

# Factors Influencing Poor Examination Performance in Business Studies Among Grade 12 Pupils in Zambia A Perspective of Three Selected Schools In Ndola

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## I. INTRODUCTION

**Abstract**— Commerce is a dynamic education system which can help handling the resources of a country rationally. Thus, business studies prepare school leavers well to cope with the dynamics of the free trade of goods and services. Like any other subject, business subjects are summative assessed by the Examination Council of Zambia both at the end of grade 9 and grade 12. The formative assessments are done during teaching as is the case is with the other subjects although this does not add up to the summative examination in form of Continuous Assessment (CA).

According to Ministry of Education (2011), the grade 12 National Examination is competence based and recognized internationally. However, pertinent feedback from the Examination Council of Zambia (2018) points out that the performance of pupils at Grade 12 National Examination in Commerce has been poor nationwide. Therefore, there was need to conduct a research to establish why this is so.

The study used qualitative approach, using interviews, focus group discussion, observation and documentary data. Thematic approach was used in data analysis. The major findings were related mostly to teachers' qualities. Apart from these factors, also teaching and learning resources were a problem; business studies textbooks were not readily available for pupils use. The study recommended several remedies for that situation.

**Keywords**—Academic performance, Business Subjects, Pupils, Examinations

During the past two decades business education in secondary schools has grown to an enormous extent. Business education is the main stream among all disciplines in modern education system and somewhat different from other disciplines. This is because business is a stream where skill development is a prime requirement. It is skills such as industrious skills, professional skill, computing skill, communication skill, leadership skill, managerial skill and entrepreneurial skills among others that are essential in the enjoyment of better human life. Previously, business subjects were called commercial subjects. Thus in this research the terms may be used interchangeably to mean the same parentheses, following the example. Some components, such as multi-levelled equations, graphics, and tables are not prescribed, although the various table text styles are provided. The formatter will need to create these components, incorporating the applicable criteria that follow.

To uplift young personnel into intellectually competent, morally upright, socially committed, economically rational and entrepreneurial desirous, business education is a prerequisite. Despite today's business being on a constant change, the principle of buying and selling still remains and to cope up with the fast-changing

global scenario, business education still remains a key player. Commerce is a dynamic education system which can help handling the resources of a country rationally. Thus, business studies prepare school leavers well to cope with the dynamics of the free trade of goods and services.

In Zambia, business studies are offered in junior secondary as optional subjects. At senior secondary school level business subjects taken are business studies and principles of accounts. It is worth noting that business subjects together with other subjects are taught in English throughout junior and senior secondary school levels. Like any other subject, business subjects are summative assessed by the Examination Council of Zambia both at the end of grade 9 and grade 12. The formative assessments are done during teaching as is the case is with the other subjects although this does not add up to the summative examination in form of Continuous Assessment (CA).

According to [1], the grade 12 National Examination is competence based and recognized internationally. However, pertinent feedback from the Examination Council of Zambia (2018) points out that the performance of pupils at Grade 12 National Examination in Commerce has been poor nationwide. The assumption is that these national results of commerce subject reflect a group of pupils who are lacking in competence of knowledge and understanding of critical interpretation of the work, judgment and personal responses, application and innovation. It is apparent that contributing factors to pupils' poor performance in commerce subject may not be based on what happens on the actual examination day but rather what happens way back in class when these pupils are taught skills and competences in the subject. Moreover, examinations are

based on what has been taught and pupils tend to do well in subjects well taught.

## Statement of problem

While education has always been perceived as a social sector, it is also an economic tool for development. It is against this background that the Zambia Education Curriculum framework has been developed to provide further guidance on the preferred type of education for the nation. Business subjects are among the subjects which can play a vital role in achieving this. Unfortunately, examination performance of pupils in those subjects in recent years is discouraging. Reference [1] reported on the release of the 2017 grade 12 examination results, commerce subject recorded the lowest mean percentage (19.05%). In the statement, Ministry of General Education further noted that low performance in Business studies (previously called commerce) has been observed over a number of examination periods. Therefore, there was need to conduct a research to establish why this is so.

The **general objective** of this study was to investigate factors influencing poor examination performance in business subjects among grade 12 pupils.

