

## An Assessment of The Opportunities and Challenges of Weekly Boarding on Pupils' Academic Performance: A Case of Mwanzi District.

(Paper ID: CFP/1096/2019)

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### *Abstract*

Weekly boarding is an informal system where pupils are not full-time boarders but live in rented accommodation during the week and go home on weekends. Learners resort to weekly boarding system due to longer walking distance from home to school and also because of insufficient schools in their communities. The central problem of this study was to assess the opportunities and challenges of weekly boarding on pupils' academic performance in selected schools in Mwanzi District of Western Province. The objectives were to; investigate the challenges faced by weekly boarders in schools in Mwanzi District; to identify the opportunities of weekly boarding on pupils' academic performance and to examine the effects of weekly boarding on the academic achievement of learners in Mwanzi District.

This study utilized a descriptive survey design. The descriptive survey provided qualitative information from a representative sample of the sampling frame by the use of an interview guide, observation checklist and questionnaires. The respondents for the study were 89 in total which comprised of 71 pupils, 11 teachers, 3 HODs/senior teachers and 3 Head teachers from four (4) sampled schools.

Descriptive statistics were used to analyze quantitative data with the aid of Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS) software.

Qualitative data was analyzed according to themes. Both quantitative and qualitative findings were reported based on the objectives of the study.

The findings of the study indicated that weekly boarders faced challenges such as lack of food, poor health, unhealthy living environment, violence, immorality, poor accommodation, reporting late to school and absenteeism from lessons. These problems negatively affected their academic performance. However, there were notable opportunities in this study that were beneficial to learners' academic performance. These include group study, getting along with other peers and reduced distance to school. The study recommended that head teachers, Ministry of general education officials, teachers and guardians should collaborate in providing permanent boarding facilities to accommodate learners from distant places.

**Keywords:** *Academic performance, Boarding School, Weekly boarding, opportunities.*

## I. INTRODUCTION

### 1.1 Background to the study

Education forms the basis upon which the socio-economic development of any nation is based. UNESCO (2005) states that the level of a country's education is one of the key indicators of its level of development. In 1990 and 2000, the international commitment for free universal primary education was established at Jomtien and Dakar respectively (World Bank, 2008). The two conferences looked at the equity and quality issues facing developing countries as they expand their educational systems. Education for All (EFA) has thus drastically increased the demand for education while competing with the resources necessary to respond to that demand. Among other results, the demand for education led to the rise of boarding schools in most countries.

Many boarding schools in Southern countries date back to colonial periods. These facilities existed to provide intensive quality and holistic education. In other cases, children are sent to boarding schools in order to improve their educational results under supervision. As for weekly boarding, children do not have close supervision either from their parents or school officials.

The demand for education in Zambia is growing at a high rate as the country progresses towards attaining Universal Primary Education (MESVTEE, 2014). In the national policy of education, it is indicated that every child who attains seven years must be given an opportunity to go to school. In order to meet this policy directive, the Zambian government has made a number of strides in realising universal education. Some of these efforts have been seen in the liberalization of education whereby many stakeholders have come on board to open institutions of learning ranging from private, community and church schools (MOE, 1996).

In a recent statement, the Minister of General Education Dennis Wanchinga said the government planned to construct 115 secondary schools in order to increase access to education (Zambia Daily Mail, March 18, 2017). In the same tabloid, Zambia National Education Coalition (ZANEC) board chairperson Kabika Kakunta said the country has made progress in promoting access, especially at primary school level where nearly all the children were currently enrolled in school due to massive investment in infrastructure and declaration of free primary education. Establishment of schools did not consider factors which could contribute to high quality education for improved academic performance particularly learners from distant places to and from their schools. Expanding enrolment through increased schools close to the people has been a great step towards universalizing education as the eligible learners would access schools.

In Mwandi district, most of the schools were built through the liberalization and decentralization strategy which transferred decision making authority from higher authorities to the community members. The strategy mandated local people to decide about the location at which a new school was to be built. For instance, one of the secondary schools under this study is located 10 kilometers away from some villages where learners come from. This prompted parents to rent or construct houses near the schools for children to access education at the nearest place. In other words, weekly boarding was established whereby learners will be at school for a week and go home over the weekends to collect food and other school requisites.

There are many reasons why some parents choose to send their children to schools on weekly boarding arrangement. According to Kelly (1996) boarding costs at secondary schools were higher and this led to a widened

gap between the rich and the poor. Beere (1993) agrees with Kelly (1996), when he observed that in 1986, St. Johns Secondary school in Mongu had 300 out of 500 pupils who failed to pay boarding fees. These learners (300) opted to find accommodation with relatives. Besides, weekly boarding helps to reduce the distance learners cover to get to the nearest schools. In Kenya and in the United States, weekly boarders had a resident family that lived in the dorm known as dorm parents, Warigi (2001). However, many parents argued that a teacher could not take the place of a parent especially when one was dealing with teenage youngsters in very emotionally and delicate stage.

Additionally, some parents do not wish to send their children in full time boarding schools for fear of getting them exposed to immoral life. In support of such views, Yeo, (2010) observed that sexual assault and homosexual tendencies were more common in boarding schools especially in coeducation boarding schools. This reason become opportunities for parents to settle on weekly boarding initiatives.

Weekly boarding has opposing results among researchers on academic performance of learners. It is commonly argued that this reduces the ability of learners to focus their attention in studies due to a number of challenges they face (Subrahmanian, 2003). In some places, pupils, especially girls, are still faced with numerous challenges that hinder them from excelling further in their education, among them lack of boarding facilities to support their stay in school.

This situation has forced them to be weekly boarders, in poorly-constructed makeshifts. This situation prompted the researcher to assess challenges and opportunities of weekly boarding on the academic performance of pupils in Mwanidi district.

