missed learning opportunities for learners.

Information about how teachers and students use their time in the classroom is vital to the development of educational policies that should guide the improvement in the quality of education. Although the time a teacher allocates and uses for teaching and learning activities is important, the amount of time that students actually spend on learning-related activities is critical for improving learning outcomes.

Though curriculum implementation also involves the assessment of learners, the time that is spent on national examinations and their marking in Zambia has been of great concern. This is because of the negative consequences it has on the non-examination classes or grades which are supposed to be learning at the time national examinations are done. Kelly (1999) postulated that, in most schools, a lot of time was taken up by activities such as school weekly assemblies, meetings held by visiting government officials, health talks, variety shows held during lesson time. In addition, teacher in-service programmes which lasted the whole day while learners were either sent away or asked to stay away from school, unplanned holidays such as when a teacher dies, teachers' day, women's day, mother's day and many other unforeseen eventualities that took place at the expense of teaching and learning all contributed to the loss of learning time. Kelly made these observations almost two decades ago and since then the educational landscape in Zambia has extensively changed. For instance, from 2013 to 2017 the Ministry of General Education reviewed the curriculum from a content based one to a competency based curriculum. This has immense implications on how teaching and learning is to be done. Mulenga and Kabombwe (2019:118-119) explained that;

*"The vision of the Zambian education sector was that through the competency based curriculum, learners will be expected to acquire three critical educational elements namely; worthwhile skills, appropriate attitudes and applicable knowledge which make up competencies. Competencies are abilities critical to the performance of specific tasks. To become competent at anything, a learner needs to: know something about it, have the skills to apply the knowledge and have the right attitudes that ensure s/he will do it well."*

What Mulenga and Kabombwe (2019) referred to was that there was a shift in the focus of learning from mere memorization or recall of information to application of tangible and visible learning activities. For this to effectively be achieved there is a lot of time required and its prudent utilization by teachers. This study focused on Mongu district as a way of delimiting the study and also finding out if what Kelly had noticed many years ago is still the case.

## 2. Brief Review of Related Literature

Curriculum implementation is a very crucial stage of any curriculum development process. The problems that may arise during implementation can cause disparities in the intended curriculum, implemented curriculum and achieved curriculum. Lockheed and Verspoor, (1991) postulated that the disparity between the official, intended instructional time and actual patterns of time implementation in schools and classrooms, as well as the factors affecting this disparity, were fundamental issues that deserved scholarly attention. The duo observed that among the factors that caused such disparities was how teaching and learning time was done. In relation to the use of time in the implementation of the school curriculum, Abadzi (2007) also contended that curricular objectives were prescribed for coverage within specific time frames, therefore the implication is that learners should be engaged in learning 100% of the time that has been allocated for learning. It was therefore, imperative to have researched data on the prevailing situation regarding the time spent on teaching and learning so as to maximize time for learning since it is the core business of learning institutions such as schools.

Since a curriculum is planned, Miller and Seller (1990) stated that curriculum implementation is a process of applying the curriculum planning (programme) within a specific time frame in the form of learning activity involves a student-teacher interaction in the context of the school environment. Teachers therefore, play a very important role in the planning and utilization of time for learning so as to effectively facilitate learner's acquisition of desirable knowledge, skills, values and attitudes as Mulenga and Luangala (2015) had also put it.

There are equally other factors that support successful curriculum implementation in the school. In view of this, effective curriculum implementation is the one that reflects what the learner eventually takes away from an educational experience. Educational facilities are identified as one of the factors that support curriculum implementation. School facilities are basic structures and facilities necessary for effective teaching and learning. Some scholars seem to have focused much on lack of teaching resources, funds and equipment as factors that can affect the implementation process without factoring in the aspect of time usage. However, it is a fact that time is one of the resources that can adversely affect any implementation of the school curriculum if not well utilized even if the school may have all the needed school facilities, equipment, resources and qualified teachers.