The **specific objectives** of this study were as follows:

- i. To examine pupils interests in business studies and how it affects their performance
- ii. To examine teachers' qualities in teaching business studies
- iii. To assess the availability of teaching and learning resources in relation to business studies
- iv. To find out the extent to which business studies are inspected

### Significance of study

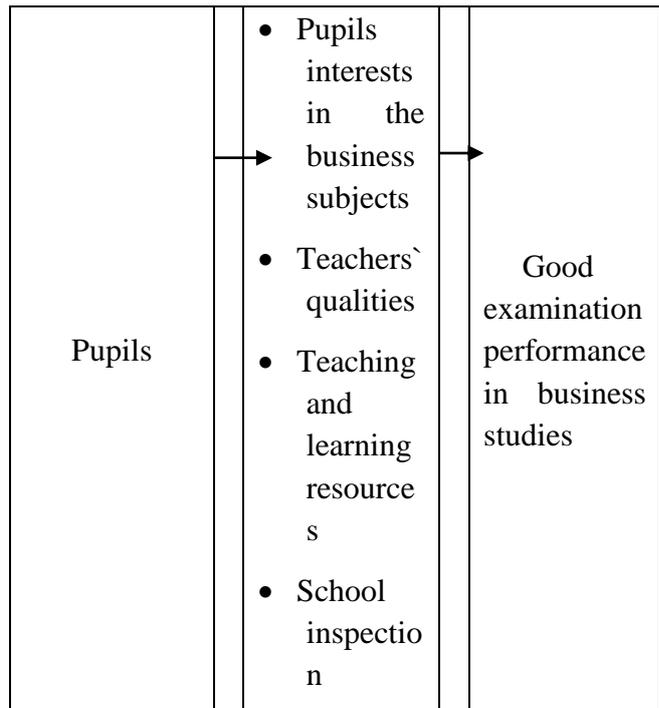
This study will help the Ministry of General Education understand the challenges facing business subjects so that necessary measures to improve pupils` performance are taken into consideration. Furthermore, teachers and pupils will find the study beneficial as they would be able to identify the causes of poor performance in business studies. Last but not the least, the research findings will contribute to the already existing body of knowledge on poor academic performance of pupils especially in business studies.

### Theoretical Framework

A system theory input output model developed by Ludwig Bertalanffy will be adapted in this research. According to [2] the theory suggests that an organized enterprise does not exist in vacuum but is dependent on its external environment. Therefore, the enterprise receive inputs, transforms them into outputs and exports the outputs to the environment.

This study`s input focus was on pupils studying business subjects, pupils` interest in learning business subjects, teaching strategies and school inspection and the business studies` teachers` qualities, availability of teaching and learning resources characterized the process. The output was the academic achievement as characterized by pupils` academic performance in final examinations.

<b>Input from external environment</b>	<b>Process in schools needs</b>	<b>Output expected</b>
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## II. LITERATURE REVIEW

### A. Global Perspective

Porter and Lawler (1968) showed that factors such as effort, abilities and traits impacted on a student`s examination score in accounting. Reference [3] study examined the ways in which teacher qualifications and other school inputs were related to student achievement across the United States of America. According to the study, teacher quality characteristics such as certification status and degree in the field to be taught are very significantly and positively correlated with pupils` outcome.

As for school inspection, [4] shows the preliminary results from a three-year European study into the effect of school inspections on the quality of education reveals that the teachers perception on those schools that were inspected has also implemented more changes in terms of quality improvement and organized more self-evaluation activities in the schools. However,

an investigation on effect of Dutch primary school inspections on tests scores by [5] revealed that the scores increased by 2 percent to 3 percent of standard deviation inspections and concluded that inspections do no harm but seem to have little or no effect on student performance and in turn lead to slightly better school performance.

## *B. Regional perspective*

Reference [6] studied the factors influencing performance in business subjects in ordinary level secondary schools in Tanzania. The study indicated a significant proportion of unqualified teachers and also fewer periods were dedicated to teaching business subjects. He concluded that these were associated with pupils' poor performance among other factors that declined the subject performance. These findings and conclusions were similar to findings of similar studies conducted by [7-8].

A more recent study was conducted by [9] on factors influencing poor performance of pupils in business subjects in Tanzania. The study concluded that human and material resources contribute to the poor performance in business subjects. Lack of books, libraries, teaching and learning materials related to business subjects were challenges many schools faced. Incompetence among teachers and lack of inspections were also contributing factors to poor performance among pupils in business subjects.

## *C. Local perspective*

There is scanty of literature on the poor examination performance of secondary school pupils in business subjects in Zambia. However, literature of similar interest and relevance is reviewed.

Reference [10] conducted a study on factors contributing to poor performance of grade 12 learners at national examination in Literature in

English in secondary schools in Kafue District, Zambia. The study found that due to paucity of teaching materials and teachers' guide, teachers had an overdependence on self-generated commentaries that retold the study texts and tended to drift away from the syllabus. The findings further revealed that the teaching strategies used in the classroom of Literature in English were inadequate to equip pupils for the end of year national examination.

