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DEPARTMENT OF APPLIED EDUCATION

BACHELOR OF EDUCATION DEGREE IN GEOGRAPHY

**THE LOW PASS RATE IN GEOGRAPHY AT O' LEVEL IN RURAL SECONDARY
SCHOOLS: THE CASE OF GARIKAYI SECONDARY SCHOOL IN SILOBELA CIRCUIT
IN KWEKWE DISTRICT**

By

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APPROVAL FORM

The undersigned certify that they have supervised the student Esther Nyarai Nyazenga's dissertation entitled the low pass rate in Geography at Ordinary Level in rural secondary schools: The case of Garikayi Secondary School in Silobela circuit in Kwekwe district. It was submitted in partial fulfillment of the requirements of the Bachelor of Education Honours degree in Geography at the Midlands State University

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Dedication

This project is dedicated to my father, my loving husband, Denford and my children

Acknowledgements

I would like to express my sincere gratitude to my supervisor Dr E Gudyanga for his appraisal and critical advice at various stages of the project. I also acknowledge the head, teachers and students of Garikayi Secondary School for their cooperation in making this study a success. This project brought us together into one big family.

Abstract

This study sought to find out the factors that contribute to the low pass rate in Geography at O Level in rural secondary schools. A descriptive design was used as methodology. A sample of 6 teachers and 60 students was purposively sampled. Interviews were used to generate data while students responded to questionnaires. Content analysis was used to analyse the data generated to answer the two main questions of this study. This study revealed that the poor performance of students in Geography at Ordinary Level final examinations in rural secondary schools is attributed to their socio- economic circumstances which sometimes deny them proper role models who can motivate them to pursue education as a worthwhile investment. Most parents in rural areas have not gone far with education themselves. Rural secondary schools do not have adequate teaching and learning materials. There is need for a multi-sectoral approach to improve the pass rate in Geography in rural secondary schools. The government, the community, individual parents, the school system and students themselves should work hard to address the challenges to proper teaching and learning in these schools. Communities should inculcate in their children the true value of education. Schools should endeavor to provide adequate and relevant teaching and learning materials. Students themselves should take responsibility for their own future.

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CHAPTER ONE

THE RESEARCH PROBLEM

1.0 Introduction

This chapter discusses the background to this study, statement of the problem and justification for this study. It also outlines the research questions and the delimitations.

1.1 Background to the study

Zimbabwe gained its independence in 1980, after almost 100 years of British colonial rule. The colonial era was built on white supremacy, racial segregation and oppression of the majority African population by the white minority. Education was used as a segregatory tool to suppress and subjugate the African natives in the country (Moyo, 2014). The two tier system of F1 and F2 schools was meant to create a clear distinction between the whites and the blacks (Zvobgo, 2004).

The first ten years of independence were committed to rectifying the social inequities brought by the former colonial regimes (Ncube&Tshabalala, 2014).The new government was committed to the creation of a socialist state, which was guided by the principles of social justice and equality. Education was declared a fundamental human right. It was regarded as a potent tool for social and economic transformation. As a result, the formal sector of the education system was expanded to unprecedented levels (Ncube&Tshabalala, 2014). Secondary schools increased from a paltry 197 in 1980 to 1502 by 1989, a sharp increase of 662%. Enrolments increased by over 200%across the whole system (Ncube&Tshabalala, 2014). The majority of the new secondary schools were built in the rural areas first as upper-tops that is using nearby primary schools

infrastructure to do their business and later constructed independent sites (Chikowore,2013). In spite of the noble idea of availing secondary school education to the majority of rural students who needed it, there is a widespread outcry across the country about the low performance of pupils from these schools at Ordinary Level Examinations (Chikowore, 2013). The majority of these schools produce 0% pass rates year-in year-out.

There are concerns among stakeholders in the education sector over the growing rate of failure in Zimbabwean secondary schools in recent times. Zimbabwe Schools Examination Council (ZIMSEC) could notice the growing failure rate in the yearly decline in students' performance in the Ordinary Level (Jobolingo, 2012). Stakeholders in education blame students for general unpreparedness to study as one of the major causes of students' failure. Teachers are also blamed for lack of dedication to their jobs, which has inadvertently affected the academic performance of student.

Geography stands among critical subjects in the Zimbabwean curriculum which are meant to foster an understanding of the nation's landscape as well as equip students with necessary skills that are crucial in the appreciation and conservation of natural resources. Geography touches on many aspects of life that include the economy, the environment, environmental management, population and migration, meteorology and climatology (Samkange, 2016). The learning of geography has tangible benefits to both the society and the individual. These include the benefits of understanding the physical and social environment.it also helps the individual to develop skills and abilities that enable the individual to function efficiently within the community. Such skills include problem identification, observation and analytical skills, interpretation and problem solving skills (Samkange, 2016). Outstanding among these benefits is that Geography provides education for sustainable development.

The subject also provides countless employment opportunities for students at all levels of education from secondary to tertiary. With this reality in mind it is imperative to place equal importance on Geography as on other subjects like Mathematics, Science and English language. According to ZIMSEC, a student is considered to have passed ordinary level examinations if he or she scores a grade C or better in at least five subjects (Ngoro, 2012).

The ministry of higher and tertiary education has made it clear that Science Technology Engineering and Mathematics (STEM) subjects have strategic economic importance and are a priority. These subjects include Physics, Chemistry, Mathematics and Geography, among others. It is so much a priority that students taking up STEM subjects at A Level have been offered free education by the government (TechZim, 2016). Thus Geography is of critical importance in the curriculum.

In the public examinations of 2015, Geography ranked least among STEM subjects at O Level with a dismal national pass rate of 39% (TechZim, 2016). This has also had a negative effect on the numbers of students who decide to register for Geography at O Level. The numbers have been declining as most students choose to do Arts and Commercial subjects which have relatively higher pass rates. In the three years between 2012 and 2015 there was a constant decrease in the pass rate in Geography at national level.

The phenomenon is not limited to Zimbabwe alone. Uganda faces a similar predicament as Geography usually ranks among the least passed subjects at a level similar to O'Level (Ahimbisbwe, 2015). It is a sad reality that many students have performed dismally in Geography at Ordinary level at national level. In a report by ZIMSEC on the 2014-2015 examinations, Geography was among the least passed subjects with 38.92% which was a decline from the

previous year's 41.11% (ZIMSEC, 2016). The Midlands province has also reflected the dismal picture in performance in the Geography in the 2015 examinations, the province scored 39.9% in Geography which happened to be the third highest pass rate among the ten provinces in the country (ZIMSEC, 2016). That reflects a generally worrying failure rate in the country and the province. Kwekwe district has been worse. In the 2016 examinations, the district obtained a 28.5% pass rate. It was a decline from the previous year's 31% (Kwekwe District records, 2017).

The situation was worse at Garikayi secondary school where the percentage pass rate was 4.1% in 2012, 4% in 2013, 2.7% in 2014 and 0% in 2015 (School records, 2016). This dismal performance in Geography affected the overall pass rate at the school as many students failed to score the expected five subjects that determine a pass at Ordinary level.

This slump in pass rates for Geography among other subjects has dented the national pride and thus attracted the scrutiny of many stakeholders. Zimbabwe school examinations council has been a victim of this as it is responsible for the administration of examinations. In an effort to shield itself, grades have been lowered to allow low scoring candidates to achieve pass grades (Zimbabwe Independent 24 November, 2015). This systematic manipulation of the grades has compromised standards. The news report cited above identified low scoring subjects like Accounting, Mathematics, Chemistry and Geography as having benefited immensely from this manipulation of grades in recent years. Thus it is worthy losing sleep over the factors that could be contributing to the low pass rate in Geography especially in rural secondary schools where the pass rates are very low, worse than what is reflected at national level.

These figures are a cause for concern hence this study explored the factors behind the dismal performance of students in this subject at the school.

1.2 Statement of the problem

There is a constant dismal performance of students in geography at O Level in rural secondary schools. This is against the evident importance of the subject at O Level because of the employment opportunities that it provides to students after school. There are factors behind the low pass rates in the subject at rural secondary schools. This study investigated those factors to establish how they contribute to the failure by schools in rural areas to improve the performance of their students in Geography in final national examinations.

1.3 Significance of the study

This study was meant to help students of Geography improve their performance at O level. It was also expected to help teachers of Geography and education administrators to ameliorate the ills that cause the dismal performance of students in the subject at Ordinary level.

1.4 Research questions

This study intended to answer the following questions:

1.4.1 What factors contribute to the low pass rate in Geography at Ordinary level in rural secondary schools?

1.4.2 What can be done to improve the performance of students in final Geography examinations at Ordinary level in rural secondary schools?

1.5 Delimitations

The study focused on the factors behind that contribute to the low pass rate in Geography at Ordinary level in rural secondary schools. Particular attention was paid to the reasons why students fail the subject dismally year in year out.

The study was delimited to Garikayi Secondary School in Silobela circuit in Kwekwe district.