Studies on the utilization of learning time in Zambia among teachers are quite scanty. Mkandawire (2010) outlined factors such as unavailability of school facilities to be a major impediment to curriculum implementation. Though time loss was also listed as one of the factors that affected curriculum implementation, Mkandawire did not explain the factors and effected loss of learning time on curriculum implementation. In his study on the provision of quality secondary education in Zambia through the Academic Production Unit (APU) Mulenga (2006) observed that time for implementing the programme was not adequate. From the two studies it can be deduced that no

attention seems to have been given to the utilization of time in the curriculum implementation process. As such, in this study, the researchers sought to bridge the gap by assessing how teachers used teaching and learning time to implement the school curriculum.

### **3. Research Methodology**

Scholars of this study employed the concurrent embedded design of the mixed methods approach where quantitative and qualitative data were collected, analyzed and interpreted (Creswell & Plano Clark, 2011). Quantitative data were mostly derived from teachers' questionnaires which had both closed and open ended questions. Qualitative data were derived from students' focus group discussions and head teachers' interviews and the observation checklist for lesson starts. The design was found to be appropriate as it helped the researchers to establish teachers' views on the factors that affected how they utilized time for learning and brought out rich verbatim data based on teachers, students and head teachers' responses which further helped the researcher to understand and appreciate the research problem. Comparing the two data sets during the discussion and interpretation stages helped the researchers have an in-depth understanding of how learning time was utilized and lost in schools. This study had more of the qualitative data than the quantitative one because the quantitative data was mostly used to support the qualitative data. It is for this reason that the embedded design was preferred. The study was carried out in Mongu district which is the provincial headquarter of western province of Zambia. Studies conducted in western province have indicated very high failure rates and yet none of them seemed to consider how learning time was utilized in schools in this province. Mongu district was therefore purposively sampled because it had a high number of secondary schools as compared to other districts in the province (Ministry of General Education, 2016). The target population comprised all the 22 public secondary schools in Mongu district, all the 22 head teachers of these schools, all the 550 teachers and all the 6000 secondary school grade twelve students in these schools. The study targeted grade twelve students because it is a critical stage as it is the last grade in secondary school and thus students at this stage were mature enough and thus were in a better position to understand and make judgements about how learning time was used in their schools.

In Mongu district, schools are categorized according to five administrative zones. Thus researchers used these zones as clusters from which two schools were sampled using simple random sampling giving the sample two schools from each zone hence having ten schools for the sample. Head teachers of each school were purposively sampled giving the study ten head teachers. Using the school teachers' registers, teachers were stratified into stratum of male and female and then using simple random sampling ten teachers were sampled from each stratum thus giving the study twenty teachers from each school. Thus the whole study had 200 teachers. The same procedure was used for students using a school register they were stratified into male and female then using simple random sampling ten students were sampled from each school thus

giving the study 100 students. Stratified and simple random sampling was used in both cases so as to give teachers and students equal chances of being part of the study (Cohen, Manion & Morrison, 2000). Table 1 gives a summary of the target population and the sample size.

**Table 1:** Summary of the Target Population and Actual Sample of the Study

Participants	Target Population	Sample Size	Sampling Method
Head Teachers	16	10	Purposive
Teachers	550	200	Stratified and Simple Random
Students	6000	100	Stratified and Simple Random
<b>Total</b>	<b>6566</b>	<b>310</b>	

Data collection was done by use of questionnaires for teachers and interview schedules for head teachers and a focus group interview guide for students. There was also an observation check list to help monitor the use of time at the beginning of each of the 50 lessons that were observed, 5 from each school. The researchers conducted face to face interviews with the head teachers which lasted for at least thirty to forty minutes. Focus group discussions were also conducted in each school with students. In both the interviews and focus group discussions the researchers took notes and recorded the discussions. Recordings were done with the permission of the participants. The classroom observation schedule enabled the researchers to monitor how time was used during the first twenty minutes of each lesson. Teachers were given questionnaires which were collected the following day with the help of the school administrators. Data was analyzed using descriptive statistics of frequencies and percentages and emerging themes. The analysis was done this way so as to describe what was happening in schools in relation to the utilization of time for learning.