Reference [11] conducted a study on factors affecting poor performance of learners in continuing education schools. The study revealed that some factors were as a result of administrative and management practices. These factors included lack of sufficient teaching and learning materials, lack of proper and adequate infrastructure, low staffing levels, over enrolment, erratic and insufficient funding, and lack of boarding facilities. The study further revealed that learner behavior also contributed to negative academic performance.

It has been discovered that the changing of the curriculum by the authorities without preparing the learners and giving out reading materials was one of the causes of poor examination performance in Africa [12]. This affected the learners adversely as they had to start from the scratch due to non-availability of relevant books. In his study of quality education in selected schools in Livingstone and Kazungula districts in Zambia, [13] found limited textbooks as a factor affecting the performance of the learner. Researches done in Uganda and Ghana found significant effects leading the researchers to conclude that improving the availability of textbooks is of the most cost-effective methods for enhancing learning achievement. While these findings cannot be disputed, the findings in Zambia slightly differ. In Zambia, it was discovered that simply raising the number of books does not

automatically improve learning outcomes and that teacher training must be improved in order to ensure effective teaching and use of textbooks [14].

### **Establishment of Gap**

To the researcher's knowledge, no published study has been conducted on factors influencing poor academic performance among grade 12 pupils in business studies in Zambia. On the other hand, various studies have been carried out on academic performance among pupils and factors influencing performance other subjects such as Literature in English. Moreover, this research was birthed from the current situation reported by the Ministry of General Education during the release of 2017 grade 12 results which indicates the need to investigate the dismal examination performance of grade 12 pupils in business studies in recent examinations.

## **III. METHODOLOGY**

### **A. Research Design**

The research design for this study was a non-experimental, descriptive study using both quantitative and qualitative data collection and analysis strategies. The study combined both qualitative and quantitative methods as a way of reducing on the biases that come with using one paradigm and to also increase the validity of the research findings. The use of both quantitative and qualitative paradigms in a study increases the quality of the final results and does provide a more comprehensive analysis of the phenomena being investigated because the results got using one paradigm could be clarified by the use of the other one [15].

### **B. Sample Size and Sampling Techniques**

- The target population for this study were pupils, business studies' teachers, Heads of business departments

and Head teachers in three selected government schools of the City of Ndola.

- The sample size was drawn from three selected schools totalling 50 participants i.e. Milemu Secondary School, Lubuto Secondary School and Masala Secondary School. Out of 50 participants, 32 were pupils; 12 from the biggest school (Lubuto Secondary School) and 10 from each of the other 2 schools (Milemu and Masala Secondary School). Nine business studies teachers; 3 from each selected school were included in the sample. Teachers play an indispensable role in the teaching and learning process. They were expected to provide the researcher with practical experiences of factors influencing poor examination performance in business studies in those chosen schools. Six heads of business departments; 2 from each selected school. Heads of departments have a monitoring role over business studies teachers in the teaching and learning of business studies. 3 Heads of schools, one from each selected secondary school were included.

- Random sampling was applied to select pupils of the sample. Random sampling is the method of sample selection which gives each possible sample combination an equal probability of being picked up and each item in the entire population to have equal chance of being included in the sample [16]. A purposive sampling was applied to teachers, heads of departments and heads of schools. Hence, [16] purposive sampling is a type of sampling whereby items for the sample are deliberately

selected by the researcher; his/her choice concerning the items remains supreme.

observed through triangulation method of data collection.

### C. Instruments and Procedure of data collection

Research instruments were questionnaires, interview schedules and Focus Group Discussions. In this research, two sets of self-administered questionnaires were used to get data from both the school staff and pupils.

The researcher sought permission from District Education Board of Zambia to conduct a research in the target schools in the district. After permission is granted, the researcher went into the targeted schools and collaborate with the administration to distribute the questionnaires as well as organize group discussions with prospective participants. Once the questionnaires were filled in and group discussions are done, the researcher collected the questionnaires and information collected from the discussions and interviews for analysis.

### D. Data analysis techniques

Data analysis consisted of content analysis of interview responses and item analysis of the questionnaire responses. The Statistical Package for Social Sciences and Microsoft Office Excel were the main statistical tools to be used in analyzing statistical data quantitatively. Thematic analysis was used in the analysis of qualitative data from interviews and Focus Group Discussions. In this regard, qualitative data generated in this study were categorized in order to examine emerging themes.