1.6 Limitations

The researcher expected to encounter a number of limitations in the process of the research and these included reluctance of intended respondents to participate in the study. This limitation was averted by obtaining a letter from the university that sought permission to do research at the school. Travelling costs to and from Garikayi secondary school also presented a challenge to the research. She dealt with this limitation by making arrangements with the school authorities to confirm if intended respondents were available before travelling to the school. Questionnaires were responded to in here presence on a prearranged date to minimize trips to the school.

1.7 Definition of terms

1.7.1Factor

According to the Oxford dictionary a factor is one of the elements, circumstances or influences which contribute to produce a result (Oxford, 2017). This study thus explored the various events, circumstances and influences at Garikayi secondary school and established how they contribute to the low pass rate in Geography at O level.

1.7.2 Low pass rate

According to the Cambridge university dictionary, low pass rate refers to failure to score an expected average percentage in passes. The low pass rate in Geography at O level in rural secondary school discussed in this research is a percentage pass rate well below 50%.

1.7.3 Ordinary level

A two year course which begins in Form Three and ends in Form Four and is determined by national examinations.

1.8 Summary

This chapter discussed the background to the research and the statement of the problem that prompted this study. It also outlined the questions that this study seeks to answer and the significance of this research. The next chapter will discuss literature related to this study.

CHAPTER TWO

LITERATURE REVIEW

2.0 Introduction

This chapter reviews literature related to the study and identifies areas of concurrence and contradiction. The discussion of literature answers the two main questions of this study and explore that factors that contribute to the low pass rate in Geography in rural secondary schools. It also examines solutions suggested by other scholars as a panacea to the problem of poor performance of students in rural areas. The chapter also identifies gaps left by the writings which this study will attempt to cover.

2.1 Factors that contribute to the low pass rate

A number of scholars have written on the factors that contribute to the low pass rate in rural secondary schools. These writings focused mainly on the various elements that are to blame in the dismal performance of students at rural secondary schools in national examinations. This study borrowed its basis from these writings and identified similarities as well as disparities that it can improve on.

2.1.1 Socio- economic situation of students

According to Ramalla (2009), education does not exist in a vacuum but reflects the broad social, economic and political structure of the country it services. Education and politics exist in a symbiotic relationship since education is always addressed within an environment of politics hence poor academic performance especially in rural secondary schools is a reflection of social realities such as poverty, political, and socio-economic problems (Ramalla, 2009). Poverty,

according to Kirov (2002), is concentrated in provinces that have a high rural population and the poverty is due to their high illiteracy and unemployment levels. These perpetuate the problems that influence poor school performance by the children.

Walters & Soyibo (2000) stated that student performance is very much dependent on socio economic background. Adell (2012) argues that poor performance at rural secondary schools is an international problem that has been linked to the low socio-economic background of the learners. Munn (2009) argues that the school environment might also be the source of poor performance if learner support materials are not adequate. The arguments concerning lack of facilities and resources in rural based schools are always raised where there is serious under performance at these schools (Karande & Kulkarni, 2008). Parents' occupation influences the students' achievement in academic works due to levels of their investments in their careers that determine their level of purchasing capacity.

As Ralenala (2012) observes, rural schools often serve disadvantaged learners who are from families that are not educationally supportive. Okafor (2006) believes that lack of equitable distribution of social amenities within urban and rural areas is the main reason for poor performance of pupils from rural secondary schools. Otieno & Yara (2010) asserted that learners from low economic status families tend to value domestic activities more than schooling. Such children are subjected to child labour and have little time for studies. This research also believes that the poor socio- economic situation where students hail from has a great impact on their general performance at school and in Geography in particular.

In a study by Rammala (2009) on the factors behind the rise in failure rate among South African students, the home environment has an immense role to play in the success or failure of students especially in rural secondary schools. Students are adversely affected by poverty, cultural differences, unstable homes, drug abuse and teenage pregnancy. Unpredictable events such as loss of a family member through death, divorce, separation and substance also affect their performance in school.

Adell (2002), states that the exposure of the youth to negative role models from an early age contributes not only to poor academic performance but also to learners dropping out. Learners from unstable families are usually emotionally disturbed and therefore underperform. Families in most rural area lack stability a learners are left in the care of their grandparents after the death or divorce of their parents. They are also exposed to violent crimes and poverty which in turn disturb their motivation in life.

Self-esteem is as equally important in influencing the performance of students. Even in so called developed countries, learners can perform poorly if their self-esteem is low. It is even worse in poor communities where students have a low self-worth and achieve low grades in school which in turn reinforce their negative self-image.

2.1.2 Lack of parental support

Harris (2013) attributes poor performance of rural secondary pupils to lack of parental support. There is a correlation between parental support in homework activities and the performance of pupils. Students with parental support in homework achieved better than those without parental

support even if those without parental support had a higher intelligence quotient (Harris, 2013). According to Haralambos and Holborn (2002), the school should be an extension of the home. There should not be difficulties in pupils' transition from the home to the school. Lack of parental support therefore negatively impacts on students' performance in school.

According to Ncube (2013) parents have an important role in the upbringing of the students. They have to clothe and feed the students, provide moral support, give positive comments on their children's schoolwork, if the children's schoolwork is below standard and the parent says, "I know you can do better than this." The sense of self-worth comes into the child's mind and this encourages him/her to better his/her performance. Negative comments by the parent will render the child useless and the child will eventually perform badly and will lose self-worth. The parents should pay school fees on time so that the child is not sent out of school for non-payment (Ncube, 2013).

Some parents are not able help their children because they have not gone far with their education. Some of the parents only attained primary education, especially those from the rural area. The 2012 CENSUS information shows that most of the parents in the rural areas have attained at least primary education (Ncube, 2013).Banard (2004) argues that the academic performance of students heavily depends upon the parental involvement in their academic activities to attain a higher level of academic success. Educated parents can communicate better with their children regarding school work and can assist them in their homework (Krashen, 2005). The least educated parents cannot secure formal employment to enable them to raise

funds for their children's education. They are not able also to help their children in doing homework because they have less knowledge of the content.

Rammala(2009) argues that a student's perception of parental support in his/her education affects performance. Students whose parents are not adequately literate are disadvantaged because these days' parents are required to assist their children with assignments and projects that are to be done at home. According to Marchesi & Martin (2002), one's results and expectations for the future are better if one belongs to a higher social ladder. Inherent inferiority, illiteracy of parents and poverty thus connive to negatively affect learners in rural secondary schools.

The situation at home has an integral role to play in the success or failure of students at school. Rammala (2009) argues that the atmosphere at home helps to foster or break school success. Domestic quarrels by parents especially those who are poor and unemployed result in child neglect and eventually a learner's performance will be affected negatively. The same study also acknowledges that urban students usually perform better than rural learners because those in urban areas can afford a balanced diet than their rural counterparts.

The availability of parents is also central to the success of students. Saiduddin (2003) argues that when parents quarrel or get arrested students suffer. In contrast, availability of parents provides, support, learning opportunities, behavioral models and connection to other resources which help the learner concentrate on education and perform better.it is a sad reality to note that most students in rural secondary schools in Zimbabwe are either orphans or come from single parent

families. In most instances, the single parents will be away working in South Africa and the learners are left in the care of their grandparents.

The relationship between the home and the school is also a factor in the success of students or lack of it. Karande & Kulkarni (2005) suggest that there should be a link between the school environment and the home environment. Unfortunately, schools usually do not have the mandate to interfere with family matters unless the family requests advice or intervention within allowed ethical considerations (Rammala, 2009). Some parents might not want to talk about the behavior of their children thus resulting in a negative relationship between parents and teachers (Rammala, 2009).

Dietary issues can also be blamed for poor performance of students in rural secondary schools. Rammala (2009), states that nutritional deficiencies in early childhood can be associated with poor cognition in later years where chronic deficiencies of iron, zinc and vitamins are lacking. Kaklamanou, Armitage & Jones, (2013) indicate that students need fuel to actually make them study well and be attentive and manage the responsibility of class. It has been discovered that skipping breakfast can affect problem solving tasks such as mathematics. Most rural secondary schools in Zimbabwe and Silobela in particular do not provide meals to their students even in areas where there students are known to come to school on empty stomachs.

This notion is however contested by Renala (2010) who states that even students from affluent families can perform poorly in school due to other factors. This study also agrees with Renala (2010) and believes that diet cannot really be a factor in the high rate of failure of students in

Geography at O'Level in rural secondary schools. While it can be considered as a contributing factor, this study will not be able to do any tests to establish if it could be true.

2.1.3 Students themselves

Avital (2012) asserts that attitude of rural pupils towards the school and its benefits negatively contributed towards their commitment to school work. A study by Ndebele (2008) in Plumtree district in western Zimbabwe found that most secondary pupils thought that it was better to cross either the Botswana or South African borders to comeback in a few months driving good cars than concentrating on their education. This kind of negative attitude minimizes concentration and commitment to academic work (Ndebele, 2008). Burmaster (2009) found that where pupils had no reason to be at school, they frequently absented themselves from lessons to do other things they thought would help them in life, like income generating activities.

Ncube (2013) adds that hard working teachers are let down by lazy students. When such hardworking teachers meet the class, they make clear the topics to be covered and the objectives to be achieved. What it would require then are students who read in advance so that when the teacher comes for the lesson, the grey areas are made clear and this will bring about deeper understanding on the part of the student (Ncube, 2013). Most rural secondary schools have a similar problem since students travel long distances to school and seldom have enough time to study. Furthermore, they might not have proper lighting for them to read ahead of the teacher or even revise work that they have already covered with the teacher.