## 1.2. Statement of the problem.

Education is a major basis to national development; this is according to the national goals of education in Zambia as reflected in the national policy of education (MOE, 1996). In an effort to ensure that all children regardless of their social status get access to education, the Government of Zambia then introduced free primary Education in 2002. This policy saw many children going through to grade eight (8) and beyond (MESVTEE, 2014). However, schools with junior secondary classes are few in Mwanidi district and are distant from one another. To make matters worse, the district has only three (3) secondary schools of which only one (1) is a boarding school with limited space (MDEB, 2015). Parents to the learners opted to find accommodation for their children near these schools.

Concerns have however been raised over the opportunities and challenges of weekly boarding on the academic performance of learners (UMDSS, 2016). This raised some questions for assessment of pupils' performance in relation to weekly boarding and hence, this study.

## 1.2 General objective

The purpose of this study was to assess the opportunities and challenges of weekly boarding on pupils' academic performance in Mwanidi District of Western province, Zambia.

## 1.3 Specific objectives

To achieve the purpose of this study, three specific objectives guided the research process:

- (i) To investigate the challenges faced by weekly boarders in schools in Mwanidi District.
- (ii) To identify the opportunities of weekly boarding on pupils' academic performance.
- (iii) To examine the effect of weekly boarding on the academic achievement of learners in Mwanidi District.

## 1.4 Research questions

The following were the research questions for the study:

- (i) What challenges are faced by weekly borders in schools in Mwandia District?
- (ii) What are the opportunities of weekly boarding on pupils' academic performance?
- (iii) How does weekly boarding affect learners' academic performance in schools in Mwandia District?

## 1.7 Significance of the study

This study would provide information to planners, policy makers, teachers, parents and community members about the importance of appropriate organisation of weekly boarding to improve learners' academic performance. Therefore, findings will be appropriate in future planning and practice in building new schools on proper strategies to institute better learning environment. Further, as long as weekly boarding will likely affect academic performance of the learners, the findings will open new avenues for future studies in different schools across the country.

## 1.8 Conceptual framework

The current study conceptualizes academic performance of learners as an outcome of weekly boarding. This study reviewed quality determinants proposed by Omari (1995). This author grouped such quality determinants into input, process and output (IPO) components.

### Inputs

Under inputs, Omari (1995) assumed that provision of quality education requires the availability of a conducive learning environment. As location of school depends on decisions made by leaders, Osokoya and Akuche (2005) urge school administrators and community members to ensure availability of

good infrastructure for quality learning outcomes. Geographical location of the school is also necessary as distance from home residence of the learners necessitates the existence of weekly boarding.

The other category of inputs is financial inputs. These are the expenses that parents incur when it comes to send their children in boarding schools. If these are well utilized, they can positively affect academic progression of the learner (Dewey, Husted and Kenny, 2000).

In a school system, physical facilities play an important role. Without them learning cannot take place. Bandele (2003) and Vandiver (2011) identified physical facilities in school as a key factor which affects academic performance in the school system.

### Process

Processes are group behaviors that can be observed, are influenced by different input factors and affect the outcome. On the other hand, Omari (1995) argues that quality-learning outcome is an interaction of several elements. Such elements include the quality of lodging that learners have.

### Output

The output phase considers the kind of academic performance aimed to be achieved, namely academic performance, social skills, disciplined students and well-educated graduates. Looking at weekly boarding issue, several concerns have been raised over the output of academic performance of learners who reside in such arrangements. According to Mlozi et al. (2013), in any productive processes, the quality of the output depends upon that of inputs. In this case, the development of schools and boarding facilities requires inputs including financial resources as well as a combination of prudent budgeting, strict implementation, and good reporting for funds (Ayeni and Ibukun, 2013).

## 1.9 Delimitation

The study targeted the population confined within the four (4) rural schools in Mwandu District. This is the population that provided meaningful responses to the research questions at hand.

## 1.10 Operational definition of terms.

**Academic performance:** refers to how learners deal with their studies and how they accomplish different tasks given to them by their teachers.

**Boarding School:** a school where learners study and live during the school year with their fellow students under the charge of teachers and administrators.

**Challenges:** obstacles faced by learners who live in weekly boarding setup.

**Weekly boarding:** where pupils are not full-time boarders but live in rented accommodation during the week but go home on weekends.

## 2 LITERATURE REVIEW

### 2.1. CHALLENGES FACED BY BOARDERS.

Literature from the global perspective has given more information on the problems associated with boarding schools. A study by Luo, Yangjiang, Linxiu, Chengfang and Scott (2009) revealed that learners in boarding schools had more challenges than day scholars in terms of feeding. This was due to poor living conditions and nature of meals served in the boarding school.

As demonstrated in the U.S., Canada, New Zealand, and Australia, residential schools prepared indigenous children for menial labor and domestic service rather than provide quality education (White, 2004). Thus, children coming from these schools would be on the one hand, less culturally adept and hence less able to succeed in their home context, while on the other hand insufficiently skilled to be successful in the dominant society.

In Russia, some children face discrimination in seeking to access boarding schools. However, many children with disabilities and their parents prefer these schools to mainstream schools because they tend to have more teachers and other staff with specialized training to work with children with disabilities and more accommodations to meet their specific educational needs (Curto, et al, 2014). However, because mainstream schools usually lack these accommodations or may not admit children with disabilities, attending a specialized school is often not the result of a meaningful choice.

A study by Maphoso and Mahlo (2014) on a comparative study between boarding and non-boarding schools in South Africa found that in boarding schools where sanitation was poor even the academic performance of students was poor compared to schools where sanitation was moderate and good. Similarly, Ddungu (2000) revealed that sanitary conditions in which people become accustomed to poor hygiene are dangerous to the psychological upbringing and to the learning process of a student. Thus, he recommended that schools should always ensure that buildings are kept clean.