A pilot study was conducted in one of the secondary schools to ensure validity of the data to be collected and reliability of research instruments. Reliability of data was

## IV. RESULTS

### A. Pupils interests in studying subjects

During interview and focus group discussion pupils were asked if they were interested in studying business subjects. The findings of the study indicated that all 32 (100%) pupils were interested in studying business subjects. This is represented in Table 4.1 below

**Table 4.1 Pupils interests in studying subjects**

	Ye s	N o
Are you interested in learning business subjects?	32	0

**Source:** Field Data

These findings were supported by those of the focus group interview. One member of focus group interview in one secondary school made further elaboration by narrating: *“I am interested in studying business subjects because I wanted to become a big businessman and in turn improve the country’s economy”*

These pupils are interested in studying business subjects but they are discouraged in the way the content was delivered to them in class and the shortage of teaching and learning materials. Other members of focused group in another school expressed interest in studying business subjects. One of them narrated: *“Madam we are interested in studying business subjects because the subjects are applicable in the real life. It is true the subjects are beneficial in our daily life –we can apply the knowledge gained in those subjects and apply it even at our homes. We can budget our money properly”*.

However, pupils’ interest is heavily influenced by some teacher’s attitude to teach a subject. According to [17], positive teachers’

attitudes are fundamental to effective teaching. A teacher must be interesting to his learners; he/she must work/manipulate his pupils into such a state of interest in what he/she is going to teach them. Hence, other objects of attention get banished from their mind. Interestingly all pupils were interested in studying business subjects. However, contrary to [17] contention, their interests were derived from their personal future goals. It is clear from the findings that pupils were interested in studying business subjects but their interests fell short of the role played by positive teachers' attitudes which are fundamental to effective teaching and learning.

## ***B. Teachers' Qualities in Teaching Business Subjects***

Reference [18] has identified a few strong and consistent teachers' quality predictors of student achievement including teacher's qualifications (certification), knowledge and experiences under this theme of teachers' qualities in teaching business subjects, the study came out with the following sub themes:

- i. Teachers academic and professional qualifications
- ii. Teachers experience
- iii. Teacher mastery of subject matter

### **Teachers' academic and professional qualifications**

It was revealed that, three (3) teachers were graduates with degree in education; six (6) had a diploma in education. On other hand, heads of business departments when asked what their academic and professional qualifications were, it was found that one had master's degree, four of them had degree in education while one had a diploma in education. In addition, heads of business subjects' departments when probed on the subjects they studied at secondary education, it was disclosed that all the three heads of departments studied business subjects

in ordinary level secondary education and Economics, Commerce and Accounting (ECA).

**Table 4.2** Distribution of Business Subject Teachers and their Academic and Professional Qualifications

Qualification	Frequency	Percent	Cumm. Percent
Masters	1	5.5	5.5
Degree	10	55.6	61.1
Diploma	7	38.9	100
Certificate	0	0	100

**Source:** Field Data

The findings indicated that most of heads of business subjects' departments are degree holders while the majority of subject teachers were diploma holders. In support of this, heading departments needs wider content knowledge, in the area of specialization, among other characteristics, preferably at degree level in order to command confidence in discharging leadership roles in the department.

The same question which was asked to teachers and heads of departments was also asked to heads of schools concerning their academic and professional qualifications. The findings indicated that all school heads (in the 3 visited secondary schools) were holders of Bachelor of education degrees or above. As expected, all heads were teachers by profession. However, the question is: are they trained to manage schools and are they vocal enough to advice the owners of schools (government and private) on the needs of their schools and about the effects of some of the policies set by them on student learning?

Overall, teachers and heads of business subject departments should have a command of their subjects and thorough knowledge on business subjects they teach in order that their pupils benefit from their knowledge. This finding is supported by [6-7], who found teachers with poor academic qualification being

one of the likely factors that influence pupils' poor examination performance.

## Teachers' Experience in Teaching Business Studies

In the visited secondary schools, teachers' experience ranged from 2 years to 10 years. Majority of them had an experience ranging from 4 to 6 years. Reference [19] commented that teachers' teaching experience was significant with pupils' learning outcomes as measured by their performance in the secondary school certificate examinations.

**Table 4.3** Teachers experience in teaching Business Studies

School	Years of experience				
	5	4	3	7	5
Masala	5	4	3	7	5
Milemu	9	3	4	5	6
Lubuto	6	2	4	8	10

**Source:** Field Data

Schools having more teachers with five years and above teaching experience achieved better results than schools having more teachers with less than five years teaching experience. In this case, more than half of business subject teachers in the visited secondary schools had adequate teaching experience to achieve better results. However, one school had a commerce and bookkeeping teacher whose teaching experience was 10 years.