Gilman & Anderson (2006) state that attitudes are learned throughout life and are held in the way children are socialised at home and at school. Children have been deemed as good observers in many educational programmes. They assess and easily copy the attitudes of those people around them and easily become like those around them. Perception about the difficulties associated with numerate subjects has thus led some pupils having preconceived ideas about numerate subjects such as Geography (Jekera, 2014).

Saiduddin (2003) identifies motivation and self-concept as integral personal variables in explaining academic failure of students in schools. Because of motivation, a learner will strive to achieve higher marks even if he or she is not naturally good in the subject. Gonzalez (1997), states that motivation maintains a circular relationship with the level of information processing and improvement of academic performance of learners. Thus if learners are not motivated there are very slim chances of success even when they have a natural gift in school.

Self-concept is also cited by Sanchez (2000) as an important personal attribute in the success or failure of learners. This attribute is developed from early childhood and affects the learner right through secondary school if it's not improved. According to Rammala (2009), most students in rural secondary schools lack self-concept as they feel despaired, disillusioned, alienated, frustrated, hopeless, powerless, rejected and estranged. These feelings destroy the confidence of the learners and thereby affecting their performance.

2.1.4 Blame on the educational system

Vundla (2012) states that the major causes of high failure rate in South African rural secondary schools include shortage of well trained teachers, inadequate teaching facilities, lack of funds to

purchase necessary equipment, poor quality textbooks, large classes, poorly motivated teachers, lack of laboratories and libraries, poorly coordinated supervisory activities, interference of the school system by politicians, incessant transfers of teachers, automatic promotion of pupils, and lack of proper classrooms.

Ncube (2013) on the other hand points to the school administration and states that the school administration should make a deliberate effort to supervise the teaching and learning process. There is no or few supervision going on in schools and so teachers are at liberty to do whatever they want. The school administration should provide adequate teaching and learning resources to enable meaningful teaching to take place. The school administration should motivate the teachers in any form within its means.

Marchesi & Martin (2002) are of the view that the relationship between the learners and the teacher greatly influences the academic performance of pupils. Characteristics of the teacher are considered as key elements for the learners' personal and academic performance. According to Jekera (2014) the work ethics displayed by the teacher significantly influence the pupils' attitude towards the teacher and his/her subject. Reciprocal appreciation between the teacher and the pupils creates an atmosphere of mutual trust and gives pupils confidence in whatever they are learning. If the teacher fails to create a good working relationship with his/her pupils, then the environment may not be conducive for effective teaching and learning Jekera (2014).

2.1.5 Language barrier

In a research study carried out in France, Sayed and Ahmed, (2009) observed that pupils who wrote examinations in their mother tongue performed better than those who wrote in a second

language. It was observed that pupils who wrote examinations in their mother language understood the instructions and requirements better than those who wrote in a second language. Language is, thus, viewed as a serious barrier to effective teaching and learning. Burmaster (2006) thus observed that some teachers teaching numerate subjects resorted to teaching in the pupils' mother tongue for clarity and simplicity. The teaching and learning of Geography at Ordinary level has been seriously affected by language barriers as the subject is taught in English and material is presented in the same language which is only a second language for all the students in rural secondary schools.

2.1.6 Teaching and learning facilities

According to Ralenala (2003), thousands of schools in South Africa have poor infrastructure. The trend observed in South African schools is also highly prevalent in Zimbabwe with the majority of schools lacking basic infrastructure such as classrooms and libraries. Pupils have to make do with the inadequate infrastructure. According to Grayson (2009), there is a strong relationship between the learners' performance and the quality of facilities available to the learners. The majority of schools in Zimbabwe do not have Internet facilities such that pupils solely depend on textbooks and teachers for their information needs. Some schools in urban areas have Internet and satellite television facilities whereas such facilities are beyond the reach of most of the rural schools. With the rapid changes taking place in Geography, pupils have a greater need for such facilities which give them access to current information. According to Stifiel, (2001) in a study carried out in the United States of America, Canada and Australia by the Centre for Education Governance, it was revealed that better funded and resourced schools

were able to improve learner performance. Some schools especially in the rural areas charge very low fees such that very little funds are left for the purchase of teaching and learning materials.

Textbooks constitute an important tool for academic achievement. It is however sad to note that most rural schools cannot afford to buy textbooks and the teacher is left to serve as the only source of information (Nyandwi, 2014). Students on the other hand cannot buy their own copies. The downside of this reality is that the teacher's information will be biased towards textbooks he is attracted to because of colour, print or the author's qualifications (Nyandwi, 2014).

A library also forms an integral part of the learning process. Hornby (2010) states that education functions in a world of books and a library is a room in which a collection of books, tapes, newspapers, journals and articles are kept for people who want to read or borrow. The absence of a library spells doom for students. It is sad to note that most rural secondary schools do not have libraries and there are no library books to help students with supplementary reading.

2.1.7 Teachers

Teachers are very crucial in the success of education because they are ultimately responsible for the translation of the education policy into action and principles based on practice during their interaction with students (Afe, 2001). Both teaching and learning depend on teachers and no wonder an effective teacher has been conceptualized as one who produces desired results (Uchefuna, 2001).

Vundla (2012) points out that one of the factors behind the high failure rate in secondary schools is lack of adequate trained teachers in rural secondary schools. In a study to understand the factors behind the high failure rate in Tanzania, Nyandwi (2014) observed that the teacher pupil

ration remained very high even after efforts were made to recruit more teachers in secondary schools. Zimbabwe faces a similar problem as there is an acute shortage of trained teachers especially in rural secondary schools. The teacher pupil ratio is very high standing at 1:40 in some schools.

The quality of teachers produced in teachers colleges and universities can also be blamed for the high failure rate in most rural secondary schools. Ncube (2013), states that in most colleges, students are enrolled on bridging courses because they do not have adequate qualifications to train as teachers. As a result, the quality of the teacher is compromised before he even becomes a teacher.

According to Bulawayo24News of 07 May 2017, there are thousands of unqualified teachers in the education sector in Zimbabwe who hold degrees in other sectors but do not have teaching qualifications. The Herald of March 11 2015 reported that Zimbabwe has 20 000 unqualified teachers.

The Guardian of 29 December 2014 reported a similar problem in the UK where about 4000 children are reported to be in the hands of unqualified teachers. The article stated that the result of such a situation is a compromised education system which can have far-reaching consequences in the future.

According to Ncube (2013), the standard of teaching in public secondary schools is characterized by lazy teachers, increasing absenteeism among teachers, general poor quality of tuition and

teachers strikes over poor salaries and working conditions. Thus, lack of motivation among teachers in public secondary schools adversely affects their performance and thereby contributing immensely to the high failure rate of students (Ncube, 2013). In a study on the factors behind students' failure, Ncube (2013) also points out that for most teachers, going to work is just a formality and some go to work without being clear on what to teach and have no time to check on the progress of the learners.

2.1.8 Teaching and learning methods

Saiduddin (2003) postulates that it is a convenient scapegoat to pass the blame and responsibility for the low academic performance to factors such as socio economic status, family, culture and the learner being less intelligent than others and not pay attention to the teaching and learning processes. He adds that all learners are educateable and the way in which the school is managed is the most critical factor in determining the quality of education for its learners. Bennell and Ncube (2009) states that the decline in performance in schools has been explained by the quality of education provided.

Effective teaching methods are central to successful teaching and learning. Torfff and Sessions (2005), state that effective teaching is a balanced blend between pedagogical knowledge and content knowledge. However, most teachers have stuck to the traditional methods of lecturing to students, where the teacher has all the knowledge and students are just recipients. Tshibalo and Schulze (2000) assert that most Geography teachers use in effectualand traditional methods in teaching Geography especially in topics like map work.

Carstens (2008) argues that Geography teachers should develop subject-specific terms to promote literacy in the subject. Inefficient teachers however become barriers to the learning of the subject as they fail to help learners acquire optimal literacy in Geography.

The medium of instruction is also cited as a factor in the poor performance of students in Geography at O'Level. Butt (2000) states that English provides the medium of teaching and learning Geography in an English context in every classroom. He adds that the use of English can be a barrier to pupils learning of Geography if the teacher fails to direct learners' mere talking about geography to impact on their actual learning. Geography language itself is argued to be a barrier to learning the subject because of its difficult terminology (Butt, 2000). Kgosana (2009) propounds that the use of geographical technical language and concepts bars learners from learning because the second language learners do not have a good command of English. The English should be user-friendly to the learners because if the teacher is not an expert in the curriculum, complicated, unreadable books will be selected which learners cannot use independently (Maduane, 2016). According to Malekela (2003) if the learner is handicapped in the language of instruction, then learning may not take place as the instructor and the learner will not be communicating effectively.

These studies are informative to this research as most students in rural secondary schools have inherent problems with English as it is their second language which they do not often use except in the classroom hence learning becomes a challenge in Geography.

