

Grade Retention in the Eyes of Learners: A Subjective View from St Joseph Primary School in Mutare District

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Abstract: The study explored the perceptions of grade retained learners at St Joseph's Primary School in Mutare District. Fifteen repeated learners (aged 10 to 13 years thus from grade four to six) participated in the study. Altogether, there were fifteen (15) learners who repeated grades thus eight (8) 53% were boys and seven (7) 47% were girls. Because of the small number of grade retained learners, the researcher decided to use them all in the study. The fifteen automatically became the participants of the study. Qualitative approach was used. Semi-structured interviews were conducted and analyzed through phenomenological analysis. Based on the findings it is clear that twelve (12)80% of the learners who participated in the study viewed grade retention as a positive exercise. This was contrary to three (3) 20% who perceived grade retention negatively. They regarded the exercise as stressful and thus eventually failed to achieve its objective. The findings revealed that the policy had positive effects on academic performance. The following recommendations emerged based on the findings of this study. Schools should introduce weekend learning to help pupils who have been earmarked for grade retention. Teachers should also offer individualized attention to pupils earmarked for grade retention so that they can improve in their academic performance. Pupils should also be provided with extra time by school authorities at the end of the school term especially 1st and 2nd term with a focus on pupils whose academic performance shows weakness during the term. However, (Mainrades, 2002) carried out a content analysis study on grade retention on a global scale. The analysis indicated that the grade retention is usually used in poor countries. The situation of grade retention in European countries have decreased between 1980 and 2011 from 3, 1% to 2%. (Massachusetts, 2009). Global estimates published by World Health Organisation in 2016 indicate that about 1 in 20 of primary going children worldwide have undergone retention in their primary level.

I. INTRODUCTION

Background: Education should aim to grow learners into productive citizens that use their knowledge, talents and learned skills to sustain themselves and help others while pushing the human race forward in areas of equality, equity and harmony (UNESCO 2018). In the event that learners fail to grasp or to achieve these aims in a certain grade, grade retention is then practiced. (Barker 1998) .Grade retention is meant to help learners who lag behind.

Globally

Retention is not a new practice. Retention rates for students in British schools were very high as early as the late 16th century (Hess, 1978.) By the early 19th century in the United States, grade retention was the preferred method for dealing with learning deficiencies (Cunningham and Owens,1976).By the end of the 19th century ,the practice was so common that nearly every other child was retained at least once during his or her school career (Larson,1955). Historically in the USA grade retention practices were consequential for a number of important educational and socio-economic outcomes. (Hauser, Frederick and Andrews, 2007) Retention in western countries is based on reading proficiency and can produce large improvements in academic performance when compared to grade level peers (Harvard, 2011).In England they believe that receiving the same instruction for another year will provide more time for the child to learn physically and intellectually (Jacobs, 2016) .In Russia grade retention helps learners who have missed a lot of instructions or concepts because of absenteeism ,or the instructions have been inconsistent because of frequent family relocations and attendance at more than one school or when the child is younger than most learners at grade level or when the child has experienced serious illness or emotional trauma (Mainrades, 2002) carried out a content analysis study on grade retention on a global scale. The analysis indicated that the grade retention is usually used in poor countries. The situation of grade retention in European countries have decreased between 1980 and 2011 from 3, 1% to 2%. (Massachusetts, 2009). Global estimates published by World Health Organisation in 2016 indicate that about 1 in 20 of primary going children worldwide have undergone retention in their primary level.

Regionally

A study by Jere (2006) which was conducted in many developing African countries reveals that grade retention is more common in developing countries than in developed countries and it is especially common in remote rural areas .The study furthermore revealed that the highest rates were found in the Sub-Saharan African countries where each year, about 22% of primary pupils are retained. In South Africa 52% of the learners are retained at least once before they reach grade 10 (Miller 2010). Botswana in the mid-1990s had

an overwhelming rate of learners who went through grade retention, 7% of their primary school entrants repeated grades (Jere 2006). At the primary school levels girls have lower dropout and grade retention rates than boys (UNICEF by Coyne 2003). Low income countries rarely focus on grade retention (Sarah Kabay, 2009). A primary conclusion in most literature is that grade retention is practiced more frequently in Francophone thus French speaking and Portuguese in English speaking Africans (UNESCO 2012). The difference is interpreted from a historical perspective. Colonial education systems reflected various European approaches to grade retention (Barker, 2010).