The other challenge linked to boarding learners is lack or poor accommodation. Accommodation has a significant effect on the academic performance of students and in schools where facilities are good, the performance of students is also high compared to schools where facilities are poor. In light of this, it's true as the findings of Nabaseruka (2010) on the effect of students' living conditions on their academic performance in secondary schools of Goma, revealed that congestion in dormitories affects academic performance of students. The above declaration is supported by Joshua and Zachariah (2016) who observed that noisy and overcrowded residences with inadequate security and lighting at night are common examples of physical

environment that undermine students' ability to engage in their studies.

In addition to the many problem's borders go through, sources of their food also affect their wellbeing. Joshua, et al (2016) report in their study that a high percentage of learners return home for lunch when learning and teaching is on course while others do not take lunch at all and skip it altogether. This finding showed clearly that the food problem which emanates from home backgrounds and environments and all accompanying problems related to them largely contributed to the poor performance of learners who reside in weekly boarding.

Other problems that day students that lived in compounds faced included lack of reference and reading materials in their relatively poor homes and backgrounds. Coupled with other problems, such as poor lighting systems, interference, noise pollution in their environments and such other things like hunger, lack of reading company and societal attitudes, all these made it extremely difficult for day students to excel in the Kenya Certificate of Secondary Education (Adetunde and Asare, *ibid*). Bahadar et al (2014) penned similar findings in their study conducted in Somalia. The initial information collected from 329 students revealed that it became difficult to provide learners with necessary materials for their survival.

According to Press Release Login (PRLog) (2012), boarding schools in the neighboring Gauteng Province had all the facilities which students needed during their studies, which create a learning environment for pupils to access libraries, computers and teachers while doing their homework. Valentino (2012) adds that students attending boarding schools on average show higher achievement rates than their counterparts.

Nemes and Mzimya (2015) carried out a study on the availability and utilisation of girls' hostel services rural based community secondary

schools in Igunga District in Tanzania. They used a cross-sectional research design on a sample size of 84 respondents. Findings from three (75%) school heads, three (75%) school board chairpersons, three (75%) hostel supervisors and three (75%) hostel prefects indicated that school hostels faced competition from cheaper private accommodation. They claimed that, although renting of accommodation in public residential areas is insecure the cheaper private accommodation continued to attract parents who could not afford the high hostel expenses. This implies that as long as the majority of parents in rural areas remain in abject poverty, they are forced to rent cheaper but insecure accommodation for their daughters.

According to Snelson (1973), weekly boarding had continued in some areas whereby pupils carried their own beddings, food and lived in a hut erected by themselves and cooked their own food. Those who did not have time to prepare food had to starve the whole day in order to attend classes. Ahmed (2004) also concluded that provision of food act as a strong incentive to attend school on a regular basis while Kelly (1996) echoed the same sentiments about poor school attendance by the children in weekly boarding day schools.

Following the de boarding policy in the late 1980, most rural children especially girls had challenges in accessing education in Zambia due to distance to and from school. In their pursuit of education, most of the rural girls rent some small houses to access their school. Looking at poverty levels which stand at 60% in Zambia (CSO, 2018) most of the girls become prey to adult males who take advantage of their vulnerability and the girls are forced to engage in illicit sex to sustain their living (FAWEZA, 2014).

Mwanza (2015) did a research related to this study. She studied on the state of girl-child's education in Chongwe. The researcher noted key issues prevailing in girls' education in Zambia especially in rural areas which include high absenteeism and poor retention. The causative factor to these issues is partly due to poverty.

It has also been established that parents incur huge costs to finance the stay of their children in boarding schools. In a study of girl-child's education, Mwanza (ibid) revealed that parents incur other direct costs of sending their children to school such as transport, food and other school requisites.

Lack of parental supervision has also been cited to be problematic to learners who live on their own. Failure to take care of the children leads to immoral behaviour in terms of pregnancies. In most rural setups where girls are permitted to sleep on their own, this also happens when they go for weekly boarding to distant schools. This situation exposes girls to pregnancy, HIV and other sexually transmitted diseases.

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## **2.2. OPPORTUNITIES OF WEEKLY BOARDING ON PUPILS' ACADEMIC PERFORMANCE.**

Boarding schools seem to have varied benefits for the learners' future life, like improving academically as they have all the time available to immerse in an education environment.

Kazmi and Perveen (2011) from their cross-sectional study found out that the environment

affects personality development as a result of lack of emotional expression. However, the respondents were of the view that sending children to boarding schools can help in easing the psychological and educational challenges of absent parenting. It is also emphasized by Moris (2013) that boarding schools offer many opportunities for all children, including an extended range of education, supervised homework time before and after school activities.

Living together in the boarding school increases solidarity and cooperation among learners. Hodges, Sheffield and Ralph (2013) reports in their study in Australia that treated students are more likely to do their homework in groups, and that strong students help weak ones. Additional research indicates that small dorm groups had access to an extensive support network which creates a sense of community and support among boarding students and reduces the stress that might be associated with being away from home (Schaverien, 2011).

In Maris's (2013) study carried out in China wealthy business elites, he learnt that parents send off their babies in an attempt to establish their independence hoping to set them up with life skills from a very tender age. Moreover, children develop their social skills from their very younger age, as they interact with other fellows. This interaction plays a major role in personality development of the child.

In the earlier explanation, it was reported that parents send their children to distant schools because of lack of schools in their localities. Sometimes the schools within reach were understaffed and lacked proper education delivery. Because of poverty levels, home environments of the students and their family backgrounds impacted negatively on the performance. Therefore, staying near the school in boarding offered learners an opportunity to

study and concentrate on their academic work (Joshua, et al, 2016).

According to Press Release Login (PRLog) (2012), boarding schools in the neighboring Gauteng Province had all the facilities which students needed during their studies, which create a learning environment for pupils to access libraries, computers and teachers while doing their homework. Valentino (2012) adds that students attending boarding schools on average show higher achievement rates, both academically and socially, because boarding schools become extended families where teachers and students live and learn.

