

# Homework Policy Implementation in Selected Primary Schools of Kalabo District in Western Province of Zambia: Prospects and Challenges

Violet Mwanamwambwa<sup>1</sup>, Kalisto Kalimaposo<sup>2</sup>, Kaiko Mubita<sup>3</sup>, Patrick Sikayomya<sup>4</sup>, Muyangana Akombelwa<sup>5</sup> and Nicholas Haambokoma<sup>6</sup>

<sup>1,2</sup>*Department of Educational Psychology, Sociology and Special Education, University of Zambia*

<sup>3,4,5</sup>*Department of Language and Social Science Education, University of Zambia*

<sup>6</sup>*Department of Religious Studies, University of Zambia*

**Abstract:** This study explored homework policy implementation in selected primary schools of Kalabo district in Western Province of Zambia with particular focus on prospect and challenges. The study objectives were to establish the challenges pupils and parents encountered when given homework and to assess the prospects of giving homework to pupils in selected primary schools of Kalabo district. The study used a qualitative approach with the target population that consisted of three government primary schools in Kalabo district. The sample size comprised a total of 27 participants apportioned as three teachers, nine parents /guardians, and fifteen pupils from the three government schools selected. The three schools in Kalabo district were selected conveniently while the teachers, parents / guardians and pupils from each school were selected purposively. The research instruments used were semi-structured interview guides and focus group discussion guide. The study found that learners and parents encountered a number of challenges, it was observed that some parents did not want to help their children in answering their homework because they believed it was the role of the teachers to do so and not parents. The study established that despite these challenges learning through homework proved that teachers were engaging parents in the education of their children so that they could help them learn from what they knew in their environment. The prospects of giving homework to learners at selected primary schools were that: homework provided learners with an opportunity to improve the academic performance, it opened up the minds of learners to interact with friends to arouse the interest of learners, and they learnt how to manage their time and kept them in constant touch with school work. Parents did not regularly check their children's homework because they were busy with work, farming and doing business which depicted a negative response towards their children's homework. In view of the above findings, the study recommended that teachers should ensure that they give homework to learners which is manageable so that they finish on time and parents should help their children with homework by creating enough time for them.

**Key words:** Homework policy, implementation, prospects.

## I. BACKGROUND TO THE STUDY

Homework is a requirement in all Zambian schools, according to the Homework Policy of the Ministry of General Education (MOGE, 2015). Teachers have been given guidelines for prescribing homework as a teaching tool. Some

of the guiding notes are that homework being tasks or activities assigned to learners to be completed after class hours should be assigned to help children continue learning after class; homework is part of the instructional process, as it gives the child more time to learn; homework is part of the formative assessment as it gives the teacher and parents information on the child's progress; and that homework provides an opportunity for the teachers to gauge learners' difficulties and to address them by instruction; learners reinforce recently learnt concepts and skills, and parents are helped to engage in their children's work and monitor their progress through homework. Since the Ministry of General Education's main aim is to provide quality education to all the citizens of Zambia, and homework is one such an important aspect in the implementation of quality education, the ministry has placed emphasis on the implementation of homework policy in all the schools in the country (MOE, 2015).

According to Nivo (2008) homework is school work given to learners to do at home during their spare time individually or in groups. Galloway et.al (2013) asserts that homework is school work that is done by a learner after undergoing clear instruction on how to carry out the work. Nyoni (2012) argues that homework should be assigned to learners in order to fulfil specific learning objectives rather than for the sake of occupying learners at home. According to Cuban (2009), homework should allow for practice and application by children and children should not be assigned homework that requires new concepts that have not been introduced and taught by the teacher. Homework should act as a revision of learnt concepts. Kadodo (2013) posits that the objective in giving homework is to develop an independent learner who is able to "learn how to learn" and face problems and solve them without having to wait for the teacher, hence developing in him/her the concept of self-image and confidence as a learner. Redding (2012) postulates that homework can provide other benefits. For example, the child's ability to bring an assignment home, gather and organize necessary materials to complete the assignment, return the assignment and receive a mark, strengthens his or her sense of responsibility (Redding, 2012).