Locally

In Zimbabwe the ministry of primary and secondary education is the base for quality primary and secondary education. It is also responsible for strategic planning and development, research, implementation, monitoring and review of policies for the development of primary and secondary education in Zimbabwe. (Lunel 2000). (UNICEF 1998) The ministry of primary and secondary education advocates for many strategies in order to deal with learners who lag behind. These includes, according to (UNICEF Journal 1998) Performance Lag Address Program (PLAP), Early Reading Initiative (ERI), remedial strategy, speech therapist, special classes and grade retention just to mention but a few. According to Barker, (2012) remedial programs are used to address gaps in basic skills and most remedial programs target reading and mathematics weaknesses. Remedial programs are different from special education services he added. (UNICEF 1998) suggested that remedial instruction can help struggling learners shore up their basic skills. This extra help is believed to help students catch up with their peers and sometimes, if a student's gap in learning is not related to a disability. From the studies conducted by Lunel, (2000) in a number of some school districts and states it shows that remedial strategy is the most prevalent in improving reading proficiency and numeracy skills gap only. Lunel, (2000) indicated that despite the need for typical settings for proper remediation learning, it overburdened teachers, schools, lack of resources and once a remedial program has ended, students are often returned to the mainstream classrooms. However, once intensive interventions are removed, students may begin to struggle again once more. The ministry's one of its major objective is how to improve the level of low achievers, and ultimately how to prevent failure in schools, (Haddad, 1979). This has made the government to consider grade retention, grade promotion, ERI (Early Reading Initiative) and PLAP (Performance Lag Address Programme) (Ndhlovu, 2000). The Zimbabwean education Act Chapter 25 section 4 supports grade retention in schools (Barker 2010). A lot of studies have been done on whether grade retention is practiced in primary schools (UNICEF 1998). In Zimbabwe there are more than 6123 primary schools and 17% of these practice grade retention (Weed 2011). Saint Joseph's Primary School has an enrolment of 1672 learners and it shows that 5% of them have undergone grade retention. Retention at St Joseph Primary School is

practiced but little knowledge is known on whether the learners are for the idea or not. Therefore the researcher decided to carry out the study to explore the learner's perceptions on grade retention.

Knowledge gap

Retention as a remedy for poor academic performance has been hotly debated and extensively studied for decades. In an era emphasizing educational accountability, policies of determining grade retention based on students' scores on standardized tests have been adopted by many schools in an effort to end social promotion (Weed 2011). Perhaps, the observation made by Range (2012) would help in concluding this matter. Firstly, he argued that analysing the success of a practice is a noble professional duty. He further contend that despite the feelings towards any issue, grade retention is an emotionally debatable issue, we must turn to the body of research to guide how we work with learners. We would not expect our doctors and cancer research experts for example to rely on their feelings but we depend on them to rely on research. It is true that almost anyone will find exception to the rule. This includes testimonies of "...it worked for these learners I know". Our practice towards grade retention must reflect research done on many learners whilst still keeping in account individual differences. According to some teachers and administrators the rationale is that repetition of the grade will give the students an additional year to master the academic content they failed to master the previous year (Barker 2010). Very few studies have looked at the learner's perceptions towards grade retention (Burkman, LoGerfo, Ready, and Lee, (2007). Therefore the researcher has to study the perceptions of learners on grade retention at St Joseph Primary School in Mutare District.

II. METHODS

Qualitative approach was implemented in this research because it is inductive, holistic, emic, subjective and process-oriented. It suits in understanding, interpreting and describing the experiences of grade retention. The qualitative approach also describes life experiences and gave meaning according to Morse & Field (1996). This approach is more appropriate as it exactly allows learners to give their meaning on grade retention since it is dialectic and interpretive. A qualitative research approach was preferred as it best meets the life experiences of learners who repeat grades. A qualitative research helped to consider the importance of understanding people in their context and the commitment of studying naturally occurring phenomenon without introducing external controls.