Apart from business teachers' teaching experience, Heads of business subjects' departments were asked as how long they had been teaching business subjects. It was found out that, all 3 heads of departments had a teaching experience of between 5 and 10 years. Although they had long teaching experience in business subjects, they lacked experience in heading business departments. Only one teacher had two years of experience the rest had only one year.

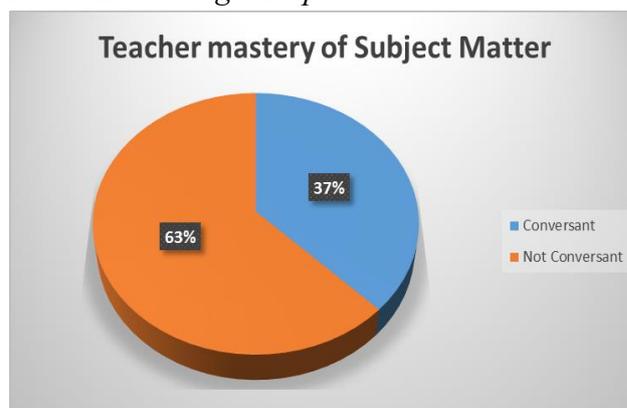
The heads of departments' experience are of short duration. It takes time to learn the

situation in the department and in heading the department. It is expected that heads of departments would have to start planning what the head is aiming to be implemented for the benefit of pupils. Over all, heads of business department had short experience in heading business department; which is one of the likely factors that influence pupils' poor examination performance.

## Teacher mastery of Subject Matter

Teacher's mastery of subject matter can be described in three ways according to [17]: knowledge of content, pedagogical content knowledge and general pedagogical knowledge. That is to say teachers must have good grasp of subject matter, know how to teach different concepts of the subject such that it makes sense to pupils. Teachers were asked whether they were conversant with all topics in the syllabus, 3 out of 5 teachers said they were conversant with all topics in the syllabus of these subjects.

The other two (2) were not conversant. One out of the two (2) mentioned the topics which were difficult for her to teach- she narrated: *"I am not conversant with some topics of the syllabus for example Bank reconciliation and bills of exchange -I don't even understand how I can teach the topics to my pupils. There no seminars on business subjects maybe I would have asked and got helped"*.



**Figure 4.1** Teacher Mastery of Subject Matter

## Source: Field Data

This response indicates that teachers have problems with content and pedagogical skills. Reference [3] findings pointed certification status and degree in the field to be taught as very significantly and positively correlated with student outcomes. Obviously, according to [3], a teacher who does not understand what she/he is supposed to teach his or her pupils probably his/her pupils cannot succeed and get good performance in examination.

On the other hand, when pupils were asked on strategy and activities teachers used to teach business subjects, they said that most commonly they use question and answer, followed by group discussions. The business teacher in one school proved the pupil's views on the teaching strategies by narrating: *"I use questions and answers and group discussions"* These methods of teaching cover weakness of a teacher - even if she /he does not understand the topic because, after all questions and answers can be obtained in the textbooks. He /she is supposed to prepare a lesson from it. In the normal class, a teacher starts with brainstorming with the previous lesson, followed with the lesson of the day, and thereafter the teacher evaluates his/her lesson by asking pupils questions related to the topic. However, the teacher above did not start with brainstorming the previous topic; she started with the questions of the topic of the day which pupils had no idea at all. Hence her pupils were not even able to answer the questions asked by their teacher. That is all about her teaching. Do pupils gain anything from this mode of teaching as the teacher did not give them notes where they can refer? This has a negative effect on pupils' performance. These strategies must follow teacher's presentation of the topic.

Otherwise pupils would not understand the subject matter.

The findings are confirmed by class observation in teaching business subjects in two schools, where it was discovered the business teachers used strategies of question and answers followed with group discussion. Pupils participated less in their groups, no presentation from pupils were made and the teacher did not summarize his lesson. However, teachers from the third school opted lecture strategy on top of questions and answer strategy. In addition, a researcher demanded the teaching documents from the business subjects' teachers and the findings were as follows: all teachers had schemes of works and subject log books. All teachers had no lesson plans. Can these kinds of teachers who cannot prepare and use lesson plans in their teaching process deliver the required subject matter to pupils? The process of delivering subject matter to pupils can be done in line with the number of periods allocated to the subjects as recommended in the syllabus.