Research on the life satisfaction of young people reveals that it is influenced by personality, environmental, and activity variables. Both personal and ecological assets such as school connectedness and positive relationships with peers and parents—have been found to significantly and positively predict the life satisfaction of early adolescents (Oberle, Schonert-Reichl, & Zumbo, 2011). While

going away to boarding school may represent an initial dislocation from these assets, it may also represent an important social context for some students that puts them in greater contact with more supportive assets such as teachers and other pro-social adults and peers.

Nemes and Mzimya (2015) carried out a study on the availability and utilisation of girls' hostel services rural based community secondary schools in Igunga District in Tanzania. They claimed that, although renting of accommodation in public residential areas is insecure the cheaper private accommodation continued to attract parents who could not afford the high hostel expenses. Evidence from the study shows that the provision of accommodation facilities for learners promotes enrolment and retention in secondary schools,

particularly in developing countries where the girl-child remains largely marginalised.

Another study by Bass (2007) on two boarding schools in the United States and South African schools revealed that students who went through the boarding system remained friends for life. According to her study, Bass noted that one of the main reasons that parents usually send their students to boarding school is to let their children benefit from discipline and structure offered in many boarding environments.

Bass (2007) suggests that boarding schools can be a remedy for certain students who are motivated, but need to live in an environment that matches their desire to perform well in school. Capable students who come from homes that are unsupportive and not conducive for learning are ideal for the boarding school environment. These homes may include parents who are too busy to be attentive to their children's learning needs, unable to provide the necessary transportation to enable students to participate in extra-curricular activities, or homes where parents are uninvolved in their children's education. Students who needed separation from their parents were also ideal candidates for boarding school.

A few studies have been carried out in Zambia concerning the benefits of boarding schooling on the learners' academic achievement. A study by Kakupa (2014) on selected day-secondary schools in the Western province of Zambia looked at exploring school effectiveness in challenging contexts. The study revealed that boarding schools provide a conducive learning environment with high teacher/pupil interaction. This attracts more pupils to go to school to acquire academic excellence.

The other opportunity mentioned in the above study is that boarding schools offer more time and better circumstances for studying. There is sufficient time to study and concentrate on



studies, thereby impacting positively on the class performance. Supervised learning, time dedication to academic programs such as reading books and other learning materials bring academic excellence. As the children come from homes, they have an opportunity to study and help them to overcome any shortcomings in their progress. As some parents are illiterate, they cannot help the students with their studies or give them opportunities to learn more knowledge, which can be provided in residential schools. This implies that the study of the children can be monitored after school hours.

The bringing together of different pupils of varying learning abilities will enable the majority of the students to excel. On top of that, boarding school students generate the sense of team-building among themselves while studying there which is absolutely necessary for their future. They grow this mentality of supporting and helping each other and maintain a very close relationship between each other. It also comes out that in a boarding school student learn to respect other peoples' rights and values, generate a sacrificing mentality and sense of cooperation. It also helps students to learn team-building and fellowship. Interacting and communicating with people at an early age is very important for a child's personal life and can be especially helpful for future professional activities. In this process of learning through teamwork, consideration for others and tolerance are taught. Lifelong friendships and strong alumni networks are established.

It is also very common to see that boarding school students are self-confident and self-dependent more than day-time school students. Boarding schools do play a huge role on growing a personality and attitude of a student. A student learns to be self-dependent, confident, hardworking while studying in a boarding school. Boarding schools contribute, more than day-schools, to a developed sense of

independency and maturity. The pupil also learns to survive using their own initiatives and therefore makes them more responsible citizens. The spirit of independence that is created in the pupils that attend a boarding school remains an advantage to the parents or guardians (Ebenuwa-Okoh, 2010). There is a reduction of dependency syndrome in the pupils.

### **2.3. THE EFFECTS OF WEEKLY BOARDING ON THE ACADEMIC ACHIEVEMENT OF LEARNERS**

A number of studies have been undertaken to assess the effects of boarding schooling on the academic achievement of learners. The explicit goal of these boarding schools is to substitute time at school to time at home, under the presumption that this will generate better outcomes for students. Curto and Fryer (2014) found that being enrolled in the boarding school, increases students test scores by 20 percent of a standard deviation per year spent in the school. Machebe, Ezegebe and Onuoha (2017) researched on the impact of parental level of income on students' academic performance in high schools in Japan. Three hundred students of Senior High Schools in Osaka and Hyogo prefectures of Japan were randomly selected and used as the sample population. The researchers reported that children from parents that are more active in the process of monitoring and imparting educational knowledge excel in their academic career and are often more productive in the society. With adequate care, tutelage and active participation of parents in the child's educational activities like monitoring of homework and other school related activities, the child is more likely to be courageous and as such do well at school. According to Machebe, etal (2017), lack of resources by boarders also leads to their poor performance in school activities.

Repeated evidence has confirmed that the most accurate predictor of student academic

achievement is the extent to which children interact with their school mates. Evidence also suggests that peer relationships are a significant source of social and emotional support, beyond that of the parents (Gorrese & Ruggieri, 2012).

In another study, Faisal, Shinwaria and Izzat (2014) assessed the academic performance of day scholars versus boarders in pharmacology examinations in Pakistan. It came out from the study that an environment of healthy competition with other classmates and peers is provided at boarding schools motivates children to improve their performance. The day scholars, on the other hand, lived with their parents and didn't come across with issues such as bad food, hostel ragging and homesickness, but they surely envied the freedom and independence of their hostel mates. It is believed that due to unsustainable home environment, the day scholars could not study properly.

In Australia, Indigenous students were less likely to attend school, had higher rates of daily absenteeism, and significantly lower retention rates than their non-Indigenous counterparts (ABS, 2012). As mentioned previously, improving access to education for indigenous children living in remote areas via attendance at boarding schools has been a key recommendation of recent government reports (Productivity Commission, 2011).