Ethical considerations involved outlining the content of the research and what was required of participants then informed consent was obtained and confidentiality ensured. The researchers obtained ethical clearance from the Directorate of Research and Graduate Studies of the University of Zambia and an authorization letter and research permit from the District Education Board Secretary of Mongu district. The letters were used to get permission from different head teachers to conduct the study in their schools. In this study, privacy and confidentiality of the schools and participants was highly respected such that all responses were confidential and anonymous.

#### 4. Results and Discussions

It is an obvious and logical fact that when allocated teaching and learning time is used effectively, this is an important condition to improve student learning and achievement. However, in this study we give evidence that a significant proportion of allocated instruction time was lost in many ways in most schools that we visited in Mongu district. Financiers and leaders of educational institutions should not assume that because teachers are present in school then teaching and learning is obviously taking

place. In this study we came across most of the situations that pointed to the fact that teachers would be present in school but absent in class and present in class but allowing time to go to waste. These situations are what we called 'silent erosion' of teaching and learning time since no authority seemed to take any action about it.

#### **4.1. Present in School but Absent in Class**

Njoroge (2012) postulated that the attainment of timely coverage of the syllabus was mainly achieved through teachers' commitment and hence schools should consider putting more emphasis on teachers attending to their teaching duties and not simply reporting for work. In this study, explanations for teacher absenteeism varied considerably according to participants. When pupils were asked to confirm if teachers taught them regularly, in all the focus groups conducted students mentioned that some teachers were not regular and students wondered why. In most of the focus groups students explained that teachers reported for work though some did not teach them. For instance, in three groups students even got emotional as one of them said that;

*"Some teachers are always in school but rarely attended to classes. They would usually be available in school but found chatting in the staff room and attend to other issues within the school."*

This was actually confirmed by a number of students as one of them mentioned that;

*"Our teacher of English is also our patron for sports, he has never missed any sporting sessions but he rarely come to class to teach. This is very bad. When he comes he would mostly give us a very long exercise to do without giving us much explanation. Then he would spend some time on his phone, most likely on WhatsApp."*

In another discussion a student mentioned that he was reprimanded by teachers when he asked them to go to class as he explained that;

*"I am a class prefect myself and some of our teachers whom I have followed at the staff room have gotten mad at me after reminding them that we were waiting for them in class. They think that I am rude."*

In interviews with Head teachers they also confirmed that a significant proportion of teachers were absent or arrived late at school. Head teachers actually seemed to justify some of the teachers' absentees from class as one head teacher said that;

*"Sometimes it is not the teacher to blame but the system. Teachers are also required to attend to policy issues and other official duties such as marking of exams and so forth."*

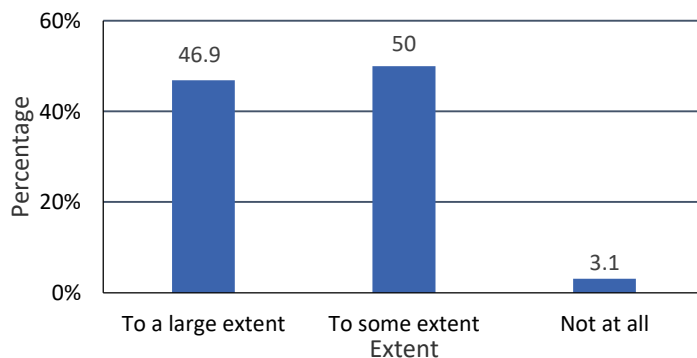
One other head teacher mentioned that;

*“Some teachers would be absent if salaries delayed because they may not have transport money to get to school and you know that a teacher’s salary is nothing to sign home about. Or in other cases come late due to distances from schools since they are not accommodated near the school for lack of enough teachers’ houses.”*

These findings confirm what Benavot (2002) revealed in his study about factors that contributed to poor provision of quality education in developing countries that many teachers were present in school but absent from their classrooms and other times absent because of other non-teaching duties. This finding pointed to the need for renewed attention to monitoring and supervision of curriculum implementation in schools by school leaders. If head teachers confirmed that some teachers did not attend to their classes and even seemed to accept it then nothing much can change. Head teachers should not just theoretically know that effective use of learning time is a potential driver for learner achievement but also be reminded that the sole purpose of a school is teaching and learning as express in the 1992 education policy document, Focus on Learning (Ministry of Education, 1992). Both students and head teachers confirmed that some teachers would be present in school but not teach. In the following sections we provide some of the findings that authenticate these views.