Eita (2007, p.1) mentions that homework can be seen as an everyday part of school life. Most children come home from school with one or more assignments to be completed and returned to school the following day or a within a few days. However, the importance of homework is increasingly becoming recognized. Cooper (2007) asserts that homework in the early grades should encourage positive attitudes and character traits and allow for appropriate parental involvement in homework which reinforces skills introduced in class. In primary schools, homework should work towards improving standardized test scores and grades. However, it was not known how homework was being implemented in the primary schools of Kalabo District of Western Province.

#### *Statement of the problem*

Government through the Ministry of General Education has endeavoured to introduce homework policy as an extension of school work (MOE 2015). Apart from that, the Ministry of General Education has also encouraged teachers who are the key implementers of homework to work hand in hand with learners in ensuring that this policy becomes a success (MOE, 1996). Due to the congested nature of the primary school timetable, it becomes inevitable that some work may remain unfinished in the classroom and thus some time has to be found at home to finish the classroom tasks under the guidance of parents, guardians or older siblings. The study therefore set out to assess how the primary school teachers were implementing this homework policy. Since the introduction of this policy by the Ministry of General Education little seems to be known about the prospects and challenges of this policy especially in rural primary schools. It is against this background that this study sought to explore homework policy implementation in selected primary schools of Kalabo District in Western province of Zambia.

#### *Objectives of the study*

1. To assess the prospects of giving homework to pupils in selected primary schools of Kalabo district.
2. To establish the challenges pupils and parents encounter when given homework.

#### *Significance of the study*

It is important to investigate homework policy implementation in schools and identify challenges and prospects of this innovation to enhance learning. The study may devise ways of ameliorating the challenges and also come up with strategies to improve on the successes of the policy. The findings of this study might be useful to educational practitioners and administrators and may contribute to finding a lasting solution to the effective implementation of homework in schools. The study will also contribute to the growing body of knowledge on homework in primary schools.

#### *Limitation of the study*

The study was restricted to three selected primary schools of Kalabo district. Other schools in the district did not participate

in the study. For this reason, the findings of this study may not be generalised.

## II. LITERATURE REVIEW

A number of studies have revealed a number of challenges in the provision of homework policy in schools. Núñez et al., (2015) observed a positive effect on homework completion at all levels, whereas control had a negative effect. At the middle and high school levels, parental support had a positive influence on academic achievement. However, at all levels, parental control had a negative effect on academic achievement. Kunene (2016) also noted that homework marginalized economically disadvantaged learners who found it difficult to complete homework tasks due to lack of suitable environment where house chores were more and there was little time for homework. Further

Homework policy as perceived by Silinskas, Niemi, Lerkkanen, and Nurmi (2013) found that parents tended to help more when learners were struggling. They added that struggling learners might have parents who were unskilled with their assistance, poor learners themselves, or less educated and this lead to a negative effect of parental assistance with the child's skill development through homework. The results were that parents who were not forceful with their assistance or helped without being asked lowered the children's performance. Further Desforges (2003) indicated that a better home learning environment had the strongest effect on cognitive development of learners. They argued that parents in disadvantaged areas in most cases did not speak the language of learning and teaching and this affected the communication between parents and child with regards to the instruction about homework assignments.

Hong, Wan, and Peng (2011) found that tenth-grade learners were more negative about homework than their teachers knew. In mathematics, learners claimed they did not complete work because the assignments were too difficult. However, the learners were more critical of themselves than teachers were as a result of a cultural element to the study. Abrahams (2013) highlighted challenges such as poverty, unemployment, inequalities; lack of educational resources; lack of structure in the home; single parenting, school and community factors, and a lack of educational stimulation that negatively affected parental involvement in homework assignments. The findings are also supported by Dornbrack, Scheckle and Felix, (2008) noted that deficit discourses ascribed to working class parents constructed them as having limited resources to draw on to assist learners at home with homework.