The logical design focuses on the commonality of a lived experience within a particular group and also allows the researcher to arrive at a description of the nature of grade retention (Para how 2007). Phenomenology design enhanced the true meaning of the perceptions of grade retention explored through experiences as described by the individual. In this study, learners' experiences of grade retention was

described in the way these appeared. Learners communicated what is real to them about grade retention and not what they hear or they have heard. It uncovered concealed meaning in the learners on grade retention phenomenon embedded in the worlds of the narrative. It clarified and enlightened how learners understand and comprehend grade retention.

In this study, the population comprised learners who repeated grades at St Joseph Primary School. Participants were from grade four to grade six since most studies agreed that, that's where most retention took place (Barker, 2010). The learners who repeated grades at St Joseph school were fifteen (15) 8 boys and 7 girls. Purposive sampling technique was used. Purposive sampling was preferred because it is a non-probability sample that is selected based on characteristics of a population and the objective of the study. Altogether, there were fifteen (15) learners who repeated grades thus eight (8) boys and seven (7) girls. Because of the small representation, the researcher decided to include them all. The fifteen automatically became the participants of the study. The researcher discussed every procedure with the participant so as to get informed consent. In this case where participants were minors the informed consent extended to the parents or guardians.

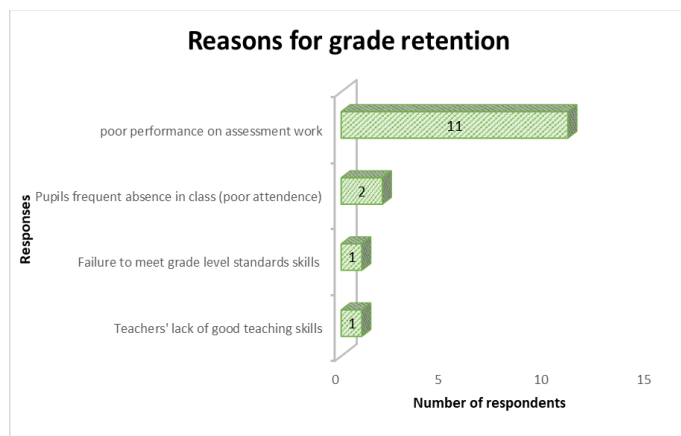
Table of Respondents

Respondents by grade	Number of respondents	Percentage %
Grade six (6)	10 4boys 4 girls	67
Grade five (5)	5 4boys 3 girls	33
Total	15	100

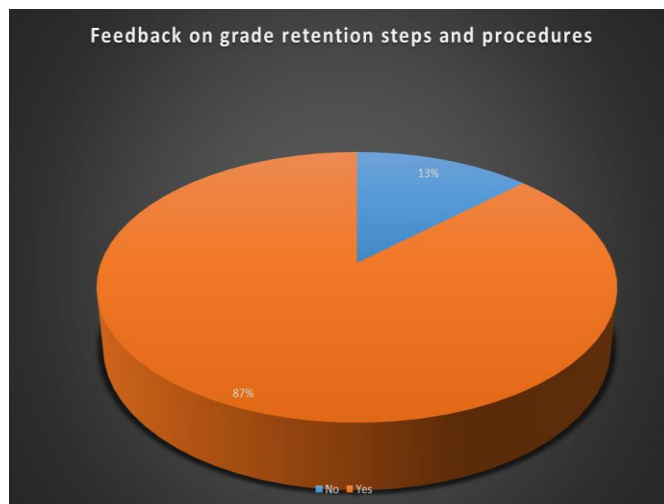
III. RESULT

These findings have generally revealed that grade retention is important in improving educational skills of learners who lag behind, despite the fact that they face some challenges in learning with those who have not repeated grades. In order to establish pupils' perception towards grade retention, respondents were first asked on the reason for their grade retention.