In Africa, a research by Jagero (2011) found that learners who reside in residences with good facilities scored higher in terms of academic achievement while learners with a lower academic achievement mostly lived in areas without water and electricity. Similarly, boarding schools scored higher in academic achievement, which concurs with the finding by Marais and Meier (2010) who established that boarders outperform non-boarders in academic achievement.

Adetunde and Asare (2009) compared the performance of day and boarding students in

senior secondary school certificate mathematics examination in Ghana. The researchers noted that there was no significant difference between a student been a boarder or day student in terms of the performance in mathematics. However, there were some boarding students would not study because there was no parental or adult control over them.

Durán- Narucki (2008) provided empirical evidence of the effect of building quality on academic outcomes whilst (Bhagwan 2012) also found that learners in residences with poor accommodation had an academic achievement below schools with fair conditions. In another study, Jagero (ibid) discovered that the condition of the buildings in some Kenyan schools was related to academic achievement, and improvement in their condition was associated with improvement in achievement scores.

According to a study by Makewa (2016), the greatest problem faced by day students schools in the Hai District in Kilimanjaro-Tanzania was home environment that was not conducive to reading. Other problems include bad company at home, lack of proper accommodation and proper diet. This led to the majority of day secondary schools continued to perform poorly in the national examinations compared to boarding secondary schools.

Rasheed (2017) assessed the effects of school factors on academic achievement in agricultural science among selected secondary schools in Oyo, Nigeria identified indiscipline to affect the academic performance of learners. Furthermore, Ehioghiren and Izehiuwa (2014) did an analysis of academic performance of boarding and day students in Benin metropolis of Nigeria. It was revealed that the academic results in a boarding school are most times better than in day-schools. This was because boarding schools have good results because of good conditions, supervised studying and food.

According to the Zambian National Assessment Survey of 2008, achievement levels in rural schools were generally far below urban schools. It is in rural areas where learners face challenges such as long distance to schools and inadequate access of education. As a last resort, parents send their children to find accommodation in far away schools for boarding purposes. Several factors can be associated to poor performance in the researched rural places of Zambia. These included socio-economic status, family support, status of boarding rooms, among others (MOE, 2008).

Kelly and Kanyika (2000), observe that a positive correlation exists between frequency of homework and performance. Some schools with poor pupil performance do not have any policy on homework. Without parental assistance, boarders will likely underperform in academic activities. Some studies mostly from developed countries, have shown that parents are more likely to be involved with their children's education at home than in school (Lee and Bowen, 2006).

Amongst the boarding pupils, research has indicated that boys' and girls' approaches to learning tend to be different (Artelt et al., 2003). For example, Marsh et al. (2006) found modest, yet systematic patterns of gender differences consistent with gender stereotypes. In terms of academic buoyancy, mean-level gender effects have shown boys scoring higher on academic buoyancy than girls (Martin & Marsh, 2008). The limited research available suggests that there are differences in the academic and non-academic development of boarders according to their gender.

Research into engagement and performance measures done in African states and Zambia inclusive indicates that, on average, older students are higher in disengagement and lower in homework completion (Martin, 2007).

Although there was mostly parity between day students and boarders from a longitudinal perspective, there were two significant differences. In terms of academic outcomes, boarders and day students differ significantly in terms of absenteeism. The finding that boarders were less absent from school than day students is not surprising given that they reside at the school during school time and there are various systems and structures in place to ensure attendance. Therefore, it may be that the academic lives and influences on boarders are more similar to that of day students, whereas after school or non-academic life is more dissimilar.

Further, monitoring and coaching of students is better in boarding schools. Often parents of students, who are illiterate, are unable to monitor the progress of their children and coach them in their studies. Furthermore, in boarding schools it is easier to monitor and coach students than in day schools, because students stay intern during and after school hours. A lack of monitoring and support of children especially those in boarding is a negative characteristic of day-school. On the other hand, Omotere (2011) opined that focused learners can find sufficient time to study and concentrate on studies, thereby impacting positively on the academic performance. The limitation of being in constant contact with the parents helps them concentrate on studies, the availability of time to allow for serious studying. Situations of having a student away from their parents with less house chores to attend to normally helps them perform better class.

In boarding schools, there are study schedule that students are compelled to follow. So, they are obliged to study. The students are obliged to study according to a structured program. Additionally, the way in which boarding schools provide relief for parents who are intensively

involved in their professions and careers is also of particular importance.

## 2. 5. Personal critique and gaps of the study.

The review of related studies identified several gaps that further convinced the researcher to undertake this study. Many similar studies have been done in the whole world on influence of day schooling and self-boarding arrangements on academic performance in schools. Few of such studies have been done in Zambia, and none has been conducted in Mwanzi District. It was therefore this gap that this study sought to fill. The researcher did an intensive review of literature related to weekly boarding and academic performance. From the literature reviewed a number of gaps emerged which further informed the direction the study to be taken.

## 3. RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

### 3.1 Research design

The researcher used the descriptive research design. This is because it was an efficient way of obtaining information needed to describe people's feelings, thoughts and opinions (Orodho and Kombo 2002). This kind of information can best be achieved by use of either direct interviews or questionnaires which were the main instruments of research design. In using the descriptive research design, the researcher used both the qualitative and quantitative means of collecting data.

### 3. 2 Research sites

The research was conducted in Mwanzi District of western province. The district shares borders with Namibia to the South-West, Sesheke District to the west and Kazungula to the North-East. The researcher chose the area because of his familiarity with the region which enhanced better management of the study.

### 3. 3 Target population

The study population was composed of all Head teachers, all Heads of Departments and senior teachers, teachers and learners from UCZ Mwanzi secondary, Lipumpu secondary, Mabumbu and Chisu primary schools of Mwanzi District.