In addition, Tam and Chan (2009) argues that parents supervised, provided structure, and assisted with assignments for many children. They later accept that parents who did not participate at helping their children in tackling the homework tasks often had lower education levels or additional children in the home (Tam and Chan, 2009). In addition, Tembo (2016) concluded that the provisions of materials made

parents not to check the learner's homework regularly and they withdrew their help as books acted as a substitute, yet it was a good way of making children learn to study.

Other scholars like Wilson and Rhodes (2010) identified a variety of reasons which made learners not to complete homework and these reasons include the following: that it was boring; they did not understand the assignment; assignments were not meaningful; and the teacher did not give feedback for the previous homework they wrote. Munsaka and Matafwali (2014) noted that Vygotsky believed that culture provides the unique ingredient that determines how children's cognitive development progresses. It is this form of constructivism that emphasizes the role education plays in people's social transformation. Cognitive development of the children should be facilitated by both parents and teachers through the use of the right materials at home and in schools.

Other studies like Songsirisak (2019) established that homework enabled learners to acquire knowledge, develop learning skills, and increase learner academic achievement. Costa et al (2016) also observed that all the teachers in their study asked learners to do homework, especially in the areas of Portuguese and mathematics because they considered it essential for learning. This shows that indeed the importance of homework in improving the academic performance of learners cannot be overemphasised. Pfeiffer (2018) proposed that some form of homework ought to be given to the learners in order to help them in many aspects of their future life.

Milbourne and Haury (1999) observed that homework enables learners to acquire effective habits of self-discipline and time management, hence they develop initiative and learn to work independently. Mahmoud (2015) advised teachers to give regular homework assignments that require high mental skills; that is homework assignments of high quality rather than quantity. This is important since homework needs to develop interest in learners once they do it. With sociocultural theory in the sense that it views knowledge as first occurring on the social plane and then transferred to psychological plane. In this case the teacher gives homework. In the social set up and then parents and the learners discuss it, and in the end the learner internalises it so that it becomes part of his/her psychological plane (Vygotsky, 1978).

Tas et al., (2014) also indicated that because the teachers stressed that homework was important in the acquisition of subject matter, they communicated with parents and suggested the best strategies for providing help. Milbourne and Haury (1999) indicated that homework can also bring parents and teachers closer together and added that parents who supervise homework and assist their children with assignments learn more about their children's education and about the school. Songsirisak (2019) added that homework also promoted students' collaborative skills in speaking between teachers and students for clarification. Moreover, sociocultural theory encourages people to communicate effectively since it believes that knowledge comes as a result of social interactions and relations. Therefore, teachers and parents

need to constantly communicate in order to ensure that learners can learn effectively (Vygotsky, 1978). Songsirisak (2019) noted that homework benefited and supported students' learning although it had some psychological impact on their learning and affected free time management.

#### *Research design*

This study adopted an interpretive qualitative paradigm. A phenomenological design was used to find out the feelings, opinions, views perceptions and beliefs of the respondents through focus group discussion (FGDs) and semi-structured interviews. This was so to provide room for triangulation as well as bringing out frequencies that supported the findings from the views and perceptions of the respondents. The phenomenological design in this case gave teachers, pupils and parents an opportunity to provide in-depth description of their experiences, perceptions, challenges and prospects of homework policy implementation in selected primary schools of Kalabo district.

#### *Sample*

The sample size of the study comprised a total of twenty seven (27) participants. Three (3) primary schools in Kalabo district were selected (School A, School B and School C). Three (3) teachers were sampled to participate in the study (1 from school A, 1 from school B and 1 from school C). Fifteen (15) pupils (5 from each of the three schools A, B and C) were sampled, and nine parents (3 from each of the three schools A, B and C) of those pupils were also selected, making a total of twenty seven (27) participants altogether, as earlier mentioned.

#### *Sampling procedures*

The study used purposive sampling procedures, homogeneous in nature because the researcher was interested in teachers, pupils and parents in primary schools who exhibited similar characteristics. Purposive Sampling technique was used to select parents, pupils and teachers. Purposive sampling seeks those who have in-depth knowledge about an issue being investigated.