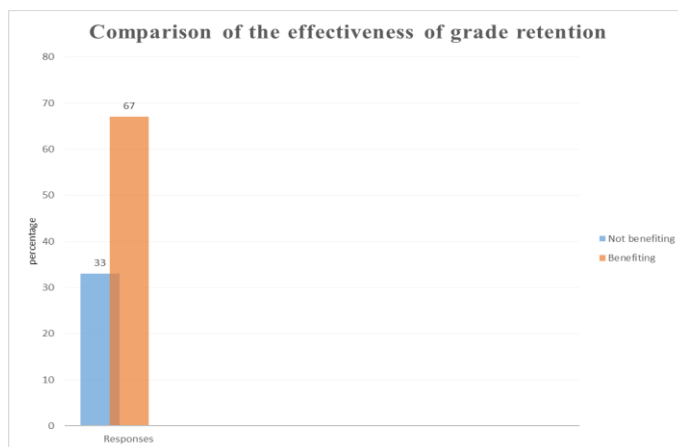
Their responses are shown in the figure 1 below:



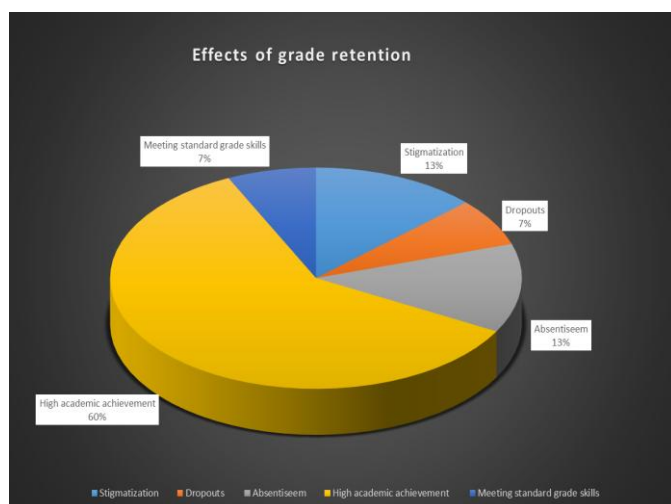
The majority 11(73%) stated that grade retention was caused by poor performance on assessment work throughout the year whereas 2(20%) reported absenteeism as a cause of grade retention and 1(7%) said that lack of good teaching skills also contributes towards grade retention. Lastly another 1(7%) indicated that failure to meet grade level standard skills also caused learners to repeat grades.



In order to assess whether respondents were happy with the steps that were taken by the school to retain them, 13 (87%) reported that they were happy while 2 (13%) stated that they were not happy about the steps of retention. Those who were not happy with the steps reported that the process was too long as it involved many stakeholders. Those who were happy acknowledged that the process and steps were necessary as they encouraged team spirit.



10(67%) indicated that grade retention helped them in their academic performance since they had shown a great improvement after the retention and 5 (33%) said that they did not benefit from grade retention programme at all.

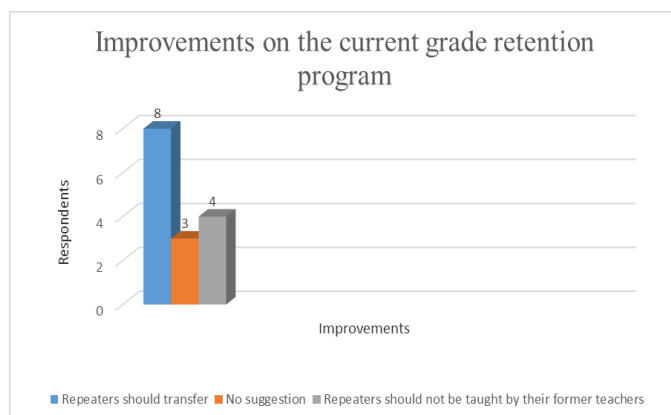


9(60%) stated that some positive effects of grade retention were high academic achievement and 1(7%) suggested that grade retention made one to work hard thus meeting standard grade skills. On the negative effects, 2(13%) said grade retention promoted school dropouts and 1(7%) reported that absenteeism was another negative effect of grade retention. 7(13%) postulated that stigmatization was very rampant and this led learners to become bullies and to be prone to other forms of abuses from colleagues.