2.2 What can be done to improve the pass rate in geography in rural secondary schools?

Mudzokere (2015) calls for the education of parents and guardians on the importance of education in the alleviation of poverty in rural communities as one solution to low pass rates in schools. This is argued to help children place equal importance on their education in turn improve their performance. Muranda et al, (2014) also calls for heads of schools to motivate parents of pupils to participate meaningfully in the education of their children through School Development Committees and other leadership roles.

Clusters and districts can hold staff development seminars to equip teachers with up to date techniques and content in the teaching of Geography (Muranda et al, 2014). The Ministry of Primary and Secondary Education should also provide adequate teaching and learning facilities for students at rural secondary schools to match their counterparts in urban areas (Ncube & Tshabalala, 2014).

There is need for a concerted effort among education stakeholders to make available learning and teaching materials such as textbooks, reference books, chalks, desks and build essential facilities at rural secondary schools (Nyandwi, 2014). He also calls for the intervention of the central government in availing funds to develop rural secondary schools.

This research appreciates these writings as they provide a sound basis for carrying out the research with invaluable information on the problem under investigation. The research will endeavor to improve on these previous writing and adjust on different dynamics in the study of the factors towards the low pas rates in Geography at Ordinary level in rural secondary schools.

2.3 Summary

This chapter informed this study through a review literature related to the current research. An effort was made to identify areas of corroboration as well as of conflict so that this study can both borrow and improve on other studies carried out on similar topics. The following chapter will address the research methodology of this study.

CHAPTER THREE

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

3.0 Introduction

The chapter discusses the research design of this study as well the approaches used. It also pays attention to the research instruments used to generate data. It also shows the target population and the sample for this research.

3.1 Research design

The research design refers to the overall strategy that one chooses to integrate the different components of the study in a coherent and logical way thereby ensuring one will effectively address the research problem (De Vaus, 2001). It serves as the blueprint for the collection, measurement and analysis of data. The function of the design is to ensure that the evidence obtained enables the researcher to effectively address the research problem logically and as unambiguously as possible (Leedy & Ormrod, 2013).

Cohen, Manion & Morrison (2000) asserts that a research design is a plan, structure and strategy of investigation to obtain answers to research questions. Elliot (2005) states that research design is the strategy, the plan, the structure of conducting a research study and that the design provides an overall framework for collecting data. Thus research design refers to the exposition or plan and structure of the investigation and has the objective of planning, structuring and executing the research questions. It is the plan or blue print according to which data is collected to investigate the research questions in the most economical manner (Nyamongo, 2001). It encompasses the

method and procedures employed to conduct research. The research design chosen depends upon the nature of the problem and the statement of the problem (Elliot 2005).

This research adopted the interpretive descriptive design. The researcher chose the descriptive design because of its flexibility in the gathering of data and interpretation of the findings to explain the problem under study. Words and pictures are used to convey what have been learnt (Muungani, 2011). The researcher develops concepts, insights and an understanding from patterns in data collected rather than collecting data to assess or corroborate preconceived models (Muungani, 2011). A descriptive research design involves the study of a limited number of cases with a view of drawing up conclusions that cover the generality of the whole group. The descriptive survey method was used because of its ability to include a large number of respondents through its research instruments, the questionnaire and interview (Borg & Gall, 1989).

The descriptive design has been dismissed by some critics as mere ‘description’ (Onwuegbuzie & Johnson 2006). This notion is misguided as description is fundamental to research. Descriptive research is instrumental in the generation of information that revolves around various social indicators and economic variables that affect society such as household expenditure patterns, employment and crime statistics. According to Marsh (2009), accurate descriptions of the level of poverty and unemployment have played pivotal roles in social policy reforms. Competent descriptions can thus challenge accepted assumptions and provoke immediate action to address the situation.

Interpretive descriptive design should provoke 'why' questions instead of just providing trivial information about a phenomenon. This design was instrumental in unlocking the mystery why most students in rural secondary schools fail Geography at Ordinary Level.

Dunne, Pryor & Yates (2005) asserted that the interpretive descriptive design is concerned with the past and present events as they both influence and relate to present day conditions and circumstances. This involves a study of practices, opinions, attitudes and processes being undertaken in an area. This enabled this researcher to describe how various factors connive to influence the low pass rate in Geography at Garikayi Secondary school. This design also removes barriers of strict academic approaches as the researcher has access to first-hand experience and has the freedom to interpret it accordingly based on the real life experiences described in the data generated.

This study used the mixed methods research approaches to investigate the effects of poverty on the education of the girl child in resettlement areas. Qualitative instruments like interviews and focus group discussions will be used while questionnaires will also be employed as an example of a quantitative method of generating data.

The qualitative approach will be used because the research focuses on dynamic realities that affect the society at large. The factors affecting the performance of students in Geography at O'Level are dynamic hence relevance of a qualitative approach in this research. The qualitative approach studies things in their natural settings attempting to make sense of or interpret phenomena in terms of how people relate to or influence them (Pope, 2000). Elliot & Timulak (2005) explain that qualitative inquiry looks for verbal accounts or descriptions in words, or puts observations in words. Therefore data is measured non-numerically. People are studied in the

context of their past and present situations. Thus, the study focused on what happens in schools every day to ascertain how those situations affect the pass rate in Geography at O'Level.

According to Denzin (2000), a qualitative research approach uses a variety of interpretive methodologies such as interviews and case studies. The research plays a central role in the elucidation of the behaviours observed. Another strength is that it uses 'open-endedness' in the generation of data. Elliot & Timulak (2005) elaborate on open-endedness to imply that participants are not only encouraged to elaborate on their accounts and that observation is not limited to pre-existing categories. Inquiry is flexible and carefully adapted to problem at hand and to the individual informant's particular experiences and ability to communicate those experiences. This is why this researcher used a number of data generation instruments that were flexible to different respondents.

According to Cohen & Manion (2007), qualitative research refers to a systematic process of collecting data and logically analysing that data in the form of words. A qualitative research is, therefore, any kind of research that produces findings not arrived out by means of statistical procedures or other means of quantification. (Strauss & Corbin, 2003).

Quantitative research on the other hand, presents statistical results represented by figures or numbers. This will be relevant in this study as statistics will be central in understanding the effects of various factors on the percentage pass rates in Geography at O level at Garikayi Secondary School.

However, Leedy (2005) discredits the descriptive survey saying that information gathered through it can be distorted, subjective or biased towards the researcher's own objectives. The advantages of using a descriptive survey however far outweigh its drawbacks if administered without preconceived researcher views hence the use of it in this study.

3.2.0 Data Collection Instruments

3.2.1 Questionnaires

A questionnaire is a research instrument consisting of a series of questions and other prompts for the purpose of gathering information from respondents (Maxwell, 2005). This systematically prepared document serves to elicit response from respondents (Amum, 2016). This quantitative method is more objective as responses are gathered in a standardised way, certainly more than interviews (Milne, 2015). According to Chiromo (2002), a questionnaire is that form of enquiry, which contains a systematically compiled and organised series of questions that are sent to the population samples. Patton (2006), is of the view that questionnaires are useful instruments for conducting survey information, providing structural, often numerical data and being able to be administered without the presence of the researcher and often being comparatively straight forward, easy to construct and to analyse.

This study used both open ended and close ended questions in the questionnaires distributed to both teachers and children. This method is effective because it is quick to generate information. Time can however be consumed in designing the questionnaire and later in analysing the information gathered. Information can be gathered from a large portion of a group (Milne, 2015). Return of questionnaires can be a challenge so this researcher sought permission to have them completed during classes. Challenges associated with questionnaires are that it is not possible to

explain any points in the questions that participants might misinterpret. This researcher dealt with this by piloting the questions on a few students first and observing how they interpreted the questions. She also made sure that open ended questions do not have large spaces to write answers on to limit the amount of information, some of which might be irrelevant. Some students were unwilling to respond to the questions and it was clear that they thought they could be penalised for giving wrong information. The researcher informed them about the aims of the research, the confidentiality of their responses and that they were not required to write their names on the forms and both negative and positive answers were equally important. She also told them they were not going to get any material benefit from this exercise.

Questionnaires give the respondents freedom to answer questions posed truthfully without the undue influence of the researcher. Questionnaires can be in various forms, for example, soft copy or hard copy.

The use of semi-structured questionnaires helped in ensuring that the respondents were not only restricted to the structured questions, but they can also clarify certain issues. Data can be quantified and it can be used to compare and contrast each research. They offer anonymity as names of the respondents are not called for. Questionnaires are likely to be answered honestly thereby helping to provide accurate and unbiased information.

3.2.2 Interviews

According to Nyamongo (2001), interviews are a way of getting data from people by asking them rather than by observing and sampling their behaviour. Cohen, Manion and Morrison (2011), state that an interview is a constructed and usually specifically planned event rather than

a naturally occurring situation. That renders it different from everyday conversation. It is not simply concerned with collecting about life but is part of life itself (Cohen et al, 2000). This is a flexible tool for data generation enabling multi-sensory channels to be used verbal, non-verbal, spoken and heard. This is usually done face to face and interpersonally and respondents answer questions designed to elicit answers related to the research hypothesis (Corbetta 2003).