### 3. 4 Study sample

The respondents of the study were drawn from four (4) schools. These include 80 pupils, 16 teachers, 4 HODs/senior teachers and 4 Head teachers. The total sample was 104 respondents.

### 3. 5 Sampling techniques

The researcher used purposive and simple random sampling procedures in selecting respondents for the study. The teachers, HODs and administrators were purposively selected on the basis of being directly involved on learners' well being. Simple random sampling method was used to select pupils.

### 3. 6 Data collection

Secondary data for the research was obtained through the use of sources such as; the public documents and past researches. Primary data was collected from the field using questionnaires, interview schedules and observation guides. The instruments supplemented each other to close the gap which might have been left if one instrument only was used.

### 3. 7 Research Instruments

#### 3. 7. 1. Interview Schedule

The researcher used semi-structured interviews to gather data from head teachers. The questions were designed in such a way as to elicit subjective views of the research participants.

**3. 7. 2. Questionnaires:** The questionnaires were administered to three categories of respondents namely the Heads of Departments, teachers and pupils. According to Kothari (2004), one of the merits of the questionnaire is

freedom from the interviewer's bias as answers are in respondents' own words and that it gives respondents adequate time to give well thought answers. Questionnaires are easy to analyze, and most statistical analysis software can easily process them.

### 3.7.3. Observation Guide

The observation guide helped the researcher to remain focused on the variables being studied. The researcher visited the houses for learners and observed the conditions of various places like the kitchen, bathrooms, water points, toilets, dormitories and the compound.

### 3.8 Reliability

Reliability is essentially a synonym for consistency and replicability over time, over instruments, and over groups of respondents. The reliability of the questionnaires was tested by distributing them to four teachers who were not to be included in the main study. This was to help the researcher know whether the questions in the instruments were clear.

### 3.9 Validity

Validity was addressed through member checking, the honesty, depth, richness and scope of the data. Content validity was established by seeking judgments from the supervisors who assisted in developing and revising the research instruments. The supervisors provided feedback and their recommendations were incorporated in the final questionnaire.

### 3.10 Pilot Testing

The interviews were pre-tested to a selected sample that was similar to the actual sample to be used in the study in Mwanzi District of Zambia. The researcher selected two schools in the district. The two schools that were used in pilot testing did not take part in the main study.

### 3.11 Data analysis

Quantitative data collected from questionnaires was processed by coding the closed ended questions and entering the data into the rhemaforms as well as Microsoft excel to run

descriptive analysis such as frequencies, percentages and pie charts. Open ended questions, interview schedules and observation guide were analyzed thematically.

### 3.12 Ethical considerations.

In addition to seeking permission from the University research department, the DEBS office also authorized the researcher to collect data from the sampled schools. The participants were given adequate information on the aims of the research. Additionally, the researcher provided the participants with copies of informed consents. All participants were assured that the data which they would give would be treated with confidentiality.

### 3.13 Limitation of the Study

The challenges faced during the research process included issues whereby some respondents were not willing to give out information as evidenced in some blank spaces left on the questionnaires. Also due to time limitation, the study did not involve other educational stakeholders for which generalization was also limited.

## 4. PRESENTATION OF FINDINGS.

### 4.1 Challenges faced by weekly boarders in schools in Mwanzi District

In determining the challenges that weekly boarders face, the researcher asked both the participants about the issue. Figure 1 illustrates responses from teachers relating to such challenges.

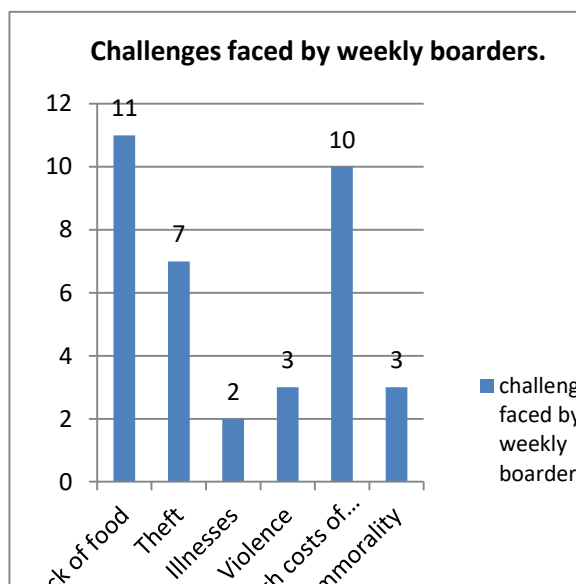


Fig 1

From figure 1, 11 teachers representing 100% indicated that lack of food was the main challenge faced by learners. This was seconded by 10 teachers representing 90.9% who cited lack of funds to buy requisites such as exercise books. 7 (63.6%) of the teachers indicated theft of the learners' properties. Immorality at 27.3% was also another problem faced especially by the girl child while violence (27.3%) was also reported to be another setback. Two (2) of the teachers (18.2%) advanced illnesses to be challenges faced by learners.

The respondents (learners) were asked to tick the option that best described their opinion concerning the conditions of accommodation on a two-point like scale. Table 1 gives the details.

**Table 1: Responses from learners on challenges faced by weekly boarders.**

Accommodation	Response	Frequency	(%)
Enough space for sleeping.	A	25	35
	D	46	65
Enough space for studying.	A	27	38
	D	44	62
constant supply of	A	45	63

water	D	26	37
Provision for clean toilets	A	38	54
	D	33	46
Enough security	A	14	20
	D	57	80

Out of the five (5) items, security was the major challenge cited by 80% of the learners who did not agree that enough security was provided in the compound all the time. However, a number of learners admitted to having experienced challenges in terms of lack of space for sleeping (65%) and studying (38%), lack of constant supply of water (63%) and no provision for clean toilets (54%).