Feedback on how learners are satisfied with grade retention

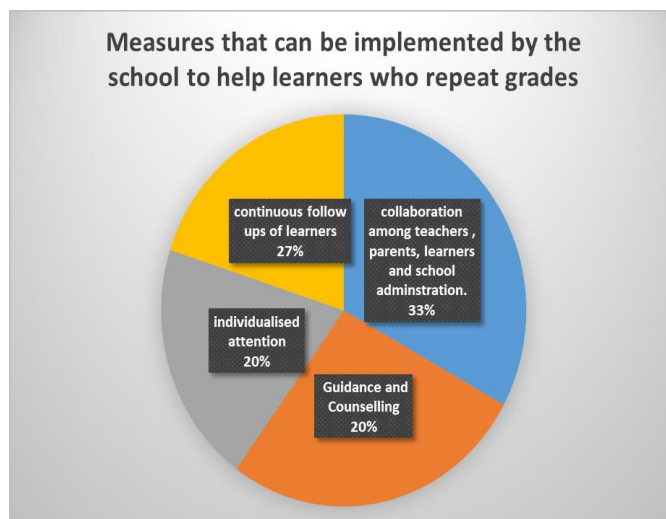
Number of respondents	Responses	Percentages %
13	Satisfied	86%
1	Not satisfied	7%
1	Not sure whether they were satisfied or not.	7%

The majority of learners, 13(86%) stated that they were satisfied with grade retention while 1(7%) were not sure whether they were satisfied. 1(7%) said they were totally not satisfied with the grade retention program.



On the ways to improve the current grade retention program, 10(67%) of the respondents suggested that learners who repeat grades should do so at a different school. However the respondents also indicated that though repeating grades was

necessary, it also brought shame and misery, whereas 5(33%) purported that the same teachers should not take the repeating grades.



On the measures that can be implemented by the school to help learners who failed grades, 33%(5) of the learners indicated that collaboration of teachers, parents, learners and school administrators was necessary, 27% (4) of the respondents suggested that continuous follow ups on learners was also of paramount importance. 3 (20%) said individualized attention should be implemented as a necessary stop gap measure. The other 3(20%) viewed guidance and counselling as a good practice which helped fend off ridicule from colleagues. This is illustrated on figure 7 above.

IV. DISCUSSION

When learners were asked about the causes of grade retention, an awesome majority, 10 (67%) of the total respondents viewed grade retention as a good policy but said a lot has to be done for it to be more effective. This is contrary to studies done by Jere (2006) and DelConte, (2011) whose outcome showed that pupils had negative perceptions towards the policy of grade retention. The differences in the outcomes between this study and other research studies like those done by Jere and DelConte are attributed to variations in the perceiver's factors (i.e. attitudes, experience, interest and expectations), target's factors (i.e. motives, background, proximity and similarity) and the factors in the situation such as social setting, time and work setting as indicated by the study conducted by Nzuvu (1999). 5(33%) of the respondents regarded grade retention as not effective on improving pupils' grades. According to Shepard and Smith (2005) perceptions are formed by people in several different ways and suggested two types of knowledge that influence people's perception as being propositional and practical. Statistically speaking, this research study unearthed facts due to pupils own experiences about grade retention. Hebb's theory on perceptions indicates that perception is influenced by several factors which among others include past experiences, attitudes, long period of learning and practice. Hebb concluded in his theory that

although certain characteristics are innately determined there is however certain other characteristics that can be proved to be the result of learning and long periods of practice. The outcome of this study indicated that 10 (67%) of learners at St Joseph Primary School viewed grade retention positively. This is contrary to the studies done by Jere and DelConte, whose outcome showed that learners have negative perception towards grade retention (Jere & DelConte 1996). The differences in the outcomes between this study and other research studies like those done by Jere and DelConte as already noted above were attributed to variations in the perceivers factors like attitudes, experience, interest, support system and expectations. It may be argued therefore that perception is the subjective interpretation of sensations in the light of experience, motivation, emotion and context .Gregory (1996) equally noted that the perception is not simply determined by stimulus patterns but rather a dynamic searching for the interpretation of the available data.