Hoyle, Harris & Jude (2002), comment that questions have dual goals of motivating the respondent to give full details and precise replies while avoiding biases stemming from social desirability, conformity, or other constructs of disinterest. They also add that proper training and proper interviewer behaviour can help greatly in achieving the goals.

Close ended structured interviews were also used in this research. David and Sutton (2004) define structured interviews as interviews in which all respondents are asked the same questions with the same wording and the same sequence. Gray (2004) added that it would be ideal if the questions are read out in the same tone of voice so that the interviewee is not influenced by the tone of voice of the interviewer.

The strengths of this method are that the researcher has control over the topics and the format of the interview (Corbetta, 2004). This is because of the use of a detailed interview guide. This allows easy analysis, coding and comparison of data. According to David & Sutton (2004), in structured interviews, prompting can be included with the questions and if a question is inappropriate, data on why a response was made can be recorded.

The weakness of structured interviews is that probing is not a luxury as the interviewer sticks to the interview guide. The respondents may hear, understand and interpret the same questions differently (David & Sutton, 2004).

The researcher used interviews to generate data from teachers of Geography at Garikayi secondary school. These interviews were conducted on a one-on-one basis with the teachers at their convenient times. The researcher recorded their responses in a note book and later decoded the information into categories to respond to the main questions of the study.

3.3 Population and sampling

Population is the summation of all organisms of the same group or species that live in the same geographical area (Cohen, Manion & Morrison, 2011). Target population refers to the group of people to whom we want our research results to apply. Bless & Smith (2007) also defined target population as an entire set of objectives, events or groups of people which is the subject of the research and about whom the researcher wants to determine some characteristics. It is from this large group that the researcher draws a sample.

According to McMillan (2006), a population is defined as a group of elements or individual objects or events that conform to specific criteria and to which we intend to generalise the results of the research. A population is, therefore, a group of individuals having the same characteristics which is to be researched on.

The population of this study is made up of students doing Geography at O'Level and their teachers at Garikayi secondary school in Silobela circuit of Kwekwe District. This comprised of 116 students and 6 teachers. This target population was relevant to the study because the students are going to write their O'Level national examinations in October 2017 and by the time of the study they are already geared for the examinations. As a result they are already in a position to identify and/or help in the identification of factors that are likely to affect their performance in the final examinations. Their teachers on the other hand are very instrumental in this study

because they have been on the job for quite some time and are in a perfect position to point out challenges that they and their students face in the teaching and learning Geography.

According to Cohen & Manion (2007), a sample is a subset of the original group selected from the whole group, taken to represent the whole group. Chiromo (2002), is of the view that sampling can either be probability or non-probability. With probability sampling, the chances of each element being selected can be calculated and each element has equal chances of being selected. Non-probability sampling, on the other hand, depends on the researcher and is generally subject to bias. The information obtained from the sample can thus be used to infer to the whole group or population.

The sample for this study was selected using the purposive sampling technique. Creswell (2008), asserts that determining an adequate sample size in qualitative research is ultimately a matter of using one's own judgement and experience in evaluating the quality of the information collected against the use to which it is to be put, the particular research method, the purposeful sampling strategy employed, and the research product intended. Boyd (2010), regards two to ten participants as sufficient to reach saturation, while Creswell (2008), recommends ten people in a phenomenological research study. In general, as noted by Creswell (2010), the sample size in qualitative research should not be so small that it is difficult to achieve data saturation. At the same time, the sample should not be so big that it is difficult to undertake a deep, case-oriented analysis. It is against this background that a sample of 66 is considered ample for this study.

Purposive sampling is considered by Creswell (2008) as the most important kind of non-probability sampling to identify the primary participants. In this study the sample was selected

on the researcher's judgement and the purpose of the research. There is no cap on how many informants should make up a purposive sample, as long as the necessary information is obtained. Bernard (2012) studied different sample sizes of informants selected purposively, and found that at least five informants were needed for the data to be reliable. This method is especially useful when there are not sufficient funds and other resources. McMillan and Schumacher (2010) are of the opinion that purposive sampling can be more realistic than randomisation in terms of the time, the effort and the costs that have to be incurred to find participants.

This technique was used to ensure both genders are equally represented. 60 students and 6 teachers will be selected and it was assumed that their responses and findings of this study would represent the views of the other rural secondary schools in the area. Among the students there were 21 boys and 39 girls. An effort was made to select learners from different socio-economic backgrounds and distances from school. The researcher also liaised with the teachers to identify learners of different learning abilities. Among the teachers were 4 females and 2 males all of whom have been teachers at the school for at least three years. This was assumed to be important in the study as they have been able to observe a multitude of factors which might be bedeviling their efforts in the teaching and learning of Geography at the school.

3.4 Data collection procedures

The researcher will obtain a letter from the university to indicate that she is carrying out research in the district. Permission will also be sought from the District education offices to allow the researcher to carry out the research at Garikayi secondary school. Arrangements will be made with the authorities at the school to allow her to distribute questionnaires for students and if

possible be present as possible respond in order to clarify any pertinent issues. Interviews with teachers will also need permission from the authorities at the school.

The researcher will use a note book and a laptop to capture the respondents' feedback and store the data safely for future analysis and decoding for presentation.

3.5 Data analysis

Data gathered will be analysed and organized into major themes as answers to the research questions and presented in descriptive form, tables and graphs. The content analysis method will be used to organise the responses into relative themes.

3.6 Summary

This chapter discussed the methodology of this study. It showed that this study used the descriptive interpretive design which allows the researcher to use methods of description to generate and present data. It also discussed both qualitative and quantitative approaches used in this study. The chapter discussed the population, sample and the sampling techniques used I this research it also mentioned the data presentation and analysis methods to be used in this study.

The next chapter will focus on the data presentation and analysis.

CHAPTER FOUR

DATA PRESENTATION, ANALYSIS AND DISCUSSION

4.0 Introduction

This chapter discusses the data gathered in this research. It presents analyses and discusses the data in the context of the questions asked by this research. Presentation of data will be done descriptively, in graphs and tables.

4.1 Research question 1 which says “What factors contribute to the low pass rate in Geography at O’ Level in rural secondary schools?”

The research established that most students perform badly in Geography at O level in rural secondary schools because they lack resources at school. One teacher said, *“If students do not have textbooks, it is laborious and there are some diagrams in Geography that u cannot draw without using a textbook.”* Another teacher at the school also added that the lack of textbooks makes it difficult for pupils to research information on their own but are left to depend on the teacher for every detail of the subject.

Rural secondary schools have the challenge of non-payment of school fees. The situation is made worse by the government policy that students should not be sent away from school because of failure to fees. As a result these schools cannot cater for their needs. Garikayi Secondary School is hard hit by this problem as most of its students fail to pay their own fees. The bulk of the money they receive is from students who are assisted by Non-governmental organisations (NGOs). Because of their vulnerable situations, most students have been placed under Basic

Education Assistance Module (BEAM) which has not remitted anything to the school since 2013. The table below shows the sources of fees for the students at the school

Source of fees	Percentage
Parents/guardians	25
BEAM	43
NGOS	32

Table 4. 1: Sources of fees for students at Garikayi Secondary School

Another factor cited for the low pass rate in Geography in rural secondary school is teaching methods. Students complained that the methods of teaching used by their teachers made it difficult for them to understand. The subject is taught exclusively in English which is a second language to all the students. One learner bluntly stated that, *“I do not understand English”*.one teacher also said, *“You speak in front of the students strictly in English and you realize that you are speaking to a very small section of the classroom. The majority will just switch off if you do not elaborate in vernacular”*.

Most students at Garikayi Secondary School walk long distances to get to school and this adversely affect their performance. The table below illustrates the average distances for the students at the school.

VILLAGE	DISTANCE
1	9km
3A	8km
3B	5km
4	10km
6	10km
9	8km
12	10km

Table 4.2: Average distances for students at Garikayi Secondary School

“Students from the farthest villages come late for school almost every day and they usually miss the first lessons. They are already tired and their attention span has been compromised. They go back home and arrive late at night and there is no time to study or do homework”, one teacher elaborated.

The lecture method is the predominant method used by teachers because they do not have resources for the learners to do research on their own. Most teachers bemoaned the use of this method saying that it was difficult to maintain the attention of the students throughout the lesson because they will be tired. *“After walking long distances to school, the students are already tired and their attention span becomes reduced. Towards the end of the lesson many students will be lost.”* However due to lack of resources and the large numbers in their classes, the teachers have no choice but to use this method.

Lack of supervision on teachers also contributes to poor results in rural secondary schools. one student stated that some teachers do not regularly come for lessons especially when the head of the school is away. It was also established that on Fridays teachers do not work as on other days as they prepare to go to town where their families are. One teacher clearly elaborated on this by saying, *“I do not have adequate time to take care of my personal issues and Friday is the only day when I have to collect my pay and attend to my other personal businesses in town.”*

The attitude of the learners themselves leaves a lot to be desired as some do not enjoy the subject at all. This is influenced by a number of factors which range from disliking the teacher to listening to the stereotype that Geography is a difficult subject. Because of the low pass rate in the subject over the years at the school, many students have begun shunning it. *“It is difficult to convince students to like Geography at the school now because they have told themselves and their peers that they will not pass it,”* one teacher said

Lack of motivation among students is also responsible for the low pass rate in the subject at the school. Very few students complete O Level in the area and of the few that do so, it is just a formality. *“gold panning is a very successful undertaking in the area as some get rich through it hence education is not a worthwhile enterprise for most students”*, said one teacher. There are multiple drop-outs at the school per year and the numbers are increasing as shown in the diagram below.

