POOR PERFORMANCE IN THE ADVANCED LEVEL GEOGRAPHY: *A CASE OF FOUR HIGH SCHOOLS IN HURUNGWE DISTRICT, MASHONALAND WEST PROVINCE, ZIMBABWE*

Gondo Reniko
Okavango Research Institute
University of Botswana
rgondo@ub.ac.bw

Mutopa Sevious
Chinhoyi High School,
Mashonaland West Province, Zimbabwe
smutopa@gmail.com

Mangwanda Taurai
Karoi Government High School,
Mashonaland West Province, Zimbabwe
mangwanda@gmail.com

Oluwatoyin D. Kolawole
Okavango Research Institute
University of Botswana
tkolawole@ori.ub.bw

Abstract

The study investigates the causes of high failure rate in Advanced level Geography in four high schools in Hurungwe district, Zimbabwe. A multi-stage procedure was used to sample a total of 4 high schools, 100 high school pupils, 17 teachers, 4 Heads of Departments and 4 Heads for the study. Adopting a qualitative research design and case study approach, this study explores the factors influencing high failure rate in Advanced Level Geography. Four High Schools in Hurungwe district were investigated. In Addition to desk-top review; purposive sampling was used to select key participants from the four high schools. Questionnaires, informal interviews and vital records review were used to collect relevant data. Findings show that shortage of resources, overstretched teachers, admission of mediocre lower 6 pupils and recruitment of under qualified teachers were some of the factors contributing to poor pass rates in the district.

Key Words: *A-level, Geography, low pass rate, mediocre, under qualified, Hurungwe, Zimbabwe, heads of Departments*

Introduction

Geography as a discipline enables the understanding of the earth from a spatial perspective. It offers a systematic framework for enquiry into questions about the world and provides a bridge between the social sciences and the physical sciences (Fisher& Binns, 2016) through

the provision of an understanding of the dynamics of cultures, societies and economies (Benjamin & Wakhungu, 2014) and those of physical landscapes and environmental processes (Webb *et al*., 2015). Thus, Geography as a secondary school subject enables students to explore and understand the relationship between the earth and its peoples through the study of space, place and environment. These three elements form the core of geography in secondary education in Zimbabwe and elsewhere. The study of geography at advanced level in Zimbabwe is built on the knowledge and skills students will have acquired in the Zimbabwe Junior Certificate (ZJC) and Zimbabwe Ordinary Level Certificate, 2248 (ZOLC, 2248) Geography syllabi. Students completing the ZJC and ZOLC 2248 geography curriculum are believed to have acquired basic enquiry and generic skills, and have had experience of making value judgments through investigating issues from a geographical perspective. The Zimbabwe Advanced Level Syllabus (ZALS, 9156) is designed to produce a self-reliant and productive, A-level geography graduate who has a clear understanding of the socio-economic problems facing Zimbabwe (ZALS 9156, 2013-2016); is able to cope with further tertiary education and be adaptable and marketable in the world of work; dynamic and holistic to understanding the interactions that are taking place in Zimbabwe and the rest of the world; appreciative of their own country Zimbabwe and the world, with knowledge, skills and decision-making qualities that are required for the ever-changing needs of Zimbabwe (Advanced Level Geography Syllabus , 9156, 2013-2016).

The aims of teaching Advanced level Geography in Zimbabwe are to: (1) increase knowledge of, and ability to use and apply, appropriate skills and techniques relevant to the greater understanding and interpretation of facts and relationships in Physical and Human Geography; (2) encourage a concern for accuracy and objectivity in collecting, recording, processing, analyzing, interpreting and reporting data in a spatial context; (3) develop the ability to handle and evaluate different types and sources of information; (4) develop the skill to think logically, and to present an ordered and coherent argument; and (5) promote an appreciation of the need for understanding, respect and co-operation in conserving the environment and work towards its sustainable development.

Statement of the Problem

In Mashonaland West Province, and especially in Hurungwe district, student's performance in Advanced Level Geography is poor and does not show any trend for improvement. For the last ten years the subject has had a low pass rate. The poor performance as shown in the percentage pass rate for the subject causes a lot of concerns to the stakeholders and students of Advanced Level Geography in particular. From the researchers' experience, it has been observed that the poor performance in the subject has also caused fear in some students resulting in some deciding to drop the subject in favour of other subject combinations. If the issues causing poor performance in Advanced Level geography is not delineated and improved then the trends of poor performance in the subject will not end resulting to poor subject combinations among students who pass to gain admission at the university in our country and abroad. The problem for this study was therefore to find out the factors

contributing to poor performance of students in Advanced Level Geography in Hurungwe district of Mashonaland West in Zimbabwe.

Background to the Study

There are hues and cries among stakeholders in education over the growing rate of failure in Advanced Level Geography in Hurungwe district. Stakeholders in education blame Advanced Level Geography teachers as causes of students' failure. This is because students seemingly perform fairly well at Ordinary Level but their performance at Advanced Level declined dismally. However, though the blame can be attributed to teachers, scholars have identified a number of possible factors that can lead to poor performance in Geography. This section of the paper focuses on the possible explanation to high failure rate in Geography at Advance level in Hurungwe district.

Jekesa (2014) in his study of the causes of high failure rate in Geography in Mhondoro Ngezi in Zimbabwe identified a number of causes of high failure rate in the subject. Amongst these causes include the learners' socio economic problems, poverty, and attitude towards the subject and other school based factors that included shortage of textbooks, untrained teachers and shortages of resources in general. Whilst these are possible factors, which can contribute to high failure rate in general, it seems there are other factors. This is because in Hurungwe District the same students perform much better in other subjects but poorly in Geography. Haralambos and Holborn (2002) are of the opinion that the school should be an extension of the home. They argue that there should be no difficulties in pupils' transition from home to school. Their argument is that whatever learning activity that takes place in the school should be reinforced by support from home. Had it been that the high failure rate in the district is for the entire subject across the curriculum then automatically we can buy the idea as the main cause.