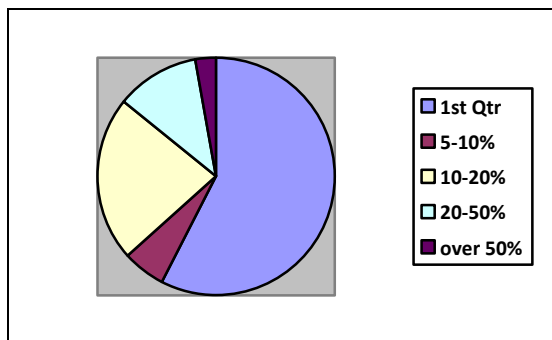
#### 4. 2. Opportunities of weekly boarding on learners' academic performance.

On whether current pupils had any benefits of being in weekly boarding, several benefits were indicated. These include, being able to study with their roommates and neighbouring pupils as well as exchanging educational materials with their fellow pupils from school. The pupils further stated that they could freely pass by a friend's place or meet them to consult and share knowledge. Further, the participants indicated that it was cheaper in terms of school fees and that they were able to have a balanced diet with variety of food. On the other hand, a few pupils who leave around one of the sampled schools stated that staying in weekly boarding during the rain and flood periods were relieved of the dangers of crossing streams on a daily basis.

#### 4. 3. Effects of weekly boarding on the academic achievement of learners.

From the data collected, the researcher was able to examine the effects of weekly boarding on the academic achievement of learners. Figure 2 presents the findings on the average

performance of weekly boarders on termly basis.



*Fig 2*

Out of the 16 teachers, 8 of them indicated that weekly boarders scored between 10-20%, 4 teachers pointed out 20-50%, 2 recorded 5-10%, while 1 reported that learners achieved less than 5% and the other one indicated over 50%.

In the questionnaire the learners were asked to tick the option that best described their opinion concerning the academic performance of weekly boarders on a two-point Likert scale from Disagree (D) to Agree (A).

**Table 2. Academic achievement of weekly boarders**

Statement	response	frequency	(%)
We normally miss morning classes.	A	26	37
	D	45	63
We sometimes leave class before the end of the last period because we have to prepare meals and come back for prep.	A	33	54
	D	38	46
Some learners	A	44	62

miss Monday and Friday lessons.	D	27	38
Distance covered to school affects performance?	A	44	62
	D	27	38
Inadequate food and education materials affect learning.	A	45	63
	D	26	37
congested houses negatively deter good performance	A	57	80
	D	14	20

According to table 2, the majority of the learners (80%) agreed that poor and congested houses negatively deter good performance while 63% accepted that lack of enough food and education materials affected their learning. An equal percentage of 62% thought that some learners miss Monday and Friday lessons and that the distance covered by pupils to school affects their performance. 54% of the learners stated that the issue of preparing meals forced them to leave class before the end of the last period because they had to prepare meals and go back for prep. Only 37% believed that some learners normally miss morning classes.

## 5. DISCUSSION OF FINDINGS.

### 5.1 Challenges faced by weekly boarders in schools in Mwandu District.

#### 5.1.1 Lack of food

Among the challenges that affect weekly boarders, lack of food was reported by a number of teachers (68%). This finding concurs with the

research findings of Luo et al. (2009) in examining boarding status and students' nutrition status by comparing boarding and non-boarding students in rural Shaanxi Province in China. They found that learners in boarding houses were suffering from poor health resulting from inadequate meals. Mo et al. (2011) showed that these boarding students in rural China had reduced academic performance relative to their non-boarding peers.

Also, during the collection of data, it was proved that some of the learners (54%) left class before the end of the last period because they had to prepare meals and come back for prep. This finding relates to Navuri's (2009) observation in a study conducted in Maasailand where he stated that school feeding programme should be put in place to improve students' attendance especially where school attendance was low.

### 5.1.2 Illnesses, violence and immorality.

Illnesses reported by 18% of the teachers were also identified to be among the challenges faced by weekly boarders. According to the researcher's observation, learners under this study lived in dilapidated houses which were poorly maintained and ventilated caused sicknesses among the boarders. Similar to these research findings, Liu et al. (2010), cited the main reason for illnesses as the environment where learners live which might have consequences on their psychological well-being, physical health, and learning outcomes.

The headteachers further cited beer drinking and fighting amongst pupils as some of the disciplinary cases they dealt with. The activities children involved themselves were such as prostitution, drug abuse, fighting and other forms of distracters outside the school setting. As reported by Davis (2001) and FAWEZA (2014) these wrong activities are caused by poor supervision either from their parents or school

officials. A study carried out by Adams (2006) indicated that learners whose life is characterised by violence and immorality tend to have poorer academic outcomes.

### 5.1.3 Poor accommodation

According to this study, most learners complained of inadequate space for sleeping and studying. One of the participants confirmed that "*there was lack of shelter for the weekly boarders*".

The findings of this study are in conformity with Kasule, (2000) that poor accommodation contributes to negative students' learning. Duffell, (2005) also affirms that good accommodation offers students with excellent opportunities for learning and social interaction with fellow students from varying social backgrounds.

## 5. 2. Opportunities of weekly boarding on pupils' academic performance

### 5. 2. 1 Reduced distance to school.

In this study, 71.5% of the learners indicated that schools were located far from their homes. Some pupils from far away villages opted for weekly boarding in order to access school nearby. The model used in this work confirms that shorter distance to schools was a basis for good academic achievement (Osokoya and Akuche, 2005). Similarly, a study carried out by Liu et al., (2010) in rural China concerning effectiveness of the Rural Primary School Merger Program. The researchers indicated that the merging of remote village schools into county schools was favourable because many additional students had to begin boarding at their new schools to avoid long commutes.

Reduced distance to school was an opportunity as one of the pupils said that "*I don't come late to school*". Therefore, living near the school was one of the ways to improve academic performance.