#### *Research instruments*

The study utilized focus group discussion guides and semi structured interviews guides. The focus group discussion was used to collect data from pupils in the three selected primary schools. Semi-structured interviews were used to collect data from teachers and parents.

#### *Data analysis*

Qualitative data was analyzed through coding and categorization of themes that emerged from the data. Data collected through semi-structured interviews and FGDs were analysed vertically according to each instrument and horizontal across both research instruments in line with the research questions. During thematic analysis, data recorded from semi-structured interviews and FGDs was transcribed,



edited, coded, categorised and tabulated according to the research questions.

### III. PRESENTATION OF FINDINGS

Twenty-seven (27) participants took part in the study from the three selected primary schools of Kalabo district of Western province. Five (5) pupil respondents were males and ten (10) were females. Of the three (3) teachers, two (2) were males and one (1) was female. Among the parents, five (5) were males and four (4) were females.

*What challenges do pupils and parents encounter when given homework?*

Research sought to establish the challenges learners and parents encountered when given homework. This question was answered by parents/guardians through interviews and learners through focus group discussions. However, triangulation of data was also achieved by comparing what the teachers said through semi-structured interviews. Parents and learners encountered challenges as they worked on homework given by the teachers. Learners failed to successfully do homework due to home chores pressure which the parents delegated to them. Results from FGDs showed that, learners failed to do homework due to home chores pressure as evidenced by the following verbatim for **Learner B<sub>5</sub>** who narrated that:

*“Sometimes we have pressure at home, especially us girls after school we have to walk home fast to do some house works and we get tired at night and fail to do our homework.” (Learner B<sub>5</sub>, 2020).*

The other challenge identified in the study was the lack of consistence to mark homework by teachers which discouraged and demotivated some learners to accomplish the homework tasks given to them in time. Results showed that there was too much homework overburdened and affected them to hand in and complete the tasks on time as evidenced by the following passages for **learners A<sub>5</sub>** and **C<sub>4</sub>** as typical examples:

*“Homework is an important part of my learning process, but there is sometimes no balance and then there are periods when no homework is given and others in which we are given a lot of homework. The homework is mostly not even marked by the teachers” (Learner A<sub>5</sub>, 2020).*

The majority of parents (6 out of 9) stated that they did not help their children with homework because of being illiterate or having forgotten their school work as supported by the following passages for **Parent 6** and **Parent 5**:

*“...No, I do not help him, I am not educated; I had no luck of being taken to school because my parents divorced when I was too young and I am also divorced and I can't manage to do everything for the children alone.” (Parent 6, 2020).*

Results from interviews showed that some parents (5 out of 9) experienced difficulties in helping their children with

homework due to lack of learning materials. For instance, the following passages by **Parent 1** and **Parent 3** are examples:

*“Certain things are hard to buy. When a performance task is given, it burdens a great deal of cost depending on to the state on that day. That happened a few times before; there are times when she forgets homework due to another one. When she learns that there is homework for the other day, we panic. Then, she naturally gets upset. And we try to complete the homework even at night. We help her as much as we can, but there are times when we don't have money and we suffer from material difficulties” (Parent 1, 2020). What are the prospects of giving homework to learners in selected primary schools of Kalabo district?*

The research question focused on determining the prospects of giving homework at selected primary schools of Kalabo district. Here the researcher needed to find out from the participants the notable prospects of giving homework to the learners. To do this, semi-structured interviews were conducted with sampled teachers, and parents. Lastly, FGDs were done with sampled learners at all the three selected schools. Semi-structured interviews with parents revealed similar results, when the researcher asked them on the importance of teachers giving homework to their children. The following excerpts are examples of what they said:

*“It is important for teachers to give homework regularly because our children are too playful, hence they need to be kept busy so that they can develop interest in the subject and also learn to search for information on their own” (Parent 3, 2020).*

*“Homework is good because it also encourages learners to work on their own” (Parent 5, 2020).*

Learners in FGDs also said that their interest in various subjects is enhanced when they are given homework regularly. The following are the notable excerpts of what they said when they were asked about the advantages of being given homework:

*“Homework encourages us to learn more on our own and then we become interested in the subjects where it is given” (Learner C<sub>4</sub>, 2020).*

*“...homework is good because it makes us practice more in the subject and we come to like the subjects which we didn't like because it forces us to study and ask our parents, brothers and sisters” (Learner B<sub>2</sub>, 2020).*

Learners developed interest in the subjects were homework was constantly given, and that it enhanced self-learning in them. Findings from semi-structured interviews and FGDs also revealed that homework helped in developing interest in some subjects by learners and also enhanced self-learning in them. For example, the following excerpts are typical examples of what teachers said when they were asked on the prospects of the homework given to the learners:

*“Homework arouses the interest of pupils to learn more leading to self-directed learning” (Teacher C, 2020).*

*“When it is done consistently, homework raises the interest of learners in the subjects since they spend more time at home answering the activities” (Teacher A, 2020).*

Findings also revealed that other prospects included improving communication between learners and parents, learners and teachers and between teachers and parents through giving of homework. When asked on the prospects of homework, some teachers eluded to the fact that it improved communication between teachers and learners, and also between teachers and parents, as well as enabling parents to be involved in the education of their children. The following are notable excerpts of what teachers said:

*“Parents are made to sign for their children in the homework book each time it is given. This is good because there is an improved communication between us and parents and between learners and parents....in the end parents also participate in the education of their children” (Teacher B, 2020).*

Findings from semi-structured interviews with three teachers revealed that homework helps in improving learners’ academic performance leading to learners performing well in assessments at school level and in national examinations. The following excerpts are examples of what teachers’ responses were when the researcher asked them on the prospects of homework given to the learners:

*“Homework improves academic performance of learners especially in reading and writing (literacy skills)....I have seen pupils with reading challenges improving through the constant use of homework because most reading of syllables, words, sentences, paragraphs and texts is done also at home with the help of parents” (Teacher A, 2020).*

#### IV. DISCUSSION

*Challenges pupils and parents encounter with regards to homework in selected primary schools of Kalabo district.*

The study established a number of challenges which parents and learners encountered as they worked on homework given by the teachers. The study revealed that some parents were not helping their children with their homework tasks for various reasons. These findings are supported by Silinskas, Niemi, Lerkkanen, and Nurmi (2013) who found that parents tended to help more when learners were struggling. They added that struggling learners might have parents who were unskilled with their assistance, poor learners themselves, or less educated and this lead to a negative effect of parental assistance with the child’s skill development through homework. The results were that parents who were not forceful with their assistance or helped without being asked lowered the children’s performance. The findings are further supported by Desforges (2003) who indicated that a better home learning environment had the strongest effect on

cognitive development of learners. They argued that parents in disadvantaged areas in most cases did not speak the language of learning and teaching and this affected the communication between parents and child with regards to the instruction about homework assignments. Parents have to initiate the helping strategies of learners with their homework.

Further findings established that learners failed to successfully do homework due to home chores pressure which the parents delegated to them. These findings are in agreement with Kunene (2016) who noted that homework marginalized economically disadvantaged learners who found it difficult to complete homework tasks due to lack of suitable environment where house chores were more and there was little time for homework. Further, the findings agree with Núñez et al., (2015) who found that support had a positive effect on homework completion at all levels, whereas control had a negative effect. At the middle and high school levels, parental support had a positive influence on academic achievement. However, at all levels, parental control had a negative effect on academic achievement. It was the role of the parents to create a conducive environment to enable these challenges be worked on.

The other challenge established by the study was the lack of consistence to mark homework by teachers which discouraged and demotivated some learners to accomplish the homework tasks given to them in time. These findings are supported by Wilson and Rhodes (2010) who identified a variety of reasons which made learners not to complete homework and these reasons include the following: that it was boring; they did not understand the assignment; assignments were not meaningful; and the teacher did not give feedback for the previous homework they wrote. Indeed, learners were demotivated to accomplish future tasks if the teachers were not providing feeding on the current ones. Marking enabled learners and parents to be informed on the learner’s progress.