Parental involvement in their children's education has a direct bearing on their children's performance (Webb et al., 2015). Children who fail to get assistance with their school work at home get frustrated and disillusioned with the subject as they perceive themselves to be no hopers (Jekesa, 2014). It is from this belief that the lack of home support has a significant bearing to pupils' poor performance in Advanced Level Geography in Hurungwe district.

Other schools of thought blame teachers as the main cause of high failure rate in Geography. Teachers in the district are being blamed for lack of dedication to their job (Ncube, 2010) and this has inadvertently affected the performance of students in Geography. However, whoever may be blamed for student failure in Geography, the general view is that high quality teachers are education's best resources and assets (Haigh, 2002). Thus the ability to teach effectively depends on the teachers' knowledge of the subject and knowledge occurs in a variety of forms. Whilst the assertion is valid as it appears, the fact that all schools in the District perform badly in Geography alone does not attribute to lack of knowledge for more than 100 geography teachers in the district of which most have degrees in the subject. Ncube (2010;25) has this to say: "*The standard of teaching in public schools in Zimbabwe is characterised by lazy, increasing absenteeism among teachers, general poor quality of tuition*

and teachers' strikes over salaries and poor working conditions". Whilst it sounds real, Ncube's allegations against teachers has not been proven through research. This might be true or not but what surprises most is that the very same teachers are producing very good results in other subjects like Chemistry, Biology, Economics and Mathematics. The very same students are doing very well in other subjects but poorly in Geography. What surprise headmasters and other stakeholders in education is that a student whose subject combination include Geography would obtain **A***s* in the two subjects and surprisingly an O or F in Geography. Therefore the unanswered question is *"What is it in Geography which is not in other subjects in the district?"*

According to Widener et al. (2016), the level of parents' education attainment plays a major role in determining their contribution to their children's education. Family factors are among the greatest influence of academic performance among pupils. The learner's perception of family support directly affects performance, while mother's level of education does so indirectly (Jekesa, 2014). The level of the parents' education attainment has also been cited as having, to a larger extent, a bearing in educational achievements of the children. The high prevalence of low levels of education in the rural areas of Zimbabwe has resulted in pupils attending schools in these areas getting very little help from home (Jekesa, 2014; Ncube 2010). However, this can be true to a certain extent but when it comes to Geography at A-Level in Hurungwe District, even those pupils in Karoi town produce poor results. Even parents who are educated have their children producing poor results in the subject, thereby dismissing parental level of education as the main cause of poor performance in Geography at Advanced Level in Hurungwe District.

Other scholars believe that the backgrounds relating to availability of educational resources such as books, educational television channels, computers, study desks and chairs as well as tranquil study environment and general support from home are crucial to the success of the learners (Benjamin & Wakhungu, 2014;Dzimiri & Marimo n.d.; Hinde, 2015; Webb et al., 2015; Smith, 2005) . Researchers have revealed that learners who have access to such resources are at an advantage compared to those from poor families. Pupils having access to teaching and learning materials are thus able to study on their own and are less reliant on the teacher and the other few resources available in most schools (Jekesa, 2014; Ncube 2010;).

Role of Geography in the School curriculum

Geography is the study of places on earth and their relationships with each other. Often the study of Geography begins with one's home community and expands as a person gains greater experience. Thus geography provides a conceptual link for children between home and school (Hinde, 2015). Geographers study how people interact with the environment and with each other from place to place and classify the earth into regions in order to draw generalisations about the complex world (Wider et al., 2016). Due to the fact that it deals with where and how people live, geography is rich in materials that relates to international understanding, multi-cultural concerns and environmental education.

The world economies are increasingly linked in an international network of trade and exchange. If our competitors know more about us than we do about them, they have an advantage in serving our markets and negotiating trade agreements and we are placed at a disadvantage in reaching their markets (Hinde, 2015). Therefore, well planned geographic education at all levels will help to make Zimbabwe more aware of other countries and cultures and prepare our students to take their place in a global community. The knowledge of geography helps us be better citizens of Zimbabwe. It is through the learning of geography that we gain knowledge that help us to ask important questions about policies that lead to changes in landscapes and land use in our country. Geographically informed students will be effective leaders of our country in future.

The study of geography stimulates an interest in and a sense of wonder about places in children (Webb et al., 2015) and helps young people to make sense of a complex and dynamically changing world (Widener et al.,2016). It explains where places are, how people and their environment interact and how a diverse range of economies, societal and environments are interconnected (Benjamin & Wakhungu, 2014). Thus, the subject builds on pupils' own experiences to investigate places at all scales from personal to the global. According to Hinder (2015) geographic enquiry encourages questioning, investigation and critical thinking about issues affecting the world and peoples' lives, now and in future. Fieldwork is an essential element of this and thus geography addresses this fundamental skill. With geography pupils learn to think spatially and use maps, visual images including Geographical Information Systems (GIS) to obtain, present and analyse information (Webb et al., 2016). Thus geography inspires pupils to become global citizens by exploring their own places in the world, their values and their responsibilities to other people to the environment and to the sustainability of the planet.

Geography has an important place in our life. It enables the student to face the various problems of life. Students of Geography are able to know about the natural conditions of the whole country, its climate, vegetation, natural resources and its mineral wealth (Dolan, 2016; Mitchell et al., 2015). Through geography it is also possible to have the knowledge of the trade and industry of a particular country. This knowledge enables students to plan the future. It enables us to acquire knowledge about the earth. Furthermore, it helps in acquiring knowledge about people of other countries with whom we may have social, practical and economic relations. This clearly indicates the practical values of geography.