Teachers were asked on the number of business subjects periods taught per week; it was discovered that they taught 4 periods per week. This was far below the ministry teaching norm of 7 periods per week in business classes of grade 11 and 12. The commerce teacher who was also the Book keeping teacher of one school said: *"I teach 4 periods of commerce, and 4 period of Book keeping per week"*

It is concluded from the results of this study that some business subject teachers did not master some business subjects' matter (topics) and is thus a factor that influenced influencing poor examination performance in business subjects among grade 12 pupils. Teacher mastery of subject matter requires to be translated into the classroom situation; through effective presentation and clear communication

with pupils. The next theme discusses results on availability of teaching and learning resources.

### ***C. The Availability of Teaching and Learning Resources in Business Secondary Schools***

Teaching resources are generic materials used to describe resources teachers use to deliver instruction [20]. They include theoretical and intangible elements, such as essays or support from other educators, or places to find teaching materials like libraries or resource centers. They are widely accepted to facilitate the teaching and learning process.

Textbooks are one of the most important inputs that have a demonstrable impact on student learning”, and that the two most consistent characteristics in improving student performance include the availability of textbooks and supplementary books. Apart from text books, library and computer laboratory are important to business subjects teachers and pupils. Within this context four areas were presented:

- i. Availability of teaching and learning resources in schools
- ii. Textbooks
- iii. Availability of school library, computer laboratories and internet service accessibility

### **Availability teaching and Learning Resources in Schools**

On the question of teaching resources for business subjects at schools, teachers were asked to mention the teaching resources that were available in school for teaching business subjects. The participants (teachers) indicated that they had acute shortages of business subjects teaching/learning materials especially textbooks. However, they mentioned the available teaching materials including chalks, long ruler, chalkboards and wall charts were available in their schools.

One Book keeping teacher emphasized the severe shortage of particularly textbooks: *“We have only three (3) textbooks for business subjects. This is very difficult to teach in this cumbersome situation”*

Also, a teacher from another visited secondary school narrated: *“Here at this school there is nothing! Nothing on business subjects! We have no books and other resources to enable us teach business subjects. The school does not buy business books because it is termed the subjects as option subjects not bias as it used to be. What confuses me is a question: if a subject is not bias but optional, does it not have the right to be given books? Why should money allocated to school exclude business subject? This makes teachers of business subjects frustrated”*.

Similar findings were noted in [6-7] who found that there were inadequate teaching and learning materials for business subjects in secondary schools.

Knowledge acquisition and knowledge delivery for any subject of the taught curriculum cannot be effective without these materials. Business subjects should not be optional when it comes to the government allocation of resources purchase of textbooks and supplementary books. Like any other subject, it produces human resource needed in this country and outside the country.

We need business experts in the public and private institutions of this country. In addition, business subjects can serve as a springboard for entrepreneurship locally and internationally particularly in the globalized economy which is characterized by competition among other things. In these circumstances, one wonders why these subjects should be optional and neglected.

## Textbooks

It is widely acceptable that textbooks and supplementary books are the best two predictors of teaching and learning materials that improve student learning. The World Bank, A Chance to Learn Report (2001) asserts that “now there is substantial research evidence which shows that textbooks are one of the most important inputs that have a demonstrable impact on student learning”. The report further states that the two most consistent characteristics in improving student performance include the availability of textbooks and supplementary books.

In visited government schools, all school had scarcity of textbooks on business subjects. But it was surprising to note that the textbooks scarcity in one of the two visited government schools was created by the head of the school. The researcher checked in school library and found there were no business textbooks.

The researcher asked the head of school if she can make an arrangement to buy few textbooks for the library to help pupils to access the content, she explained: “*Textbooks are available around 36 here in my store, you can have a look at them*”. The textbooks were safely kept in her office store. The researcher asked her “why are you keeping them there? I think it is good to put them in the library for teachers and pupils’ accessibility”. She commented: “*Teachers haven’t come to ask for them, it is their responsibility*”

Reference [21] contends that textbooks use is the instructional device par excellence, and central to teaching, a classroom deprived of textbooks promote little in acquiring the intended skills. The findings of this study have provided evidence that textbook provision to pupils varied dramatically between government and private schools; with government schools having relatively severe shortages. In two of the visited secondary schools, textbooks were

inadequately supplied to pupils because some parents could not afford the purchase of the expensive business subjects’ text books for their children. Evidence suggests that the role of supply of textbooks is obligatory to parents.