#### 4.2. National Examinations and End of Term Tests

Assessment is one of the most important aspects of curriculum implementation that is used to measured and find out whether a learner has acquired the designated skills, values, attitudes and knowledge. While assessment for learning, formative assessment, was not complained about by all participants, there were concerns about assessment of learning, summative assessment. Teachers were asked to indicate on a likert scale the extent to which national examinations and end of term tests contributed to the loss of time for teaching and learning. Teachers’ responses were as presented in figure 1.



**Figure 1:** Percentage distribution of teachers’ response on the extent to which national examinations and end of term tests contributed to the loss of learning time



The findings revealed that 46.9% of the teachers were of the view that exams and tests contributed to the loss of teaching and learning time to a large extent, 50% indicated that to some extent teaching and learning was affected while only 3.1% indicated that exams and tests did not affect teaching and learning time at all. Thus we can conclude from this that summative assessment which was done in form of national examinations and end of term tests did contribute to the loss of learning time in a very significant way. The Zambian primary and secondary school calendar is divided into three terms of approximately three months which commence in January. In follow up questions to this issue in open ended questions one teachers mentioned that;

*"We have 13 weeks in each term however for term one and term two we lose an average of two weeks doing end of term tests in each term. I wonder why students have to stop learning for two weeks just for the sake of writing tests. When it comes to third term almost the whole term is taken by national examinations for grades 12 and 9."*

This view was also shared by another teacher who indicated that;

*"In term three we only teach seriously for two weeks while the rest of the time is spent on examinations. Actually we are told that we should finish the syllabus in term two. This is confusing because the syllabus has all the three terms loaded with content to teach in each of the 13 weeks that each term has. So how are we expected to finish the syllabus in 26 weeks which is meant to be taught in 39 weeks. This examination thing is a mess."*

Another teacher mentioned that;

*"In term two some teachers are involved in invigilation of General Certificate Examinations (GCE) for external candidates that means that such teachers do not teach for almost two to three weeks. Moreover, there are also some teachers who go for marking of the same examinations for close to two weeks, all that is time lost for teaching and learning."*

When asked during the interviews all the head teachers expressed concern that so much time for learning was lost during examinations for grades 9 and 12. One of them actually said that;

*"To start with the Examination Council of Zambia need to work closely with the Ministry of General Education in consultation with teachers when coming up with the examination time tables because they do not seem to take into consideration the time that is meant for teaching and learning. The teachers that they expect to invigilate these examinations are the same teachers who are supposed to teach the non-examination classes thus taking almost nine weeks of the term to examinations. This is detrimental to the provision of quality education."*

There are clear indications from the responses of participants that a lot of learning time was consumed through conducting examination instead of teaching and learning. The head teachers helplessly expressed concern with the time tabling of the examinations as they indicated that it was beyond their control. There seem to be a tendency among education authorities in the Zambian education system of not consulting teachers about curriculum issues. In their study in teacher involvement in curriculum development in Zambia, Mulenga and Mwanza (2019:38) observed that;

*"...teachers are not given such chances and thus their voices are only heard as cries in the school wilderness. Teachers know what to teach and how they can contribute to the improvement of the curriculum development processes in Zambia but the system seems to ignore them and only thinks of them at implementation stage. Thus teachers feel that their school and classroom experiences, skills and knowledge are underutilized."*