Politicians and administrators cannot run the administration of a particular country without having knowledge of the geographical conditions of that country (Mitchell et al., 2015). Economic, political and social life is very much governed by geographical factors. Through the knowledge of geography, it is also possible to know about the inter-dependence of the people of various countries. No country can live without taking help from other countries (Fisher & Binns, 2016). In order to have proper relationship, it is necessary to have proper knowledge of the geographical factors. It is with the knowledge of geography that the politicians and administrators effectively execute their duties.

Man has the natural curiosity to know about other people and other countries. Geography is helpful in the meeting this curiosity. Man is also anxious to know about the various factors that influence our life. It is knowledge of geography that helps to know about all these things. It is from this point of view that satisfying the natural anxiety of man that geography has its importance.

Geography has its importance for economic life a well. Through the knowledge of geography, it is possible to know about the natural resources, the mineral resources, the vegetation wealth and other things that shall be helpful for our economic life. No individual and no country can progress and flourish unless it is economically sound (Widener et al., 2016). In this task knowledge of geography is very helpful. No country can have political importance values if it is able to know about the conditions of other countries. This is true of individual as well. Through the knowledge of geography, it is possible to know about all these things. The knowledge of geography also develops a sympathetic outlook in the people of a particular country. People are able to understand the problem and conditions of other countries and so they understand their difficulties and try to sympathise with them. People living in fertile land can very well realise the difficulties of the people living in desert.

Within the knowledge of geography a student develops his power of imagination. He is also encouraged to know about cause and effect of various phenomena. The subject also helps to develop the power of reasoning. When a student learns about mountains, rivers forests etc, then images of all these things are formed before him. When these features present themselves in actual form before his eyes, he is able to know them and discern them easily. The knowledge of all these landforms is also helpful in enabling the student to know about the culture and civilisation of different countries. In summary the inclusion of Geography in the school curriculum is summed up by Bash & Rao (2004) as they say, "The real value of geography lies in the fact that it helps man to place himself in the world to learn his true position and duties".

Common methods of teaching geography

This section of the paper will discuss some of the most common methods of teaching geography. This section is going to look at fieldwork, project, question and answer and discussion methods. The merits and demerits of each method will also be outlined.

Fieldwork

Field work as a method of teaching has been defined as a science of selecting, observing, evaluating and reporting information in a specific area (Benjamin & Wakhungu, 2014). It involves the direct use of the environment as a source of physical information. It can be organized to cover the area around the school. Most secondary school teachers have had a misconception that field work is only effective when the study is taken to a far area (Hinde, 2015). This misconception has made field work to be used only by a few schools and can only be used once or twice in the entire secondary school life of a student (Webb et al., 2015). The

high costs involved when the students are to travel to distant places; the travelling risks that the students get exposed to; the time taken for the study trip which is considered by some teachers to be excessive in terms of the rewards it will reap; and finally, a lot of administrative work which is not usually welcomed by teachers who are already busy with other commitments make field work unpopular (Harichandan et al., n.d.).

Benjamin & Wakhungu (2014) present field trip as a very effective method of teaching in secondary schools. they note that, when correctly used, the method involves the students during preparation stage through information gathering on the topic and preparation of the data collection instruments like questionnaire; during presentation stage through student involvement in data collection activities such as asking questions, collection of samples and recording of information; after the lesson through follow up activities such as report writing and presentation, display of collected items and doing a test.

As Sunni (n.d.) puts it, the involvement of the students in the learning process provided by field work as a teaching method provides the learner with sound and concrete basis for conceptualization, first-hand information, makes learning more meaningful and gives the learner long lasting memory and opportunity for improving social relationships among students and between students and the teachers. The use of field work in teaching Geography in secondary schools therefore helps in the attainment of one of the objectives of teaching Geography in secondary schools in Zimbabwe.

Project Method

Benjamin & Wakhungu (2014) define project method as a unit of activity carried on by the learners in a natural and life-like manner and in a spirit of purpose to accomplish a definite, attractive and seemingly attainable goal. Smith, n.d. views project method to be essentially a learning unit, designed and conducted by students under the guidance of the teacher. He further states that the project goals are established by the students based on their own background experience and they are encouraged by the teacher to work through study activities towards the achievement of those goals. Dzimiri & Marimo (n.d.) regard project as the corporate or individual study of a challenging situation in real life in its natural setting with a view to reaching a positive and concrete achievement. The three definitions of project as a method of teaching reveal that: the topic chosen for study should be a real problem in the learners' environment that when solved, the students will see positive change in their environment. For example, students may be taken to an area around the school vicinity which has been affected by soil erosion and then asked to work in groups to conserve that soil. When this is done the students will feel satisfied and appreciate their work.

The method emphasizes the involvement of the teacher as a guide. Hence the method is learner centred. Widener et al. (2016) say that when the project method is used well by the teacher it enables the students to initiate and pursue knowledge, learn and work at their own pace, develop the spirit of curiosity, enquiry and investigative approach to acquire knowledge and to provide opportunity for the learners to come into contact with the problems, challenges and opportunities in real life situation. The merits of project method mentioned above are in line with one of the general objectives of teaching Geography in secondary schools which

states that the learner should demonstrate the acquisition of positive attitudes, values and skills for self-reliance (ALGS, 2013-2016).

Literatures have found out that teachers who use project method in their teaching improve the learners' readiness to learn and encourage learners to become more active in solving problems (Jan et al., 2008; Smith, n.d. Webb et al., 2015), thus, the use of a project such as school gardening should be used as a key teaching tool rather than as an extra-curricular activity because it encourages learners to be more active in solving problems of their environment (Kothari, 2004).