Based on the findings of the present study, as shown in the previous chapter it is clear that twelve (12) 80% of the learners who participated in the study viewed grade retention as a positive exercise. This was contrary to three (3) 20% who perceived grade retention negatively. They regarded the exercise as stressful and thus eventually failed to achieve its objective.

Causes of grade retention

The respondents were further asked to identify the possible major causes of grade retention. Grade retention was one of the academic policies that was implemented at the school as an intervention measure for pupils whose academic performance was poor. Eleven (73%) mentioned that retention is caused by low performance on assessment work provided throughout the year. In addition, two (2), 13% pointed out that retention was due to pupils' frequent absence from lessons. One (1), 7% of the respondents indicated that retention was due to pupils' disability such as mental retardation. Lastly one 1 (7%) indicated that failure to meet grade level standard skills also caused learners to repeat grades. The findings were also in agreement with the outcome from studies done by Jimerson, (1999) as well as another study by Jimerson and Ferguson (2007) in which they both demonstrated that grade retention may impact positively on pupil's academics. They argued that unsatisfactory academic performance was the major cause of pupil's retention. Tomchin and Impara (1997) argue that being held back gave the child a chance to mature and review material that was not mastered during the failed academic year. As such grade retention should be viewed as an acceptable corrective measure as it prevents pupils from facing further failure. This is so because some pupils did not necessarily fail academically due to being dull but owing to their immaturity in grasping concepts. In support of this, it should be mentioned that findings from the present study revealed that St Joseph Primary school put in measures that offered support to the retained pupils. These measures included counselling and teachers devoting much of their time

on the pupils that needed help in Performance Lag Address Programme (PLAP), Early Reading Initiative (ERI) as well as facilitating for a conducive learning environment in which other well performing pupils were encouraged to be working hand-in-hand with those pupils who had difficulties in certain subjects. Nevertheless, some scholars, Gottfredson et al (1994), Owen & Ranick, (1977) argue that positive effects of grade retention if detected, are limited and tend to diminish over time. Its focus was on the pupils views on grade retention.

Suggestions of strategies to improve grade retention

Grade retention has over the years remained a controversial and an emotional issue which is supposed to be analysed in context. One of the strategies that respondents proposed in the study to further improve on grade retention included changing the former class when repeating. For example, where a pupil was in grade four white and was supposed to go to grade 5 white and because of repeating he/she did not prefer to remain in grade four white but to another grade four class either four green ,red, or blue. The respondents also pointed out that they did not wish to be taught by the same teacher for another year but preferred to be taught by another teacher. As seen in the literature review, the critical stage of any given policy is the implementation stage Sabatier, (1996).

According to the findings of this research, the study identified some peculiar factors which made the grade retention positively viewed by the learners at the School.

Collaboration among teachers, parents, learners and school administrators.

The study found out that a number of significant processes were followed before a child was retained in a grade. Teachers made referrals of students who performed poorly to the head teacher. The head teacher in turn called and involved parents in the decision making process. However according to Barker (2016) the department of School Psychological Services (SPS) should be consulted for the final decision on grade retention. This was also advocated for by the network analysis theorists Marsh and McConnell (2010) who stated that policy implementation was not only about one particular group but the collaboration of many stakeholders. The researcher found out that St Joseph school at times do not consult the SPS department for the approval of grade retention. They do so basing their decisions on the tests learners write at the end of the year of which the tests have their own shortcomings for example they may not meet their grade level.

Continuous guidance and counselling to learners who face grade retention. .