The other challenge established in the study was that teachers gave learners too much homework which overburdened and affected them to hand in and complete the tasks on time. Consistent with Hong, Wan, and Peng (2011), they support these findings when they found that tenth-grade learners were more negative about homework than their teachers knew. In mathematics, learners claimed they did not complete work because the assignments were too difficult. However, the learners were more critical of themselves than teachers were as a result of a cultural element to the study. The teachers were mostly accurate in their knowledge of learners’ beliefs in homework behaviours, such as competence and performance. With such challenges, it was not easy to make homework possible in the primary schools.

The other challenge the study established is the lack of learning materials such as textbooks for reference resulted into the parents failing to help their children and the children failing to read alone and find solutions to the questions. The findings agree with Abrahams (2013) whose findings highlighted challenges such as poverty, unemployment,

inequalities; lack of educational resources; lack of structure in the home; single parenting, school and community factors, and a lack of educational stimulation that negatively affected parental involvement in homework assignments. The findings are also supported by Dornbrack, Scheckle and Felix, (2008) who noted that deficit discourses ascribed to working class parents constructed them as having limited resources to draw on to assist learners at home with homework. Parents who had limited material resources were then also perceived to be lacking mental resources to help their children with homework which was not the reason.

The study established that the other challenge was that parents did not help their children with homework because of being illiterate and others for having forgotten their school work. Tam and Chan (2009) dispute these findings by stating that parents supervised, provided structure, and assisted with assignments for many children. They later accept that parents who did not participate at helping their children in tackling the homework tasks often had lower education levels or additional children in the home (Tam and Chan, 2009). In addition, Tembo (2016) concluded that the provisions of materials made parents not to check the learner's homework regularly and they withdrew their help as books acted as a substitute, yet it was a good way of making children learn to study. Parents being closer to the children was a remedy to ensuring that learners were helped with their homework.

The challenges identified in the foregoing discussion are against the principles of the social constructivism theory of learning. The lack of materials for learners to use at home, overburden of house chores and parent's illiteracy were the factors which made homework ineffective because there was less social interaction between the parents and the their children. Munsaka and Matafwali (2014) notes that Vygotsky believed that culture provides the unique ingredient that determines how children's cognitive development progresses. It is this form of constructivism that emphasizes the role education plays in people's social transformation. Cognitive development of the children should be facilitated by both parents and teachers through the use of the right materials at home and in schools. The absence of these materials made the learner's interaction with the family become limited and failed to develop their own problem-solving skills as intended by the teacher through homework.

*Prospects of giving homework to learners in selected primary schools of Kalabo district.*

The findings from semi-structured interviews with teachers and parents, and FGDs with learners showed a number of prospects of homework in selected schools in the district. Some of the notable prospects were: improving academic performance of learners; developing interest and enhancing self-learning in learners; and improving communication and parental involvement in children's education.

The findings revealed that one of the prospects of giving homework to pupils was its ability to improve learners'

performance in literacy and many other subjects. Teachers observed that learners who were constantly given homework improved in performance. Songsirisak (2019) established that homework enabled learners to acquire knowledge, develop learning skills, and increase learner academic achievement. Costa et al (2016) also observed that all the teachers in their study asked learners to do homework, especially in the areas of Portuguese and mathematics because they considered it essential for learning. This shows that indeed the importance of homework in improving the academic performance of learners cannot be overemphasised. Pfeiffer (2018) proposed that some form of homework ought to be given to the learners in order to help them in many aspects of their future life. To amplify this, it is important to note that when learners' academic performance is improved at primary school level through the use of homework and other means, these learners are more likely to excel in their secondary and tertiary education later in their academic journey.

Another notable prospect was that through homework, learners developed interest in the subjects were homework was constantly given, and that it enhanced self-learning in them. This finding is in line with Milbourne and Haury (1999) who observed that homework enables learners to acquire effective habits of self-discipline and time management, hence they develop initiative and learn to work independently. Mahmoud (2015) advised teachers to give regular homework assignments that require high mental skills; that is homework assignments of high quality rather than quantity. This is important since homework needs to develop interest in learners once they do it. This finding also resonates with sociocultural theory in the sense that it views knowledge as first occurring on the social plane and then transferred to psychological plane. In this case the teacher gives homework in the social set up and then parents and the learners discuss it, and in the end the learner internalises it so that it becomes part of his/her psychological plane (Vygotsky, 1978).