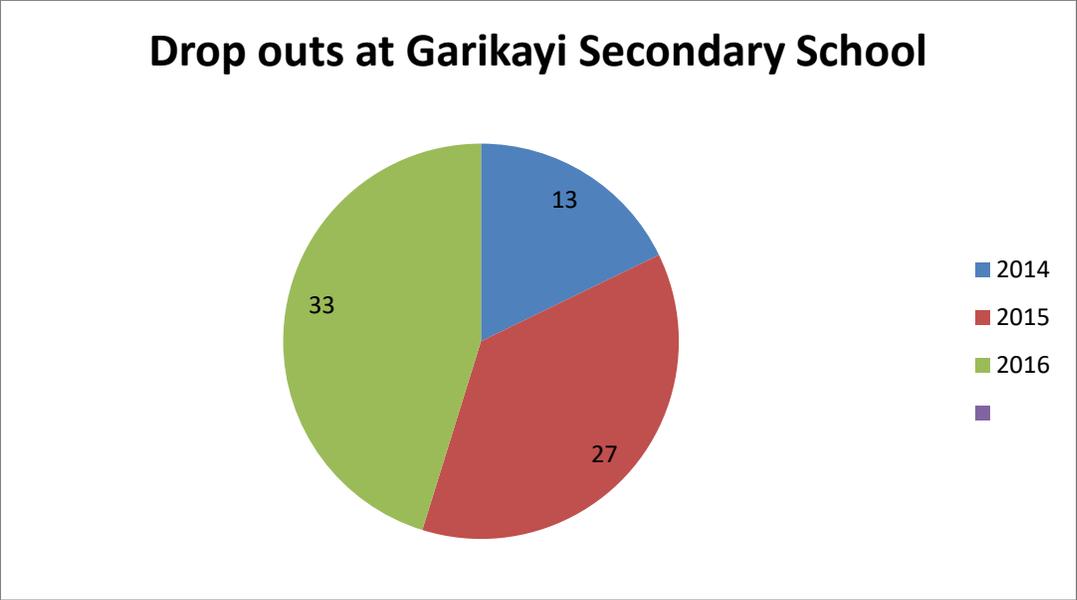


Fig 4.1: Drop outs at Garikayi Secondary School for the past 3 years

The level of education of parents was found to be an important factor in the low performance of students in Geography in rural secondary schools. Most parents and guardians in the area had not gone past Grade Seven and secondary education is a luxury. They also are handicapped in terms of assisting their children with schoolwork and homework. The pie chart below shows the average level of education among parents in the area.

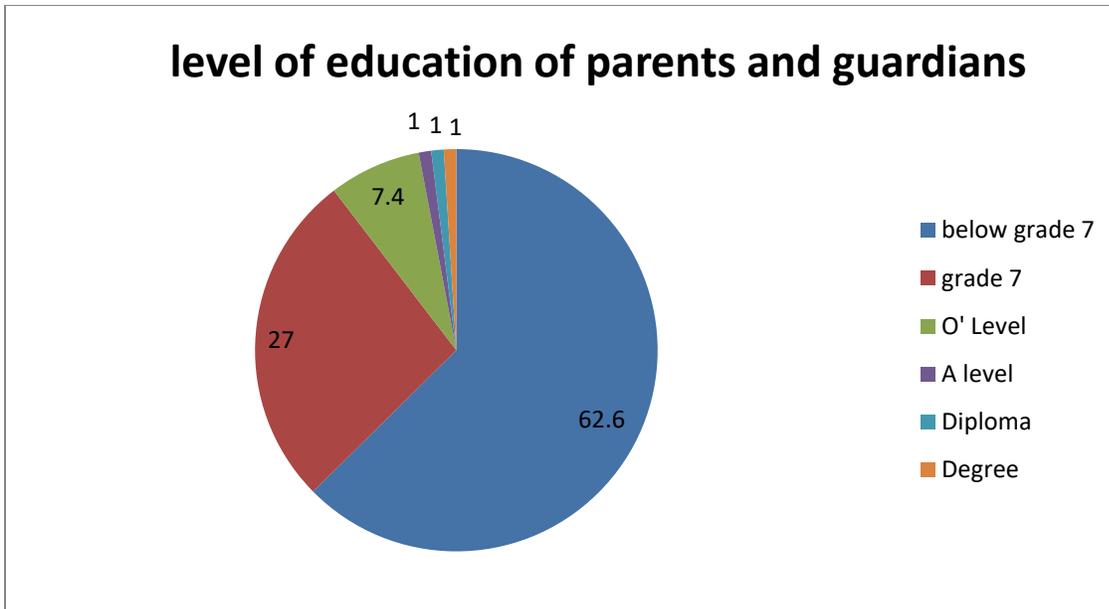


Fig 4.2: Average level of education of parents and guardians for students at Garikayi Secondary School

The self-esteem of most students was discovered to contribute immensely to their performance in school. This aspect is usually absent in students who face adverse socio-economic circumstances at home. Those from poor families are hit hard. Also vulnerable are single and double orphans. Most students at Garikayi secondary school are vulnerable due to their parentage. The graph below shows the parentage of the students at the school.

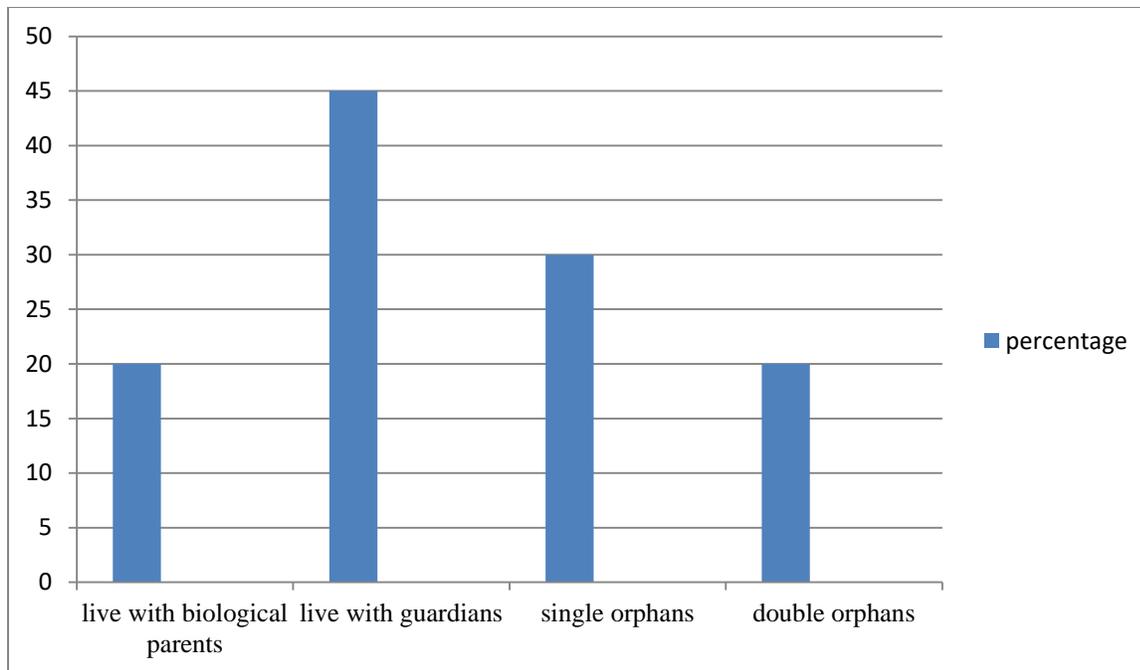


Fig 4.3: Parentage of students at Garikayi Secondary School

4.2 Research question 2 which says, “What can be done to improve the performance of students in final examinations in Geography in rural secondary schools.”

The issue of resources was central in most responses to this question. Both students and teachers indicated that they need adequate textbooks to improve performance. *“Textbooks can supplement teaching and learning even in the absence of the educator and when classroom activities have to be written, there is a reference point,”* said teacher 1.

Teachers need constant supervision from both the head and the district inspectors to ensure results improve. Supervision will ensure the teachers work hard to improve the pass rate and are in line with the syllabus. *“Supervision is important for us teachers because it keeps us on our feet but if there is no supervision, it’s easy for us to relax”.*

Students have to change their attitude towards school in general and Geography in particular. This was cited as one of the most important solutions to the problem of low pass rate. *“You can take a horse to the river but you can’t force it to drink. No matter how hard I try to push the students and prepare them for examinations, they will no pass if they have that negative attitude towards my subject. If they don’t like me as a person, at least they should forgive the subject.”*

Parents should also show interest in the education of their children. This encourages the students to work harder in school to impress their parents. Many students showed that their parents do not help them with homework. *“If we could bridge the gap between home and school, most students would perform better because they would realize that their parents care for their education”*, said another teacher.