Question and Answer Method

Questioning is a method where by the teacher asks questions and the learners give the answers. It is one of the oldest methods of teaching which still stands as one of the most effective method which involves the learners in the learning process (Kothari, 2004). From the researcher's personal experience as a teacher, and backed by research findings it has been observed that this is the most commonly used method of teaching (Benjamin & Wakhungu, 2014; Fisher & Binns, 2016b; Widener et al., 2016) and at the same time it is the mostly abused method of teaching (Mitchell et al., 2015). For example teachers who are lazy and those who do not prepare well for their class will resort to questioning to pass time (Benjamin & Wakhungu, 2014; Ncube, 2015).

(Kothari, 2004) observes that with the change in our educational goals, from mere acquisition of facts and information to development of reflective thinking and intelligent manipulation of materials, the method of questioning has become more challenging for the teacher. For this method to be effective and for the teacher to overcome the challenges such as students asking irrelevant questions, he/she must be clear with the purpose for which he/she is going to ask questions and this shows that the questions must be prepared in advance. Farson and Crichton (1996) summarize the purpose of questioning into four categories, thus, questioning for teaching; drilling; guidance and evaluating.

Eagly & Chaiken (1993) conveniently groups questions into two general types which include factual questions involving mere recall of factual information and thought questions requiring effective thinking, application and intelligent manipulation of learned materials. Munowenyu (2006) emphasises that Geography as a subject should help the learners to state, interpret, analyse and use geographical principles and methods to solve problems of natural environment. On this point it is implied that the Geography teacher should employ thought questioning in their teaching if the students have to achieve the syllabus objectives.

Ngaroga (1996:23) contributes to the effective use of questioning by giving five steps to be followed in questioning. It is in his belief that when teachers are asking questions they need to: (1) state the question, (2) pause to allow the students to think about the answer, (3) call on the name of a student, (4) listen to the answer and (5) comment on the answer).

Discussion Method

Discussion method is the oral interaction between people which consists of asking questions and giving answers (Gitau (2008). The method involves active participation of students and giving feedback and therefore is an effective method of teaching (Quist, 2005). The use of discussion method is suitable for meeting the objectives of Geography teaching because the method provides an effective means of developing skills and of utilizing facts and information i.e. students not only learn to communicate ideas, but also to dissect and evaluate them and find wider and more practical applications for them. As a result, better understanding is ensured making learning more meaningful and more lasting (Quist, 2005).

There are two types of discussion method: The expository oriented discussion and the inquiry oriented discussion (Ayoti &Patel, 1992). In expository oriented discussion, the teacher presents his objectives, explains the learning activity, demonstrates it and then invites questions from students before he concludes the teaching activity.

For example, when teaching about the topic "the Great Okavango Delta", the teacher can explain what the delta is, show the location of the Okavango Delta and then ask students to give their views on the importance of the Okavango Delta to the people of Botswana. In groups the students will discuss, record their views and present before the whole class before the teacher gives the summary of the importance of the Okavango Delta. The second type of discussion is inquiry oriented discussion, the teacher states the objectives, arranges for the discussion to take place and the whole activity is open ended. This type is not suitable for teaching Geography since in it there are no specific conclusions to be reached (Kothari, 2004).

According to Awiti (2010), discussion method can be effective and successful when (1) the students are given adequate time to search for information on the topic (2) the teacher avails the documents or assists the students by suggesting sources of information; and (3) the students are organized in appropriate groups and choose group leaders to record the points raised during discussion. If this arrangement is done the teacher's role in discussion will only be that of a guide (Ngaroga, 2008). The students are therefore given time to express their ideas and participate actively in the lesson. Discussion method is therefore appropriate for teaching when the topic requires flow of information and ideas from the teacher to students, from students to teacher or student to student.

Research methodology

This study adopted a qualitative approach to research, which is a systematic process of collecting data and logically analysing it in the form of words (Cohen, 2007). The reason for choosing this type of research methodology lies in that this study sought to get an in depth understanding of the factors contributing to high failure rate in Geography at Advanced level in Hurungwe District. In this respect, qualitative research methodology is known to play a key role as it allows researchers to gather an in-depth understanding of human behaviour and the reasons that govern such behaviour (Kothari, 2004). Moreover, the qualitative research methodology is advantageous in that it is often used for policy and program evaluation in research since it can answer certain important questions more efficiently and effectively than

quantitative approaches. The researchers used the questionnaires, interviews, observations and documentary analysis as the main instruments for data collection. The selections of these instruments were guided by the nature of the data collected as well as the objectives of the study and time limit. The data which came from individual respondents was analyzed using descriptive statistics. Frequencies and percentages were used for descriptive statistics. One hundred students, seventeen teachers and four heads and four heads of departments respectively took part in this study. Thus the objectives of this study were: To (i) identify factors leading to high failure rate (ii) Solicit stakeholders' opinions on the causes of high failure rate (iii) assess the factors contributing to high failure rate and (iv) suggest/recommend strategies to improve the Advanced level geography pass rate in Hurungwe district of Mashonaland west province in Zimbabwe.

Results and Discussions

This section of the paper is going to present the results of the study and then discuss on the results obtained from the field.