Once learners retained grades the school administrators put much emphasis on counselling and parental involvement. Parents of the affected pupils were called and advised of the schools' intentions. The school authorities encouraged the parents to provide the necessary support such as financial and morale. The responsible teachers provided counselling to the

affected pupils in consultation with the school counselling department. Counselling helped the majority of learners to accept and perceive grade retention as a good practice. Teachers proactively prepared the affected pupils' minds, hence the positive perception. The realization that parents and learners were stakeholders in the implementation of grade retention deliberately made the implementation a success at the school. Ndlovu (2015) pointed out that counselling is a mutual helping relationship between a person in need (learner) and a trained counselor. When a learner has been retained he or she has to undergo counselling. The school has a professional counselor to offer the required and appropriate service. Maloney, (2013) argues that counselling is an important component in enabling young people to take more responsibility for their lives by helping them to deal increasingly with their own issues and by empowering them. He also observed that many academic difficulties which led pupils to retain grades had their origins in the family background of the pupils and the attitude and expectations of parents.

These findings are in agreement with the outcomes of the study by Malambo, (2013) which revealed that good performance in schools was attributed to adequate learning and teaching materials, high level of pupil discipline, controlled enrolment levels, effective guidance and counselling system, prize giving ceremonies in recognition of outstanding pupil performance and close supervision of teachers and pupils among other factors.

Continuous follow-up on learner's academic performance.

Another important factor noted by the study was that pupils' academic performance was monitored and gauged by the school authorities on a continuous basis and feedback on the progression rate was also shared with parents of learners. Apart from creating a positive school climate through guidance and counselling, availability of appropriate teaching and learning materials helped. This agrees with the research conducted by Kukupa (2014), Ribbins and Burrige (1994) who identified attributes of an effective school which is the active parental involvement in school matters and pupil's academic performance. St Joseph school in this regard have successfully used this approach to implement grade retention policy thereby improving academic performance of pupils and the overall standard of education. For example the school head made use of church masses and consultation days as a way of following up on pupils' academic performance. Regular meetings with parents and teachers which were aimed at discussing pupil's performance on continuous basis were of significant importance.

Individualized attention

The study found that providing individualised attention to grade retention pupils greatly assisted them. This outcome concurs with a study conducted in Zambia by Malambo, (2012) and Kukupa, (2014) which revealed that individualized attention was one of the factors that made pupils from schools

to perform better in their academic performance. This could mainly be attributed to the fact that individualized attention by the teacher took the pupils individual needs into consideration such as rate of learning, the learning style, attitude, maturity, interest which affects the level of learning, motivation and learning environment. In this regard, St Joseph Primary School, just as it does with pupils' examination classes it should emphasize the need for teachers to provide retained pupils with individualized attention in order to make a difference in the way grade retention policy was being practiced. Such a strategy if implemented, could help teachers take into account many learners differences thereby enabling retained pupils to work at their own pace and at the time most convenient. Another advantage of employing individualized attention strategy to pupils was that effective and active learning would be realised and above all the pupils would be given an opportunity to be in control of how and when they learn.

V. LIMITATIONS

Limitations are potential weaknesses of a study which the study may not have control over, Kasonde-Ng'andu (2013). In this study lack of adequate local literature on grade retention policy was a major limitation. Reviewing local literature helps shape best practices and improves the phenomenon being researched. Despite grade retention being practiced in many schools for a very long time and for some as old as the schools themselves, there was a serious knowledge gap in literature which posed a challenge to find studies that have been done locally. However, the limited local literature was supplemented by studies that were conducted in other countries with similar learning environmental conditions as Zambia. One such study was conducted by Jere (2006) which examined perceptions towards grade retention in several developing African countries. The other limitation was that the outcomes of this study was likely not to be generalized to other schools, provinces and districts of Zimbabwe. The fact that the study confined itself to St Joseph's Primary School, therefore implied that the results could not be generalized to other schools both within and outside Manicaland Province. Nevertheless, if such generalizations were made to other provinces, they could be done with caution.

The use of purposive sampling technique in this study provided valuable information about grade retention but made it difficult for the findings to be generalized to other schools in other districts facing similar challenges of grade retention and its effects on pupils' academic performance. At first, the learners were not comfortable in disclosing some other important information pertaining to grade retention. In order to counter this challenge, the researcher clearly assured respondents that the information sought was for academic use only and was going to be treated with the highest level of confidentiality.