## 5. 2. 2 Relief from crossing streams.

Moreover, 11% of the learners cited the benefits of living in weekly boarding because during the rain and flood periods they were relieved of the dangers of crossing streams on a daily basis. All the schools in the area were vulnerable to floods but the level of vulnerability varied. Two schools are located on uplands and were not considered physically vulnerable, but have pupils who cross bridges and streams coming to schools. Of the rest, two schools were marginally vulnerable because the schools are located along unmaintained roads, which are impassable during the rainy season because of the floods.

The above findings were related to Tuladhar, Yatabe, Dahal, & Bhandary, (2013) who found that school children in Nepal were vulnerable against floods during the time of school. This led to the disruption of the quality of education system. Based on the responses, it was discovered that it was safer for learners to live near the schools to avoid risks associated with crossing streams on foot.

## 5. 2. 3 Study opportunity

Apart from that, 14% of the learners said that living with their friends was especially good in times of stress, such as exam periods. They also indicated that it was easier for them to have ample time to study and exchange educational materials with pupils from neighbouring schools. This was confirmed by a respondent from who outlined the benefits of being a weekly boarder that "*it gives time to study...we can do research work*". Similar to these findings, Papworth (2014) in his research in Australia reported that the boarding environment in indigenous communities reminded the boarders to study since other peers were busy reading, writing essays or doing calculations.

## 5. 3 Effects of weekly boarding on the academic achievement of learners

### 5. 3. 1 Poor performance in assessments.

According to the third objective of this study, 72% of the teachers indicated that weekly boarders performed poorly in the school assessments. What caused this status-quo was echoed by headteachers as lack of monitoring and supervision by parents and school authorities. Etsey (2005) in his research reports said that effective supervision was necessary for good academic performance of the learners.

### 5. 3. 2 Truancy

According to this study, 62% of the learners usually missed Monday and Friday lessons. Similarly, Kasanda (2003) in the National Assessment Survey carried out in Zambia in 1999 and 2003 attributes poor pupil academic performance to learner absenteeism as well as teachers. The end result of the practice was poor academic performance when such learners are presented for national examinations.

### 5. 3. 3 Lack of educational materials

Moreover, 63% of the learners complained about lack of educational materials to enhance their learning. During the interview session held with one of the Headteachers, it was reported that some learners came to school without scientific calculators, graph books and mathematical sets. According to Lyons (2012) the availability of educational resources enhances the effectiveness of schools as they are the basic resources that bring about good academic performance in the students.

### 5. 3. 5 Poor accommodation

Further, 80% of the learners agreed that poor and congested houses negatively deter academic performance. Other problems include lack of good lighting system, interference from friends in the room or disturbances from the local community. This was true from one a learner

who said that “*there is disturbance of studying and peer pressure*”. Owolabi (2015) did research to determine the effects of students housing on academic performance in Nigeria. The scholar concluded that such disturbances had negative effects on their academic performance.

## 5.4 Conclusions

From the study, it was found that one of the challenges faced by weekly boarders was lack of food. It emerged from the study that some learners in this category were suffering from poor health resulting from inadequate meals. Additionally, illnesses experienced by weekly boarders negatively affect their psychological well-being, physical health, and learning outcomes.

Poor accommodation was another challenge faced by weekly boarders due to inadequate space for sleeping and studying. Security concerns also affect the well being of the learners in the villages. This is because they live an environment which is surrounded by some people who may harm them.

It should also be noted that learners who do not have enough money to purchase home and school requirements do not perform well in school. Coupled with inflation and other economic challenges discussed earlier, parents and guardians were unable to provide the necessary support for their children who lived in boarding houses.

Although weekly boarders experienced some challenges, there were noted opportunities to learners’ academic performance. Boarding environment can teach learners a new way of life and help them conform to society and enhance their potential in school life. Living with their peers, learners made friendly connections that enable them to accomplish academic tasks together.

However, weekly boarders performed poorly in the school assessments due to reporting late to school and absenteeism from lessons. To add on, lack of funds on the part of weekly boarders to buy educational materials affected their learning.

Lack of effective monitoring and supervision of instruction negatively affects the performance of weekly boarders in school activities. Besides, learners can acquire better academic benefits from living in a decent housing unit within or around the school premises. However, the learners in this study were academically affected because they lived in poor and congested houses.

## 5.5 Recommendations of the Study

Based on the major findings of the study, the following items were recommended:

That schools should partner with the local communities to supervise and monitor learners in weekly boarding.

The Zambian government in partnership with the local community should build permanent boarding facilities to the current Day schools to accommodate learners from distant places. These facilities should be habitable in as far as health and security is concerned.

The school guidance department should reinforce guidance and counselling to weekly boarders socially and psychologically so as to manage how to live a responsible life as they continue in their academic endeavours.

## 5.6 Suggestions for Further Research

The following observations were noted for further research;

Future studies could include other factors that affect weekly boarding in different districts and provinces in Zambia.

It was also suggested that a comparative study be done to assess the academic performance between day scholars and boarders in a co-educational system in the same district.

## ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

The task of writing this report was made possible by the indispensable assistance of individuals and institutions whose contributions I wish to acknowledge. I wish to express my sincere appreciation to Ms. Judith Nakamba for her willingness to be my supervisor. I indeed acknowledge my indebtedness for her expert guidance, patience and attention that made the completion of this research possible. I thank the Head teachers, teaching staff and pupils of the sampled schools for their generous contribution and cooperation during the data collection exercise. Gratefully acknowledged also is my wife, Conceptor, and my children, David, Andrew and Ruth, for allowing me to "neglect" them for countless hours in pursuit of my education.

Finally, I thank all the lecturers, the support staff and my course mates at the Information and Communications University, my friends and all those who always motivated, encouraged and gave moral support throughout the study.

Glory and Honour be to God because of His doing.

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