Figure 4.1: 2015-2016 Lower 6 and Upper 6 Ordinary level results

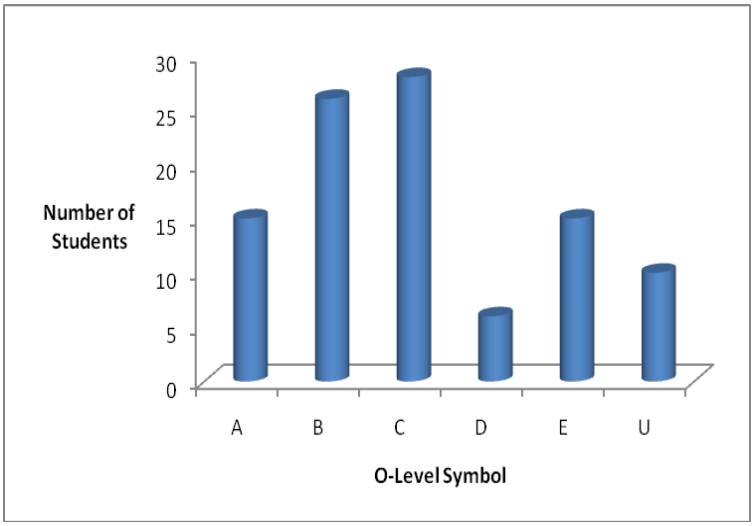


Figure 4.1 above shows the 2015-2016 Upper and Lower 6 Ordinary level results. One hundred form five and six students took part in this study all drawn from four High Schools in Hurungwe District. It is a requirement by the Ministry of Primary and secondary Education in Zimbabwe that any student who is enrolled for Advanced Level must have gained a pass at Ordinary Level for that particular subject which she or he wishes to study at Advanced level. To be regarded as a pass one must obtain a C in that subject and a C means one has scored at least 50% in the final mark for the subject. Of the one hundred students involved in this study fifteen (15) had grade A, twenty six (26) had grade B, twenty eight (28) had grade C, six (6) had grade D, fifteen (15) had grade E and ten had grade U at Ordinary Level. According to Zimbabwe Ministry of Primary and Secondary Education only sixty nine of those students

enrolled for Advanced Level in the four High Schools in Hurungwe qualified for studying the subject at Advanced Level. This implies that 31% of the students enrolled for Advanced Level for the academic period 2015-2016 in the four High Schools did not have the required prerequisite for studying Geography at Advanced Level.

Figure 4.2 below shows the Qualifications of teachers involved in the study

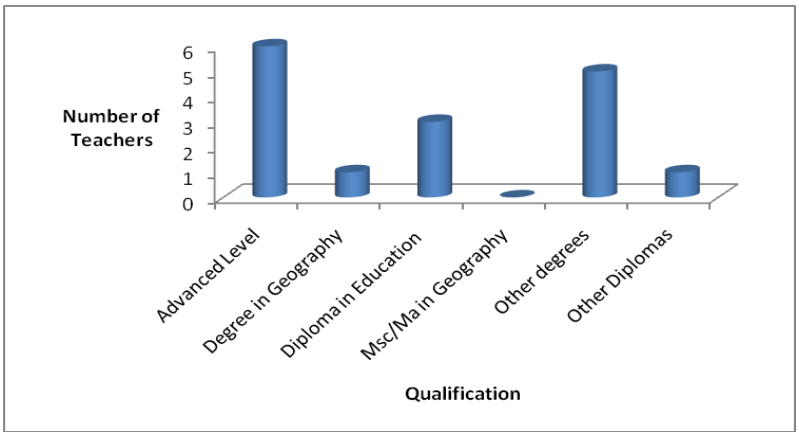
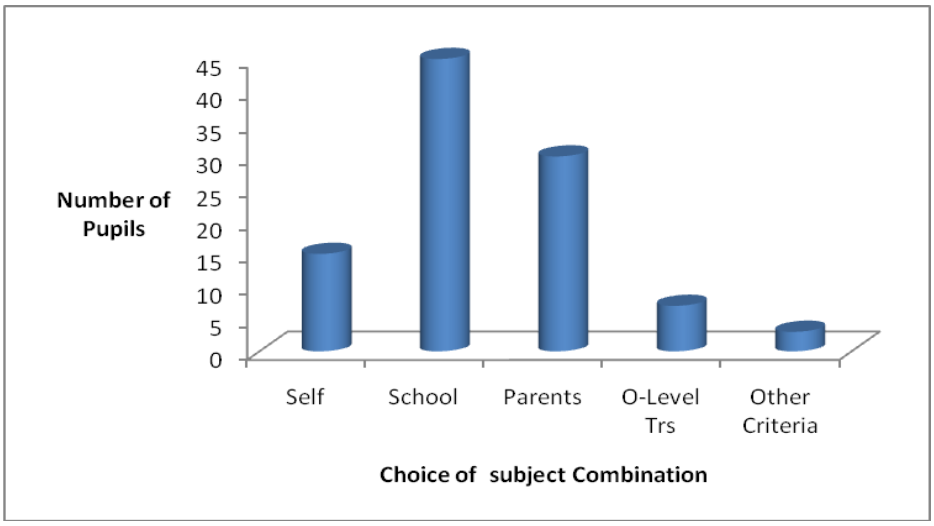


Figure 4.2 shows that 17 teachers took part in this study of which only1(5.9%) had a degree in Geography, 3 (17.6 %) had diplomas in Education with Geography as a major, 6 (35.3%) had studied Geography at Advanced level and were teaching Geography at the same level while 5 (29.4%) were teaching geography at Advanced Level with other degrees without Geography as a component and 2 (11.8) teachers had other diplomas but teaching Geography at Advanced Level. According to the Ministry of Primary and Secondary Education of Zimbabwe, one qualifies to teach if one has a Diploma in the subject being taught but must teach only up to Ordinary Level. Only those with degrees are required to teach up to Advanced Level. However, it is not clear whether one must have a degree in the subject area or just a degree to qualify to teach Geography at Advanced Level. From the results only 4 (23.5%) of the teachers involved in this study had the prerequisite to teach in the schools and only 1 (5.9%) of those qualified were able to teach Geography up to Advanced Level. This implies that 16 (94.1%) of the Advanced Level teachers in the four High Schools in Hurungwe were teaching geography at Advanced Level without the minimum prerequisite to teach the subject.

