



An Investigation Into Poor Academic Performance In English Language (Summary Component): A Study Of Three Secondary Schools In Nsama District, Northern Province Of Zambia.

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Abstract- This study investigated the factors contributing to poor academic performance in the English Language, specifically focusing on the summary writing component, among secondary school learners in selected schools in Nsama District, Northern Province of Zambia. Summary writing is an essential skill that enables learners to comprehend, analyze, and present information in a concise manner. However, many learners continue to perform poorly in this area. The study employed a descriptive research design using both qualitative and quantitative approaches. Data were collected from teachers and learners through questionnaires, interviews, and classroom observations. A total of 40 respondents participated in the study. Findings revealed that poor performance in summary writing is mainly caused by limited vocabulary, poor reading habits, inadequate teaching methods, lack of learning materials, and large class sizes. These challenges limit learners' ability to understand texts and express ideas clearly. The study concludes that improving performance in summary writing requires effective teaching strategies, provision of adequate learning materials, and promotion of a strong reading culture among learners.

Keywords- Academic Performance, English Language, Summary Writing, Secondary Schools, Nsama District

I. Introduction and Scope

The English language is a vital subject in the Zambian education system and serves as the medium of instruction across all levels of education. Mastery of English is therefore essential for learners' academic success. One of the most important components of English language learning is summary writing, which requires learners to read, understand, interpret, and present key ideas in a concise form.

Despite its importance, many learners in secondary schools perform poorly in summary writing. In Nsama District, examination results have consistently shown low performance levels in this component. This has raised concerns among educators, as poor performance in English affects learners' overall academic achievement.

Several factors contribute to this problem, including limited vocabulary, poor reading habits, ineffective teaching methods, and lack of adequate learning materials. In addition, large class sizes limit teacher support and feedback to learners.



This study therefore seeks to investigate the causes of poor academic performance in summary writing and propose solutions to improve learner outcomes.

II. Problem Statement

Poor academic performance in English language summary writing remains a significant challenge among secondary school learners in Nsama District. Many learners struggle to identify main ideas, condense information, and express themselves clearly in written form.

This problem may be attributed to several factors, including inadequate teaching methods, lack of reading culture, insufficient learning materials, and overcrowded classrooms. These factors hinder effective learning and reduce learners' ability to develop essential language skills.

If these challenges are not addressed, learners will continue to perform poorly not only in English but also in other subjects that require comprehension and communication skills.

Therefore, this study was conducted to examine the causes of poor performance in summary writing and suggest appropriate interventions.

III. Objectives of the Study

The main objective of this study was to investigate the causes of poor academic performance in English language summary writing.

Specific objectives were to:

- Identify factors contributing to poor performance
- Examine teaching methods used in teaching summary writing
- Assess availability of learning materials
- Suggest strategies for improving performance

IV. Methodology

The study employed a descriptive research design using both qualitative and quantitative approaches. This approach allowed the researcher to gather both numerical data and detailed explanations of the problem.

The study was conducted in three secondary schools in Nsama District. The target population included teachers and learners. A sample of 40 respondents was selected using purposive and random sampling techniques.

Data were collected using questionnaires, interviews, and observations. Questionnaires were used to collect quantitative data, while interviews provided deeper insights from teachers. Observations helped assess classroom practices.



Data were analyzed using descriptive statistics such as frequencies and percentages, while qualitative data were analyzed thematically.

V. Presentation of Findings

5.1 Factors Contributing to Poor Performance

Factor	Frequency	Percentage
Limited vocabulary	30	75%
Poor reading habits	32	80%
Inadequate teaching methods	28	70%
Lack of learning materials	26	65%
Large class sizes	29	72%

The findings show that poor reading habits and limited vocabulary are the major contributors to poor performance. Learners who do not read regularly struggle to understand comprehension passages and identify key ideas.

5.2 Teaching Methods Used

Method	Frequency	Percentage
Lecture method	25	62%
Group work	10	25%
Practical exercises	5	13%

Most teachers rely on lecture methods, which limit learner participation. Summary writing requires practice and interaction, which are not fully achieved through lectures alone.

5.3 Availability of Learning Materials

Resource	Available	Not Available
Textbooks	15	25



Resource	Available	Not Available
Past papers	20	20
Supplementary books	10	30

The lack of adequate learning materials limits learners' ability to practice and improve their skills in summary writing.

VI. Discussion

The study findings indicate that poor performance in summary writing is influenced by multiple factors. Limited vocabulary and poor reading habits significantly affect learners' ability to understand texts. Teaching methods also play a crucial role, as lecture-based approaches limit active participation.

The lack of learning materials further reduces opportunities for practice, while large class sizes limit teacher feedback. These factors combined create a learning environment that is not conducive for developing summary writing skills.

VII. Conclusion

The study concludes that poor academic performance in summary writing is caused by limited vocabulary, poor reading habits, inadequate teaching methods, and lack of learning materials.

To improve performance, there is a need for better teaching strategies, increased learner practice, and provision of adequate resources.

VIII. Recommendations

- Promote reading culture among learners
- Provide adequate learning materials
- Use interactive teaching methods
- Give regular practice and feedback
- Reduce class sizes

References

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