VI. CONCLUSION

The general picture that came out of this study was that pupils' perceptions towards the policy of grade retention was good and that the policy had positive effects on academic performance. Based on the findings of the study, it was evident that grade retention improved the learner's performance. It has been highlighted from the discussion that in order for a policy to be implemented successfully, there is need for all parties concerned to be fully aware of actions needed to be taken. Indeed, implementation is a critical stage in the policy cycle. This, therefore, means that whether a policy is initiated from the top, down or indeed collectively, there is need for caution during the implementation stage. It was this conscious approach that St Joseph School took which made a difference in the way pupils positively perceived grade retention thereby impacting positively on the pupils' academic performance. While other studies out rightly condemned grade retention policy as a bad education interventional strategy to help struggling pupils improve in their academic performance, this study showed that with measures such as guidance and counselling, continuous collaboration between teachers and parents, effective monitoring of pupils' academic and collective approach to resolving challenges pupils encounter, effective communication of the policy to all stakeholders and among other factors, grade retention policy was received well at the School. The research has also presented strategies suggested by respondents on how grade retention policy could be improved upon in schools. Some of the suggested strategies included provision of individualized attention, encouraging pupils to be studying in mixed-ability groups, introduction of extended learning time at the end of the term and weekends. The emphasis of such suggestions is that these strategies should be made available to pupils struggling in their academic performance proactively. Grade retention policy could be implemented with a difference and in a much more improved, effective and efficient manner. The study found out that the pupils' positive perception towards the policy of grade retention was mainly due to the following factors:

- High levels of knowledge awareness among pupils about the existence of the policy.
- Parental involvement
- Effective communication of the policy by the school authorities with the pupils, parents and other stakeholders through acceptance letters, newsletters, Parents and Teachers Association (PTA) meetings and open days. As such, the pupils would want grade retention policy to continue as well as to be extended to other schools where it is not in place. The study also sought to determine the effects of grade retention on pupils' academic performance. Most of the pupils at the school, 10 (67%) stated that the policy has positive effects because in most instances, it has caused their academic performance to improve as well as making them more serious towards school work. Although in the initial stages of retaining a pupil,

there were negative effects being reported such as the affected pupils losing concentration in class, fear of being laughed at by friends and fear of parents' negative reaction, to mention a few, such challenges were quickly resolved through the following measures:

- Vigorous guidance and counselling programmes.
- Constant reminder by school authorities to parents and pupils themselves on individual pupils' academic performance.
- Conducting organized spiritual prayers by priests and reverends in order to encourage retained pupils.
- Coordinated caring groups involving class teachers, deputy head teachers, parents, prefects and close friends to retained pupils.
- Putting up a deliberate policy of making anyone found laughing at any of the retained pupils a punishable offence.
- Inclusiveness of all stakeholders such as parents, pupils, teachers, PTA and school administration in the design, formulation and implementation of grade retention policy.
- Continuous collaboration between teachers and parents on matters that affect pupils' academic performance.
- Counselling is given prior, during and after retaining pupils
- Collective approach to resolving challenges retained pupils encounter

In line with the Hebbian theory of perception, the findings of this study are in conformity with what the theory stated that factors in the perceiver such as one's past experience, interest, expectations and attitudes; factors in the target like one's motives, background and similarity; and factors in the situation such as the social and working setting play a critical role in the formation of perception. It can therefore be concluded that pupils' perceptions on grade retention is more positive than negative

VII. RECOMMENDATIONS

This study recommends the responsible Ministry of Primary and Secondary Education and individual researchers to research more on this issue because the results of this study are not conclusive; apart from grade retention and grade promotion as strategies trying to improve pupils' performance at primary school level, the study realized other strategies (ERI and PLAP) that are currently employed as well whose impact is yet to be realized. The question therefore is neither on retention, promotion nor PLAP but on finding and implementing a strategy that can help a low achiever to improve.

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