Figure 4.3 Stakeholders involved in subject combination choice in the four High Schools in Hurungwe District in Zimbabwe.



Choice of subject combinations at Advanced level is critical for good results at that level. In the four High Schools studied in Hurungwe district, the stakeholders involved in subject choice are shown on figure 4.3. The figure shows that the school had chosen the subject for 45% (45 students while 30 % (30 students) chose geography as a subject because their parents had chosen it for them. 15 % (15 students) chose the subject out of their own interest. and 10% (10 students) chose the subject after the school got recommendations from the Ordinary level teachers who taught them. The results for this study showed that 55% (55 students) of the students in the four schools were interested in studying the subject while 45% (45 students) were not interested in the subject as they were forced to do it by either the school or by their parents.

Table 4.1 Local examinations results as reflected in school report cards for lower and upper 6 pupils for 2015 -2016 Academic

Rating	Frequency	Symbol	Points
Average	6	C	3
Below Average	30	D and E	2 and 1
Excellent	1	A	5
Good	10	B	4
Poor	53	O and F	0
Total	**100**		

Table 4.1 shows the average results for the one hundred students involved in the study for the local examinations that they had written in preparation for the final National Zimbabwe

Schools Examination Council (ZIMSEC) examinations. The results showed that of the four High Schools in Hurungwe District, 53% (53 students) had an average symbol of O or F which translates to zero points while 30% (30 students) of them had on average a symbol D or E which is 2 and 1 points respectively. Only 1% (1 student) of the students in the four High schools in Hurungwe District had on average an A which is the highest mark with five points. 10% (10 students) of the students had B symbol, which is 4 points and 6% (6 students) of them had a symbol C which is three points. According to ZIMSEC at Advanced Level A- E symbols are all passes with A the highest with five points while E is the least with one point. Grades O and F are zero points. O means that the pupil has failed to attain an Advanced Level certificate but has enough marks to award him or her with an Ordinary Level certificate in the subject. F means the pupil has failed and cannot be award even an Ordinary Level certificate for the subject. Basing on local examinations written to date, the 2015-2016 academic Advanced Level Geography students in four High Schools in Hurungwe District in Zimbabwe only 47% (47 students) of them were likely to get a pass in the final national examinations and the bulk of them (53%) were likely to fail.

The questionnaire used for data collection also asked students to name different textbooks that they use as core textbooks for the study of Geography at Advanced Level. The results of the study show that there were six different textbooks for Advanced level in use within the four High schools in the district. Figure 4.2 below summaries the results of the different types of textbooks commonly in use in the district:

Figure 4.4 Common Advanced Level core Geography Textbooks in the four High schools in Hurungwe District.

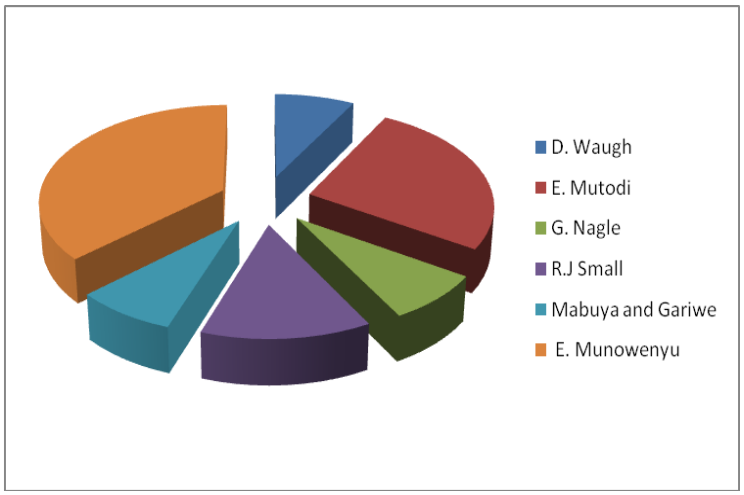


Figure 4.4 shows that the most popular textbooks in use in Hurungwe district have been written by E. Munowenyu and E. Mutodi. A book by D. Waugh and R. J. Small, though to the reserachers point of view are well written and suitable for Advanced level are the least popular textbooks in use in the district. This is probably not because teachers and pupils are not willing to use them but since they are international books they are relatively very

expensive than locally produced books and schools can not afford to buy a substatiated number.

Figure 4.5 Average Advanced Level class Size and number of textbooks in four schools in Hurungwe District, Zimbabwe

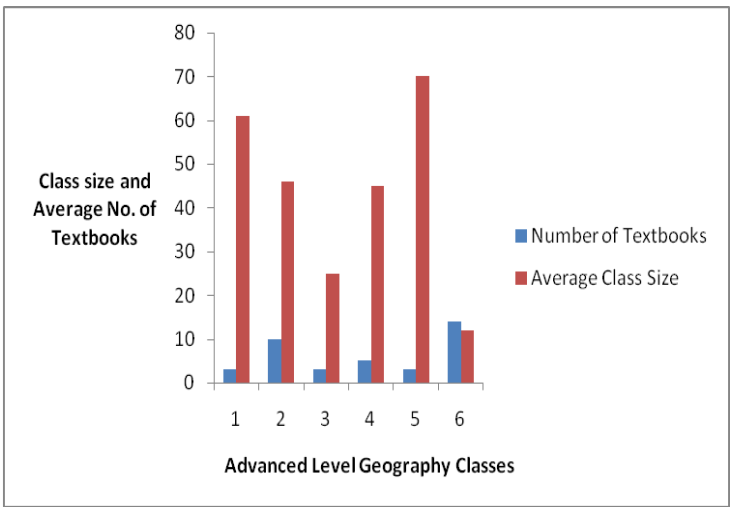


Figure 4.5 shows Advanced level Geography class size compared to number of pupils per class in the four High schools in Hurungwe district in Zimbabwe. The results shows that in each of the six classes studied the number of textbooks is lower than the pupils except in class six in which the opposite is true. Therefore, there is a critical shortage of textbook in the four school in Hurungwe district.