Teachers and head teachers actualize the curriculum, they put it into practice and thus making decisions about curriculum implementation without taking their view into consideration is likely to be detrimental to the provision of quality education. Despite the important role assessment plays in education, there was a need to have a proper plan so that examinations time did not interfere with learning. After all the definition of assessment speaks it all. Assessment is a process of finding out the extent to which learners have acquired desirable skills, values attitudes and knowledge. Thus, assessment should service learning. In order for assessment to be of use effective learning should precede it. Otherwise what is the purpose of spending so much time on assessment when there was no learning taking place? Ugwulashi (2013) explained that the realization of educational goals despite the amount of resources involved is likely to remain ineffective without good time management. Learners during focus group discussions also complained that almost the whole of term three was spent on examinations and not learning because most of the teachers were involved in invigilating exams instead of teaching. An interesting comment from one group of students was made by a student that;

*"In these schools there is so much excitement about examinations and yet there is very little learning that we are doing. We have been made to believe that passing examination is what education is all about. Which is not true."*

This was a brilliant observation from a student who was actually wondering what the education he was getting was all about. There is need for proper time tabling of the examinations so that time for learning is not reduced or lost. Ugwulashi (2013) further suggested that, school activities could easily be achieved by the use of time tables which enable activities to be simultaneously carried out without conflict in roles and space by different actors. Top ranking countries in the provision of quality education such as Finland emphasize teaching and learning rather than assessment of learning. In other ways they emphasize assessment for learning which is an integral part of teaching and

learning. While the Zambian education system is busy wasting so much time and resources on standardized tests but getting very little out of it, best and high performing education systems in the world such as those in Finland concentrate on formative assessment which is done as part of quality teaching and learning as Darling-Hammond et al (2017:35) explained what was happening in the Finish education system that;

*“School based assessments are curriculum-embedded activities intended to engage students in research and inquiry. Currently all schoolchildren are also encouraged to conduct self-assessment of their learning. Thus assessment for learning which guides student reflection and revision is used as often as assessment of learning.”*

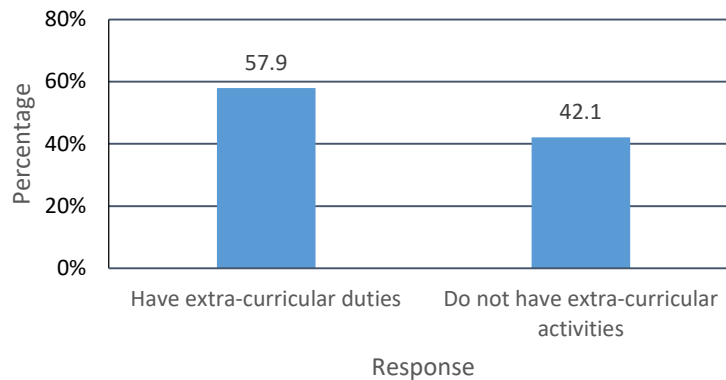
The Zambian education system needs to learn from such success stories instead of taking decisions which do not yield any tangible results. Having adopted the competency based curriculum since 2013 Zambian education decision makers and funders should understand that the measure of success in such a system is determined by the applicable skills, values, attitudes and knowledge that learners acquire and not how much they score in an examination. Mulenga and Kabombwe (2019:119) explained that;

*“The competency-based curriculum emphasizes the various approaches adopted in learning such as active learning, field trips, role play, debates, demonstration, question and answer techniques and teacher exposition.”*

To achieve what the duo referred to would require that more time is spent on teaching and learning rather than on the preparation and administration of standardized national examinations.

### **4.3. Teacher Duties in School**

Teachers were asked to indicate if they had extra school duties to attend to which contributed to the loss of time for teaching. Their responses indicated that most of the them had other duties in the school that at times reduced on their time to teach the learners. Figure 2 show that 57.9% of the teachers had extra duties while 42.1% had no extra duties besides teaching.