Textbooks and supplementary materials have to be up-to-date to meet the contemporary needs of learners. Reference [22] argue that updated student textbooks and supplementary books and sufficient supplies of teaching and learning resources supplemented the teaching and learning process. One school stocked its library with ancient and worn out textbooks as reference books, which was not a good practice. These would fall in the hands of pupils who are desperate of knowledge and yet the knowledge would probably be inappropriate. There was also a disturbing habit in one school where business text books were kept in the school head’s store instead of distributing them to pupils and teachers. Clearly this is gross mismanagement of teaching and learning resources whose implications amount to frustrating business subjects’ teachers (as reflected elsewhere in this chapter) in their teaching and hindering academic progress of the pupils.

It is clear from the above evidence that where the deficiency of textbooks and supplementary materials existed, teaching and learning process was impaired and it would not be surprising that teachers rushed in teaching as was revealed by pupils in this study. It is therefore, concluded that inadequate teaching and learning materials, particularly text books, use of unapproved textbooks, absence of a library and computer laboratory and the internet service contributed to poor performance in business subjects.

Given the advancements made in science and technology, and in particular, information technology, it is imperative to look at the role

played by computer assisted technology as a source of learning.

## **Availability of school library, Computer Laboratories and Internet Service Accessibility Computers**

Computer assisted teaching has picked momentum over the years in supplementing teaching and learning in this era of rapid development of science and technology, especially information technology. Along with the presence of a school library teachers were asked if they had a computer laboratory.

The findings found out that in two schools there were well-equipped computer laboratories but there was no computer laboratory in the third school. In one of the two schools with computer laboratories, there were 2 laboratories with 39 computers with internet facility and in the other school there was 1 laboratory with 30 computers and internet facility as well.

However, business subjects' teachers in these schools were not aware of the existence of internet facilities, as attested by the following narration of a Book keeping teacher of one school: *"We have two computer laboratories but I am not sure if there is internet, let me ask the laboratory technician"*

Some teachers like the one above were complaining that their schools had acute shortage of teaching and learning materials but they did not even bother in searching for materials from the available computer laboratories in their schools where there was internet facility to supplement business study materials. The teacher did not even know whether there was internet facility in her school or not as she had to seek assurance from the technician. This implies that a teacher of this kind was not serious in her work.

The commerce subject teacher in the second school added: *"We have one computers*

*laboratory but we have no internet facility" I never search materials from the computer lab"*

In my observation I found out that in both schools, in addition to having computer laboratories, there were also internet facilities and laboratory technicians. A technician of one of the two schools explained: "Business subject teachers did not spare time to come and use the facilities".

Think the nature of this kind of teachers who cannot spare their time searching the materials for their business subjects, even if the opportunities are, they are not even bothering to encourage their pupils to use the available computer labs; can pupils perform well in their examination?

The findings of this study suggest that schools did not take full advantage of the existing computer laboratories and internet facility. Where the facilities were available, they were not used by pupils and teachers to look for update knowledge although the internet is another very powerful, modern source providing ample and up to date knowledge. This facility is an alternative for textbooks and school library, although it does not replace them. It has the same impact that textbooks have, it is among the best predictors of student performance. Computers for instance, would be used to run CD ROMs with ready-made business subjects' lessons as alternative strategy of teaching pupils and stimulating both pupils' and teachers' interest in the subject.

The school that had no computer laboratory had also a serious shortage of textbooks. Pupils and teachers of this school missed the opportunity of searching for update knowledge. Clearly, having no access to computers and internet facility, pupils had a more serious effect in their learning and academic performance. Making use of the computers for teaching and learning would alleviate the

serious shortage of text books in the visited schools and improve performance in business subjects.

#### **D. School Inspection**

Teachers were asked whether business subjects had been inspected in their schools between the year 2011 and 2013. The findings indicated that generally there was no inspection conducted on business subjects for quite a long time.

The researcher perused the inspection file in one secondary school and discovered that inspectors conducted whole school inspection in 2016 to see how the school complied with set education standards. There were no school inspection reports on business subjects seen in this file. One head of school in the visited schools had this to tell: "School inspectors came to carry out special inspection for establishing advanced level subject's combination in 2016".

In the third of the visited school, there was whole school inspection in 2017 where all subjects were inspected but business subjects were left out. On the basis of these findings, it appears that the school inspectorate department is silent on the quality of teaching of business subjects. Failure to inspect the subjects deprives the ministry of the opportunity to know the teaching status and possible interventions to improve the performance of business subjects.