4.3 Discussion of findings

This section discusses the findings of this study and demonstrates how these findings answer the two main questions of this research.

4.3.1 Discussion of research question 1 which says “What factors contribute to the low pass rate in Geography at Ordinary Level in rural secondary schools?”

This research found out that the low pass rate at Garikayi secondary school is caused by a multiple factors. These factors can be attributed to the community, the parents, schools, teachers and students themselves. This discussion will categorise them accordingly.

Ramalla (2009), states that education does not exist in a vacuum but reflects the broad social, economic and political structure of the larger society. This research established that the low pass

rate in Geography at O level at Garikayi Secondary School is influenced by the social, political and economic environment in which the students live.

Poverty is a major player in the dynamics of education and performance of students at the school. Garikayi Secondary School is located in Sessombe 3 resettlement areas. These resettlement areas were established soon after independence in 1985 to create living space for families from overcrowded and unproductive areas like Lower Gweru and Zhombe. The area however was and is not suitable for growing crops but more productive in animal production. The families that depend exclusively on farming face a multitude of problems as they have to battle with poor soils and very low and erratic rainfall patterns. This has created a cycle of poverty for families without alternative sources of income.

Poverty is affecting students' performance in Geography at Garikayi secondary school in a number of ways. Some students do not have adequate learning materials which include stationery and uniforms. This negatively affects their self-esteem which in turn impacts on their performance in class. This was asserted by Munn (2009) who postulated that the school environment might also be the source of poor performance if learner support materials are not adequate. Adell (2012) also stated that poor performance at rural secondary schools is directly linked to the socio economic background of the learner. The situation at home usually follows the student to school both physically and psychologically. This study found out that some learners from poor households perform badly in class because they are usually withdrawn and have a very limited attention span as they are sometimes visibly absent minded. Teachers on the

other hand cannot put too much pressure on such students because they are aware of their socio-economic circumstances.

Another factor established by this study as responsible for the low pass rate in Geography at Garikayi Secondary School is distance from school. Many students walk long distance to get to school and this affects their performance (Galalabawa , 2001). When they get to school they will be very tired and will need some time to rest and catch up with others. After school, they travel those distances and get home late in the evening very tired again and have no time to do homework or revise work done on the day. It becomes a vicious cycle of their four years at secondary school.

Most students at Garikayi secondary school walk long distances daily to and from school and this adversely impacts their performance in school in general and in Geography in particular. One teacher indicated that even when a child was late for school or came with homework undone, they could not punish him because they knew the effect distance was having on the learners.

Adell (2002) states that exposure to negative role models from an early age contributes to poor performance and drop outs. This study concurred with this assertion as it was found out that the general environment in Sessombe 3 resettlement area, learners do not have positive or prominent role models to look up to and emulate. Instead, the area is well known for illegal gold panning and violence perpetrated with machetes and knives. There is no motivation to value education and as a result learners perform poorly because they know that after school, they will join the

multitude of their brothers, fathers and uncles into the mines. This is clearly shown by the rate of drop outs at Garikayi Secondary School over the past three years.

There has been a steady rise in the number of students who drop out of school at Garikayi Secondary School in the past three years. This was attributed mainly to a rise in availability of gold mined through metal detectors in the area. Many boys have joined the mining fray while girls have been attracted to the 'quick money' and have gone into early marriage.

Harris (2013) attributes poor performance of rural secondary school students to lack of parental support. Haralambos & Holborn (2002) also indicated that the school should be an extension of the home and students should not have difficulties in the transition from home to school and vice versa. This study found out that most students at Garikayi Secondary School do not receive that parental support in their education. This has led to poor performance in Geography at O level as pupils place less importance on their education because their parents have not impressed it upon them that it is important.

Banard (2004) argues that the performance of students heavily depends upon the parental involvement in their academic activities. This idea is downplayed by the sad reality that most parents in the area have not gone far with education themselves. As a result they cannot assist their children with school activities like homework. This study found out that most parents in Sessombe 3 resettlement area did not go past Grade 7. When the resettlements were established there were only 2 primary schools in the area which were very far and apart. Garikayi Secondary School was only established later in 1988. Because of the distances involved and importance

placed on agricultural activities, very few attended the school. Even during this research, the enrolment patterns at Garikayi Secondary are still very low and unstable.

This corroborates what Marchesi & Martin (2002) stated that one's results and expectations for the future are better if one belongs to a higher social ladder. Inherent inferiority, illiteracy of parents and poverty connive to negatively affect learners in rural secondary school. An apple does not fall far from its tree.

This research established that students themselves are sometimes to blame for their poor performance in Geography at O Level in rural secondary schools. This was clearly elaborated by Avital (2012) who stated that the attitude of rural pupils towards school and its benefits negatively contributed towards their commitment to school work. Due to lack of proper role models and motivation to pursue education, students at Garikayi secondary school have a negative attitude towards school in general. They watch their friends who dropped out of school driving cars and carrying babies and they envy that life. Concentration and commitment to academic work becomes minimal. Class registers indicated that on average, a student is absent from school once every week for no apparent reason. Some boys absent themselves from school to go to the mines near their villages (Sharma 2005).

The negative attitudes affect the effort students put in Geography in particular. According to Jemera (2014), perception about difficulties associated with numerate subjects has led some pupils having preconceived ideas about subjects like Geography. One teacher stated that most students enroll in Form One with negative attitudes towards some subjects because of what their

peers told them before they came to secondary. Geography is disliked by some students at the school because of aspects of the syllabus which include landforms, diagrams and map work. One lady teacher said that students who are not good at drawing can shun the subject because of its extensive use of diagrams. In 2017 only 8 students had registered to sit for Geography at O Level in the November examinations at Garikayi Secondary School.

Self-concept also contributes to low performance in rural secondary schools. Sanchez (2000) cited self-concept as an important attribute in the success or failure of students. This is true at Garikayi Secondary School where some students have been observed to be less confident due to their socio-economic circumstances at home. As a result, they have been disillusioned, frustrated, despaired due to different events in their lives. In the documents supplied by the teachers, many students at the school live with people other than their parents. A large proportion of the students have lost either one or both their parents. This has clearly affected some students who clearly had potential to do well in school. One teacher alluded that there are times when a student does not come to school for two consecutive weeks due to non-payment of fees or because his guardians need help with some work. Such situations disrupt a student's progress and performance.

The education system is also guilty of the low pass rate in Geography at O Level in rural secondary schools. Vundla (2012), states that shortage of well trained teachers, inadequate teaching facilities, lack of funds to purchase equipment, poor quality textbooks, large classes and poorly motivated teachers are some of the ills caused by the education system which in turn affect the performance of students in rural secondary schools. Garikayi Secondary School is one of the main victims of the poor education system in Zimbabwe. The school does not have

adequate facilities for the proper learning of Geography. There are no rooms meant for the learning of Geography and there is no weather station at the school (Banard 2004).

The situation is also worsened by the fact that the school does not receive adequate fees to finance its activities. The parents do not pay fees on time. The Ministry of Primary and Secondary Education has outlawed sending students home for non-payment of fees and this places rural secondary schools in a dilemma because they have no other means of enforcing the payment of school fees. In documents seen by the researcher, there are some students who have not paid school fees for more than one year. The Government programme of Basic Education Assistance Module was meant to assist learners with problems of paying fees and its main thrust were orphans and vulnerable children in the rural areas. The programme has however failed to pay fees for its beneficiaries for the past five years. Schools have been forced to let the students learn for free which affects their capacity to fund their activities and buy materials specific to subjects like Geography. Majority of students at Garikayi Secondary School do not pay their own fees but depend the assistance of NGOs and BEAM. Thus, when BEAM fails to pay fees for its beneficiaries, the school suffers and cannot meet its basic needs.

The system also lacks strict supervision on teachers especially in remote rural areas. When teachers know that control and support all converge on the improvement of their professional development, they are more pliable and ready to accept assistance (UNESCO, 2007). The reality at Garikayi Secondary School is in contrast with the above assertion as teachers have gone for a very long time without supervision by the head of the school and the district. They have become very complacent to the extent that some pupils said some teachers were no longer coming for

lessons regularly. Written work is now sporadic in classes. Work written is not being marked promptly to give feedback to the students.

At Garikayi secondary school, teachers can also be blamed for contributing to the low pass rate in Geography at O Level. As pointed out by Afe (2001), teachers are very crucial in the success of education because they are responsible for the translation of the education policy into action and principles based on practice during their interaction with students. It is sad to note however that sometimes teachers lack the motivation and commitment in that regard. It was established in this research that sometimes teachers at rural secondary schools neglect their duties because of low salaries, poor working conditions or sometimes, lack of commitment to duty.

Another challenge faced by students at Garikayi Secondary School is that Geography is learnt exclusively in English which is a second language to all students and their teachers. Sayed et al (2007) stated that pupils who wrote examinations in their mother tongue performed better than those who wrote in their second language. This proved to be true at Garikayi as many students professed to face problems with English in their learning of Geography. Two teachers also pointed out the same challenge expressing that they are forced to elaborate in either Shona or Ndebele for the learners to understand. This confirmed what Butt (2000) said that the use of English as a medium of instruction can be a barrier to pupils learning Geography if the teacher fails to ensure that their learning has an impact on them. Terminology used in Geography itself is a challenge and how a teacher translates certain concepts into vernacular makes it even more difficult. At Garikayi Secondary School, the teachers blamed the surrounding primary schools for failing to develop the language in learners.