**Figure 2:** Percentage distribution of Teacher's responses on duties in school

In the open ended question teachers who had duties in the school mentioned the different kinds of duties they were involved in. Such duties included coordination of sporting activities, guidance and counselling of the learners, attending to pupils boarding issues such as buying food and supervising production unit projects such as school gardens. Other teachers also noted that, punishing pupils during class wasted time. These finding agreed with Kipkoech (2017) whose study on time management strategies in Kenyan schools also discovered that, it was common to find teachers and learners engaging in activities during teaching and learning time which were not planned for in the course of the school teaching programme for instance, staff meetings, departmental meetings, games, symposia, local leaders address, guidance and counselling, farm activities and cleaning. The findings were also similar to the findings by Farbman (2015) who also established that time was lost due to non-instructional issues, such as interruptions from outside the class, fundraising events and other school-wide activities. In many occasions, these hours are never recovered and go a long way in negatively affecting syllabus coverage and ultimately learner achievement.

Our focus on learning time loss as an indicator of educational opportunity is grounded in a long-standing body of research on the importance of learning time for academic achievement. Unless time is regarded as one of the most important resource in teaching and learning we will still continue to have research results giving us similar findings such as the ones in this study and other studies that we have referred to. However, from the findings in this study learning time among educational staff in Mongu district seemed not to be regarded as a resource.

#### 4.4. Sporting Activities

Co-curricular activities such as sports have a number of values which are educational and contribute to psychological development, social and physical development, recreational and cultural wellbeing of students. It is the belief of the curriculum planners that these are of importance to the learner's academic soundness. However, despite their importance to the learners, the findings in this study showed that the time these co-curricular activities were conducted consumed much of the teaching and

learning time. This was because national, provincial, district and zonal secretaries, coaches and supervisors were teachers from various schools and had to attend to sports strategic planning meetings, evaluations and for other purposes as required by their respective committees. For instance, one head teacher mentioned that;

*"To plan for sporting activities such as ball games and athletics several meetings are held starting at school, zonal, district, provincial and national levels and such meetings take a lot of time and staff who are teachers. In the process a lot of learning time is lost since such teachers will not be meeting their learners."*

All the head teachers mentioned that hosting sporting activities meant losing time for learning as one of them said that;

*"A school hosting such games at district level meant that teaching and learning would not take place the week such activities are taking place in that particular school."*

Being a provincial headquarters of western province in Zambia Mongu district hosts sports competitions for all the districts at provincial level each year. One head teacher gave an example of provincial ball games that are annually held in Mongu when he complained that;

*"I wonder why Mongu has to annually host two sporting events one at district and another one at provincial level. During these two weeks there is literally no proper teaching and learning taking place in most schools in the district since most of the teachers and pupils attend to sporting activities as members of the organizing committees or supporters. It would be better if different districts alternated in hosting of provincial games."*

The learners who participated in sporting activities also expressed concern that they missed out on learning. Although this factor was not similar to what other scholars such as Farbman (2015) had found in the United States of America schools, the activities seemed to have consumed a lot of learning time in the case of Mongu schools. In focus group discussions students indicated that it was true that sporting activities disturb time for learning. The study further revealed that nothing much was done to help learners that took part in the sporting activities and missed lessons in the process. One student confirmed that;

*"It is not common to see teachers helping those students who represent the school in sporting activities. But a few teachers would take time to cover missed lessons with those that went out for sports and as such, these learners wrote tests and exams on what they never learnt. Most teachers would simply tell the students to research on their own which reduces their chances of better understanding and performance."*

Koomson, Akyeamong and Fobih, (1999) contended that, any instructional time wasted or under-utilized will result in a limited coverage of the designed curricular which will in turn have a tremendous adverse repercussion on students' academic achievement. In almost all education systems, government authorities mandate a certain number of years and a set quantity of hours per year during which pupils are required to be in school and engaged in classroom learning. In terms of managing available time in implementing the curriculum, it is important that proper and strategic planning was done by both teachers and school administrators. These ideas are supported by Bray (2000) who indicated that successful time management evolved step by step approach with the primary aim of setting priorities in the school. This called for a decision to be taken and all activities tabulated in order of importance. This would imply that, every school needed to prioritize teaching and learning by developing plans both in the short-term and in the long-term. This would help mitigate the time lapse that was created by other activities in schools and help teachers complete teaching their subjects effectively.