The findings also showed that improving communication between teachers and learners, learners and parents, and teachers and parents, as well as parental involvement in children's education was yet another prospect of homework outlined. This finding is in agreement with Milbourne and Haury (1999) who indicated that homework can also bring parents and teachers closer together and added that parents who supervise homework and assist their children with assignments learn more about their children's education and about the school. Songsirisak (2019) added that homework also promoted students' collaborative skills in speaking between teachers and students for clarification. Moreover, sociocultural theory encourages people to communicate effectively since it believes that knowledge comes as a result of social interactions and relations. Therefore, teachers and parents need to constantly communicate in order to ensure that learners can learn effectively (Vygotsky, 1978). Tas et al., (2014) also indicated that because the teachers stressed that homework was important in the acquisition of subject matter, they communicated with parents and suggested the best



strategies for providing help. This kind of communication between teachers and parents is vital in the education of the child.

Therefore, it is worth noting that the above discussions show that there are a number of prospects of assigning homework to the learners at any level and in any subject. Generally, homework is aimed at enhancing learners' performance through engaging them to do school work even when they are at home. However, by doing that, it was observed from the study that it also helped in developing interest and enhancing self-learning in learners, as well as improving communication and parental involvement in children's education. When these prospects are realised, they benefit all the three parts involved, that is teachers, learners and parents. However, homework should be given with caution and it should not be too much so as to compromise the ability of learners to have free time. Songsirisak (2019) noted that homework benefited and supported students' learning although it had some psychological impact on their learning and affected free time management.

## V. CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

### Conclusion

The importance of homework is increasingly becoming recognised in local schools and is encouraging positive attitudes for parental involvement. Homework reinforces skills introduced in class and also teaches learners to work independently and to develop self-discipline. Parental interest and support is a very important factor for children's success in school. When parents help their children with their homework, children believe that their educational pursuits are worthy of their time and effort. Teachers observed that learners who were constantly given homework improved academic performance. It can also be concluded that learners developed interest in the subjects where homework was constantly given, and it enhanced learner self-learning. The study also concludes that homework helped in improving communication between teachers and learners, learners and parents, and teachers and parents, as well as parental involvement in children's education was yet another prospect of homework outlined.

The challenges were that some parents could not adequately guide their children as they worked on homework given by teachers. Learners failed to successfully do homework due to home chores pressure which the parents delegated to them, the lack of consistency to mark homework by teachers which discouraged and demotivated some learners to accomplish the homework tasks given to them in time and that teachers gave learners too much homework which overburdened and affected them to hand in and complete the tasks on time. Other challenges were lack of learning materials such as textbooks for reference resulted into the parents failing to help their children to read alone and find solutions to homework questions. Further challenges were that parents did not help their children with homework because of being illiterate and

some children never asked their parents or guardians to assist them with homework tasks.

### Recommendations

The following recommendations were made based on the study findings:

- i. Teachers should ensure that they give homework to learners which is manageable so that they are able to finish on time whilst at home. This would encourage learners to complete the tasks given at home. However it has been noted that pupils fail to finish their homework due to economic status of the family. In some families learners are expected to participate in raising income for the family through selling at the market or participating in agro activities. Such learners have little time for homework.
- ii. Teachers should ensure that they mark homework tasks on time so that learners are motivated to continue writing and handing in their work. This would help to check on the learner's progress. Teachers have a duty and task to give prompt feedback to learners. However, the current situation does not allow them to do so due to large class sizes in schools.
- iii. The school management should ensure that they monitor the teaching and learning closely so that teachers are encouraged to mark the homework tasks for learners. This would help teachers and learners take homework policy implementation seriously.
- iv. Government through the Ministry of General Education should ensure that schools have the requisite learning and teaching aids to promote learning and deploy enough teachers in the school.

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