The methods teachers at Garikayi secondary school are also responsible for the poor performance of students in Geography at O Level. Due to other factors like lack of resources and the very high teacher - pupil ratio of 1:45 at the school, teachers complained that they are left with no option but to use the lecture methods despite knowing its shortcomings. Tshibalo& Schulze (2000) assert that most teachers use ineffectual and traditional methods in teaching Geography especially in topics like map work. At Garikayi Secondary School, teachers interviewed professed that their hands are tied when it comes to using different methods of teaching. Because of the big numbers they have and the limited time per lesson, they opt to use the easiest method of lecturing. Group and pair work are done in recaps only and mostly they use the brightest students only to save time. There are no facilities that give teachers freedom to be innovative and use various teaching methods. The school does not even have a Stevenson's screen! Thus it is difficult to imagine how the students will understand the concepts taught by mouth only.

4.3.2 Discussion of research question 2 which says: “What can be done to improve the pass rate in Geography in rural secondary schools?”

This research also sought solutions to the problem of poor performance in Geography in rural secondary schools. The findings demonstrated a multi-sectorial approach to the problem. Communities, parents, schools, teachers and students themselves have a role to play in ameliorating these ills in performance.

Whole communities can play central roles in providing students with proper role models which can shape their dreams and make education a worthwhile investment. Adell (2002), states that the exposure of youths to negative role models contributes to poor performance. Hence, the community can help the youngsters by creating good role models. The community in Sessombe 3 is known for violence, crime and gold panning. The community should condemn in the strongest sense those activities instead of celebrating them. It was found out that those families that did not tolerate or condone violence had children who had better chances of doing well in school. There were no drop outs in families who had other sources of income other than gold panning. Thus families and communities can create good role models for their children and demonstrate that one can eke a living out of education.

It was suggested that teachers should use a variety of methods that include the learner most instead of using the lecture method alone. Zenda (2016) reiterated that learners benefit more when they participate in the teaching process. The same was said by one teacher at Garikayi secondary school. He suggested that even though the numbers are big, all learners should be given a chance to lead the class and demonstrate what they can do. In that way, they grow in confidence and will never forget the concepts that they presented on. Palmer (2007) suggests that teaching methods should be inventive, encouraging, and beneficial and provide tools that can be applied to real life situations. Thus teachers should endeavor to involve learners in the learning process so that they enjoy learning and place value on the content as it will help them in life after school.

This study found out that teachers need to be supervised on a regular basis. According to Zenda (2016), there is no way one can expect learners to pass if teachers are not doing their work and it is only by strict supervision that heads of school and other authorities can ensure that teachers are working. The head of Garikayi secondary school can begin by ensuring that he supervises the work of all teachers at least once every term and focuses on all aspects of teaching and learning. In that way, results in Geography can improve.

Both students and teachers called for the purchase of teaching and learning resources as the first priority in addressing the problem of low pass rate in Geography in rural secondary schools. Nyandwi (2014) stated that there is need for a concerted effort among education stakeholder to make available teaching materials such as textbooks, reference books, chalks, desks and build essential facilities at rural secondary schools. This is definite to improve the plight of rural secondary schools and will see a change in performance of students in national examinations.

Learners themselves should change their attitude towards school. Gilman & Anderson (2006) talks of attitudes that are learned throughout based on socialization. That implies that learners can adopt positive attitudes towards school if they choose to value education. Teachers implored students to work hard in their studies and take their education seriously as the solution to the problem of poor performance.

4.4 Summary

This chapter presented data generated in this study. It also analyzed the data into themes that answer the main question of this research. It also discussed how the research answered the questions. The next chapter will contain a summary of the research, conclusions and recommendations.

CHAPTER FIVE

SUMMARY, CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

5.0 Introduction

This chapter summarises this study and its findings. It further presents conclusions from the data and its interpretation. The chapter also provides some recommendations for policy, practice and further research,

5.1 Summary

This study sought to investigate the factors that contribute to the low pass rate in Geography at O Level in rural secondary schools. It paid particular attention to Garikayi Secondary School, a school located in Sessombe 3 resettlement area, Silobela circuit in Kwekwe district. What drove this research was the fact that there has been a consistently low pass rate in Geography at O Level in rural secondary schools and Kwekwe has been among the culprits. Thus the study intended to establish the inherent factors that contribute to the phenomenon and also find out what can be done to improve the pass rate in the subject.

Various scholars and authorities were consulted to inform the researcher on the previous studies on a similar problem. These asserted that the poor performance of students in Geography in rural secondary schools is caused by a number of factors which include lack of resources at such schools, lack of supervision on teachers and socio-economic circumstances in which the students

live. The low pass rate is also caused by students themselves failing to appreciate the value of education.

An interpretive descriptive design was used in this study. A sample of 6 teachers and 60 students was used to collect data for this study. Interviews and questionnaires were used to generate data from teachers and students respectively. Data collected was analysed using the content analysis method. Data categories were identified and listed as major or minor themes.

The low pass rate in Geography in rural secondary schools is a result of a multitude of factors. The case of Garikayi secondary school revealed that poverty plays a significant role in affecting how learners perform at school. Low self-esteem, lack of adequate learning requirements all connive to negatively affect the learner's performance in school. Parents' lack of basic education, students' negative attitude and lack of good role models in the community are also responsible for the poor performance of students in rural areas in national examinations among other factors.

The situation can be rectified through a concerted effort of the community, schools and students themselves by correcting a few wrongs. Parents need to be conscientised on the importance of education in the alleviation of poverty and improvement of their and their children's lives. Students themselves should be self-motivated to do well in school and work hard to pass as individuals. Schools should endeavor to provide all basic requirements for convenient teaching and learning even in rural areas. Teachers should also work hard to impart education that is beneficial to the students and work even under minimum or no supervision. The authorities

responsible for rural secondary schools must provide necessary infrastructure for competitive teaching and learning.

5.2 Conclusions

Through this study the researcher found out that Geography is seen as a very difficult subject in rural secondary schools. Learners come for Form One with preconceived impressions about subjects, and, teachers, that are difficult. As a result its pass rate will remain low if nothing is done to demystify its difficulty. The socio-economic circumstances of learners also play a significant role in the poor performance of students in Geography at O Level.

There is a vicious cycle of poverty in rural areas perpetuated by lack of proper education of parents who fail to impress the value of education on their children who then drop-out of school or fail and the cycle continues to the children's children. There is need for vigorous advocacy in these areas to promote education to break that cycle.

Education in the rural areas is made to appear different from the same curricular in the urban areas mainly due to the different circumstances prevalent there. Schools are 'poor' and cannot afford some basic educational requirements, they ram so because parents do not pay school fees promptly. Any efforts to push parents to pay the fees, they withdraw their children from school. Because of the deplorable state of that operating environment, teachers become complacent. Supervisors shun those remote areas and promote that complacency. At the end of it all, students fail national examinations.

5.3 Recommendations

- Communities need to be educated on the value of education in poverty alleviation
- Dropping out of school of school going age should be outlawed
- Early child marriages should be abolished and perpetrators slapped with stiff prison sentences
- Local authorities who are responsible for most community rural secondary schools should build adequate infrastructure to enable competitive teaching and learning at the schools
- Heads of schools should implement strict supervision to ensure that teachers do their work properly
- Students should be self -motivated to do well in school and stand a chance to change their livelihood

5.4 Recommendations for further study

Researchers can build on and go further than this study and investigate into the following areas

- Effects of the Land Reform Programme on education in Zimbabwe
- Effects of diet on the academic performance of students in rural secondary school
- Role of resettlement communities in promoting education in Zimbabwe

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LIST OF APPENDICES

APPENDIX A: 1 INTERVIEW GUIDE FOR TEACHERS

APPENDIX A: 2 QUESTIONNAIRE FOR STUDENTS

APPENDIX A: 3 A LETTER TO HEADS OF SCHOOL SEEKING
PERMISSION TO CARRY OUT A RESEARCH
AT THE SCHOOL

INTERVIEW GUIDE FOR TEACHERS

1. What socio-economic factors affect the performance of students in Geography at O’Level?

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2. How do parents and the general environment influence the academic performance of students in Geography?

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3. What role is played by the students themselves in improving the pass rate in Geography at O’Level at your school?

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4. As a teacher, what role do you play in affecting the performance of students in your subject so that they perform well in the final national examinations?

.....

5. How can your school administration improve the pass rate in Geography at O’Level?

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6. What adjustments do you think should be made in the education system to improve the pass rate at your school and other rural secondary schools?

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7. Overall, what are the solutions can you suggest to the problem of low pass rate in Geography at O’ Level at your school and other rural secondary schools?

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- ii.....
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- iii.....
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- iv.....
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13. What do you think should be done to help students at your school pass Geography at O' level?

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- ii.....
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- iii.....
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- iv.....
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