#### **4.5. Loss of Time at Lesson Start**

The beginning of a lesson is a transition period in which students switch to a different subject and the teacher begin a new lesson classroom. Thus both the teacher and students will have to orient themselves to the start of a new session. Research has shown that beginnings of lessons can present some difficulties and drawing student's attention as Jones and Jones (2007) puts it. In a well-organized school, time management can be seen right from how teachers utilize the first few minutes of a lesson. In some schools, lesson starts can be a big challenge where students will get into a meaningless waiting not actually knowing if the lesson is to take place or not. It was for this reason that scholars in this study observed the first 20 minutes of 50 lessons while paying attention to how the first 20 minutes were utilized in relation to learning.

At the time when the lessons were scheduled to begin, in each of the classes the teacher was present only in 30% of cases and all students in 80% of cases. Only in every sixth classroom were both teachers and students present at the scheduled time. In Zambian schools lesson endings and lesson starts are usually signaled by bell rings or an alarm without any minute separating the sessions. Thus teachers are expected to begin and end the lesson at the sound of the bell. On average, the teacher was five minutes late and the lesson started eight minutes late. The maximum delay was 10 minutes, observed in 28 cases. The loss of time at the lesson starts seems small, but when it accumulates, the total amount grows abundantly. If eight minutes learning time is lost in every lesson start as was the situation in this study, it grows during one week to approximately 448 minutes for a school that has 8 periods in a day and during the whole school year to 17472 minutes or 436 lessons of each 40 minutes. This equals six full weeks of school attendance which is about half a term in the Zambian situation. As we mentioned earlier in this study unless teachers and the school administrators consider time for learning as one of the most important resource schools will continue

to silently loss time. Thus it should not surprise anyone if students would fail to achieve what has been planned through the learning outcomes when time is lost in this way.

Studies have shown that the more time is spent on learning, the more academic performance improves on learners. Heyneman and Loxley (1983) found that more instructional time spent on general science was associated with higher academic achievement in Iran, India and Thailand. The amount of time that was received by learners for teaching and learning in schools in Mongu district is likely to paused some negative implications on leaner performance.

## 5. Recommendations

The researches made the following recommendations;

- 1) The Ministry of General Education in Zambia should revisit the national examination time tabling strategy so as to reduce on the learning time that is lost. Additionally, the country's education system should learn from success stories such as those from Finland, Canada and others.
- 2) School administrators should closely monitor teachers to ensure that they are in class on time and that teachers should not be given excess duties that are likely to drive their attention away from teaching and learning. Some duties such as running boarding sections of students can be given to non-teaching staff.

## 6. Conclusion

It was established in this study that, the failure to properly utilize time for teaching and learning was as a result of factors that ranged from within the classroom and outside the classroom. According to Anderson (1985) lost instructional time is the amount of time allocated to teaching activities that for a number of different reasons, is not used toward the completion of those activities. Education administrators in Mongu district need to be aware that poor time management practices and lack of control of time wastage in schools leads to low achievement of set objectives. However, it was observed in this study that a lot of factors contributed to wasted time for teaching and learning. It was also noted that some of the challenges that teachers encountered in terms of time loss were beyond their control. Studies such as those by Benavote (2002) indicated that, in both quantitative and qualitative terms, the actual instructional time received by African students is reduced appreciably owing to diverse conditions and complex pressures faced by the education systems. The findings of this study with regard to the lost time for learning are likely to comprise the quality of education provided to the learners. It should be worrying to note that a lot of time for learning was lost throughout the school calendar due to activities that should not get in the way of teaching and learning.

Since the utilization of time has been only minimally researched in Zambia, replication studies are needed at a much larger scale to validate the results of this study. It is recommended that future studies also investigate learning time spent on-task in the

process of teaching and learning. However, empirical research concerning the outcomes of various recommendations concerning time utilization and loss is still mainly lacking. This study can therefore function as a kind of spring board to generate interest in this somewhat neglected corner of classroom teaching and learning literature.

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