The above findings were supported by school heads who were interviewed on whether or not school inspectors inspect business subjects in their schools. The findings revealed that no inspection had been conducted for business subjects in each of the 3 visited schools. The school head for one secondary school said:

"Inspector inspected the school in 2016 but there was no school inspector to inspect

business subjects" Interview with school heads on the question: Does school inspection affect examination performance in your school? It revealed mixed views. The school head of one school said: "School inspections affect examination performance because they provide onsite teacher support, which improves teacher's teaching methods and practices".

In the one visited schools, which is a private school the head used his own efforts to do internal supervision for improving examination performance. He had this to tell: "School inspectors do inspect primary school but they don't inspect secondary school. I never saw them here to conduct whole school inspection and business subjects are not inspected as well, so we use our internal inspection team of teachers under the school head supervision to inspect the secondary school teaching process. The team inspects actual teaching in classes and teaching documents. The teachers who are found to be weak are advised accordingly and followed up. This improves the performance of our school".

Failure of school inspection in schools affects the day-to-day implementation of curriculum in schools including business subjects. Therefore this can hinder pupils' academic performance. Given that no teacher had been inspected on business subjects, commerce teachers in one school had this to say: "Inspectors should come to inspect us so that we benefit from their expertise. Without inspection we cannot improve our way of teaching (methodology) and new knowledge in our subjects" It is generally argued that school inspection lead to school improvement including student learning outcome [23-24]. According to Faro (1996), school inspectors play a pivotal role in teacher development. Reference [25] adds that teachers need regular support from colleagues and managers to ensure

progressive and effective performance. Also Nyaki (2006) maintains that, the effectiveness of the school inspection is largely determined by the higher frequency, the nature of advice and recommendations given to those who are inspected. Reference [4] reveals that teachers' perception on those inspected schools had implemented more changes in terms of quality improvement. On the other hand, [26] found that student scores increased where schools were inspected and concluded that school inspection lead to slightly better school performance.

The findings of this study discovered that there was no school inspection conducted for business subjects because inspection teams did not comprise business subjects' inspectors. Schools had to rely on their internal supervision mechanism. This system of inspection is similar to Peer inspection/ School Site Supervision where colleagues of the same school and same grade could open classroom doors for contact among themselves. This system enables teachers to report to their colleagues as their first source of professional help/support when school inspectors help is not available [27].

Despite the fact that teachers in one of the visited schools conducted their internal supervision, it is interesting to note that, they perceived inspectors expertise as beneficial in improving their teaching and school performance. The findings support local studies on monitoring the quality of education where teachers perceived school inspectors as mainly bringing new ideas and suggesting on improving teaching methods [28]. On the basis of the findings it appears that teachers valued the potential that inspectors work had in enhancing their performance and in turn student performance. The genesis of their perception in probably from their encounters with inspectors while teaching in other schools or seeing the

benefits other teachers got when their subjects were inspected. Schools that are inspected by school Inspectors have added advantage because school inspectors bring to schools their expertise and experiences of other inspected schools in supporting teachers professionally.

## *E. Conclusion*

Factors influencing poor examination performance in business subjects in Ndola are compounded. Hence no single factor can stand alone to explain factors influencing poor examination performance in business subjects in ordinary level secondary schools in Ndola. The factors revealed seem to influence academic performance in those secondary schools. Starting with human and material recourses, the study revealed some of problems emanated in those resources: some schools had no books, libraries and other teaching and learning material related to business subjects for both teachers and pupils. In order pupils to perform well and teachers to teach effectively teaching and learning materials are important. Hence these affected teachers' motivation in the teaching of business subject. Also, pupils lacked reference materials for business subjects.

School inspection is another important factor in enhancing academic performance of pupils in schools. Inspectors have the role of making sure the school is giving the right education to pupils according to existing syllabus. Also, they have to make sure that text books and other teaching and learning materials are relevant to the given syllabus. In this study, schools were not inspected for a long time. Surprisingly, when inspection occurred business subjects had no subject inspector. This is the bottle neck enhancing business subjects in schools. We can conclude that lack of teaching and learning resources, incompetent teachers and lack of inspection of schools all contributed to poor

examination performance in secondary schools in Zambia.

## ***F. Recommendation***

The following recommendations are made on the basis of the discussion of the findings and conclusions:

- The Ministry of General Education ought to conduct an audit of business subjects' teachers to identify unqualified teachers and remove them from the teaching employment.
- The Ministry of General Education should review the directive on use of capitation grant to purchase all basic textbooks for all subjects rather than limiting it to purchase science and arts books only.
- Ministry of General Education in collaboration with School Inspectorate

department should train business subjects' inspectors in order to alleviate the existing shortage.

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