Table 2 Descriptive Statistics for percentage pass rates for four High Schools

	Frequency	Minimum	Maximum	Mean	Std. Deviation
School A	10	16.0	58.3	31.5	13.2
School B	10	31.0	98.0	69.4	20.3
School C	10	16.0	90.0	45.2	26.4
School D	10	13.0	84.0	49.5	26.3

Table 4.2 above shows the descriptive statistics for percentage pass rate for the four High schools over a period of ten years. The results show that for each school there were ten percentage pass rates provided and the minimum pass rates for schools A- D were 16, 31, 16, and 13 respectively while the maximum pass rate attained for the same schools in the same order were 58.3,98 ,90 and 84. On average the pass rate for schools A-D were 31.5, 69.4,45,2 and 49.5 respectively. The standard deviation, which measures the variability within the pass rate for each school were 13.2, 20.3, 26.4 and 26.3 accordingly.

Summary of responses by stakeholders on causes of high failure rate in four schools
Listed below are the responses given by stakeholders in the four High Schools with regard to high failure rate in the subject within the four schools in Hurungwe district, Zimbabwe.

Table 4.2 Stakeholders' perceptions on causes of high failure rate in the District

- Absenteeism by both students and teachers.
- complacency especially those students with better Ordinary level symbols
- failure to complete the syllabus
- few qualified geography teachers
- hot seating
- inexperienced teachers
- Lack of commitment and cooperation amongst headmasters, teachers, students and parents towards improvements of the past rate in the subject.
- lack of supervision by both heads of schools and inspectors
- lazy students
- less geography seminars
- negative attitude towards the subject
- no access to internet
- no examiners at school or district as a whole
- no libraries
- no revision time
- no special Geography rooms
- no specialist Geography inspector (s) in the District
- Overloaded teachers e.g. An A-Level teacher teaching Lower and Upper 6 students with a class each with over 40 students and teaching other lower classes as well.
- overloaded timetables
- poor and mediocre students enrolled for A-Level Geography
- poor command of English by students
- poor methods of teaching by teachers e.g. no field trips but only lecturing
- reluctance by district office in transferring teachers
- shortage of money to buy textbooks
- shortage of textbooks
- time shortage
- too big A-level Geography classes
- too long syllabus
- too many disturbance during learning e.g. sports, assemblies, unplanned meetings
- too many subjects on the school curriculum
- under qualified teachers
- use of old syllabus

- adopting a district scheme in which the school must provide to all teachers so as to lessen the burden of scheming
- agent need for revamping of the current Geography syllabus so that it incorporates more local content

- alignment of O-Level syllabus with A-Level syllabus
- all students to be recruited for form five must have at least a B in Geography, Maths and English Language
- all teachers to have a degree in the subject
- assemblies to be timetabled
- avoid favouritism in the recruitment and transfer of teachers
- avoid teachers with other degrees to teach Geography
- BSPZ to fund the marking of Advanced level midyear Geography scripts
- building of more classrooms
- buying more geography textbooks
- district to ensure that at least each school has an examiner in the subject
- field trips to be done at least twice a term
- have specialist Geography inspector in the district
- heads of schools must demand to see both students' personnel and teachers' notes
- improvement in heads and inspectors supervision
- introduce incentives for teachers
- introducing special awards for both students and teachers who perform well in the subject
- invitation of examiners from other provinces to mark midyear Geography scripts
- invitation of more examiners from other provinces to assist in coaching pupils and teachers
- map work must be taught in all schools
- marking of local examinations to be centralised and markers to be paid
- monitor the quality of midyear BSPZ examinations
- more periods to be allocated to geography
- more research to find out the causes of the failure
- more salaries for teachers
- more seminars
- more workshops on teaching of Geography
- No diploma holder to teach up to A-level.
- no favouritism in purchasing books
- no hot seating at A-level
- no teacher must mark his/her pupils' scripts during the midyear examinations
- reduce A-Level teacher pupil ratio to the recommended of not more than 25 students per class
- reduce number of subjects on the curriculum
- reduce sporting sessions
- have short scheduled meetings
- sporting activities to be done over the weekend or be timetabled
- teach all the core topics e.g. Climatology
- teachers need to improve themselves academically
- teachers to attend Geography workshops
- teachers to be allowed to teach even over the weekend
- teachers to make it a must for students to write personal notes
- teachers to teach all the topics in the syllabus

- teachers to teach at least two of the optional topic

Conclusions and Recommendations

Basing on data from school reports, Heads of Department records and school pass rates for the four High Schools which took part in this research, the following conclusions and recommendations are made:

- While it was accepted that pupils attitudes towards Geography at A-Level are import in determining performance in the subject in Hurungwe District, they cannot be sorely account for the recent declining in pass rate. However, stakeholders should try to cultivate a positive attitude in pupils towards the subject.
- Realising the issue of the subject breath as too wide and broad, there is need for schools in Hurungwe to afford the subject more space on the timetable.
- Since the syllabus was considered to be too long, ZIMSEC should be encouraged to prioritise issues and therefore develop a more communicative short syllabus that curriculum implementers can use in schools considering that Lower six pupils are recruited end of term 1 and nothing meaningful in terms of teaching and learning is done in term 1 and again no teaching is done as well in term 3 for Upper 6 since it would be an examination time.
- Realising the importance of collaborative teaching in provisions of specialist instructions, schools in Hurungwe are encouraged to cultivate the culture of team teaching.
- Resources are critical for equipping teachers and learners with current and relevant teaching and learning platform. Thus, this study therefore not only recommends that schools in Hurungwe should acquire more and relevant textbooks, internet facilities, specialist geography rooms, LCD projectors which are in tandem with changing subject requirements but the schools must ensure that teachers also upgrade themselves by acquiring at least a degree in geography to qualify to teach the subject. No teacher must teach Geography at Advanced Level with a Diploma or other degrees other than a degree in Geography.
- Teachers expressed the view that some BSPZ examination questions were vague, unclear and confound pupils. This study recommends that those who set examinations be explicit and unambiguous in their demands and the district must engage an examiner in the subject to set midyear examinations.
- The position of the district Geography inspector need to be filled as a matter of urgency with someone who has vast knowledge of the subject and has been an examiner for not less than ten years in geography at Advanced Level.
- O- Level Geography syllabus need to be revamped and match A-Level requirements. Thus this study recommends that O-Level must have another paper in addition to the current two papers in which practical geography e.g. Map Work and Field work are

specifically tested in preparation for those who would want to pursue Geography up to A-Level.

- Feedback affords curriculum implementers with corrective lenses and should therefore be availed immediately and regularly to schools, ideally as soon as results are out. This study therefore recommends that ZIMSEC must avail to each centre a detailed report, outlining all minor and major mistakes question after question that candidates for that particular centre would have made. Such reports would be a vital tool for teachers in their teaching.
- Since most teachers have indicated that they were not examiners and there was no examiner in the District, there is need for each school offering Geography at A-Level to have a detailed plan on how they would invite examiners from other provinces to couch pupils and teachers on how to answer the questions. This is because teachers have indicated that they do not have experience in marking.
- There is need for more intra and inter cluster, district and province seminars and these need to be attended by all schools offering Geography up to A-level in the district on clearly predetermined and also need to be timetabled.

References

Benjamin, O., & Wakhungu, L. (2014). Determining Methods used in Teaching Geography in Secondary Schools in Rongo District, Kenya. *International Journal of Academic Research in Progressive Education and Development*, *3*(1), 2226–6348.

Dolan, A. M. (2016). Place-based curriculum making: devising a synthesis between primary geography and outdoor learning. *Journal of Adventure Education and Outdoor Learning*, *16*(1), 49-62.

Farson, R. & Crichton, M. (1996). Performance of the absurd. New York: Simon and Schuster.

Haralambos, M., Holborn, M., Paić-Jurinić, M., Rusan, R., Tomić, V., & Fanuko, N. (2002). *Sociologija: teme i perspektive*. Golden marketing.

Harichandan, S., Shaik, A., & Sunni, M. S (n.d.) methods of teaching geography.

Dzimiri, W., & Marimo, S. T. (n.d.). challenges faced in the implementation of the zimbabwe localised advanced level geography syllabus: a case of gweru district high schools, *4*(2), 52–56.

Dolan, A. M. (2016). Engaging with the world through picture-books. *Teaching Geography Creatively*.

Fisher, C., & Binns, T. (Eds.). (2016). *Issues in Geography teaching*. Routledge.

Gitau, P.N. (2008). Mastering PTE education. Nairobi: Kenya. Kenya Literature Bureau.

Haigh, M. J. (2002). Internationalisation of the curriculum: Designing inclusive education for a small world. *Journal of Geography in Higher Education*, *26*(1), 49-66.

Hinde, E. R. (2015). Geography matters: Teacher beliefs about geography in today′ s schools. *The Journal of Social Studies Research*, *39*(2), 55-62.

Jekesa, P. An investigation into the factors contributing to pupils' poor performance in Advanced level Geography in Mhondoro , District, Post Graduate Diploma in Science Education Research Project, Bindura University Press, Bindura

Kothari, C. (2004). *Research Mathodology : Methods and Techniques* (2nd ed.). New Delhi: New Age International (P) Ltd, .

Mitchell, J. T., Brysch, C. P., & Collins, L. (2015). Journal of Geography Key Words: Trends and Recommendations. *Journal of Geography*, *114*(6), 247-253.

Ncube, A. (2010). Students' Failure, a Shared Blame in Zimbabwean Secondary Schools-The Way Forward. *International Journal of Science and Research*, *2*(10), 226-238.

Ngaronga, J (1996). Primary Teacher Education. Nairobi: East African Education Publishers.

Quist, D, (2005). Primary teaching methods in Malaysia. New York : MacMillan.

Smith, M. (Ed.). (2005). *Teaching geography in secondary schools: a reader*. Routledge.

Webb, S., Black, R., Morton, R., Plowright, S., & Roy, R. (2015). *Geographical and Place Dimensions of Post-School Participation in Education and Work. Research Report*. National Centre for Vocational Education Research Ltd. PO Box 8288, Stational Arcade, Adelaide, SA 5000, Australia.

Widener, J. M., Widener, J. M., Gliedt, T., Gliedt, T., Tziganuk, A., & Tziganuk, A. (2016). Assessing sustainability teaching and learning in geography education. *International Journal of Sustainability in Higher Education*, *17*(5), 698-718.

Zimbabwe Schools Examination Council, Advanced Level Geography Syllabus 9156 (2013-2016), Harare Mount Pleasant