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An Exploration into the Academic Performance in Government and Mission Secondary Schools in National Public Examinations: A Case of Four Secondary Schools in Chilanga District, Zambia

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Abstract
The statistics of learner performance at grade 12 shows that their performance in grant-aided secondary schools is generally better than that of the non-grant aided secondary schools. This study sought to interrogate the academic performance in government and mission secondary schools in national public examinations at grade 12 in Chilanga District, Lusaka Province. A Concurrent Mixed Method Design was used to provide a comprehensive analysis of the research problem. The sample size selected of fifty respondents was drawn from four schools. Primarily data was collected through questionnaires and secondary data from desk research. The study analysed qualitative data by identifying themes emerging from the given data. Ostensibly, the unsatisfactory performance of pupils from non-grant aided schools was predominantly attributed to inadequate learning and teaching resources; over-enrolment of learners in class; demotivated teachers; insubordination; learner indiscipline; absenteeism; and inactive In-Service Training activities for teachers. Further, the study established the reasons for excellent performance to include high teacher motivation, manageable class size, eclectic leadership styles, and supportive working environment. It was noted that motivated teachers attended to the needs of individual learners, prepared adequately for teaching, assessed learners' performance effectively, and engaged parents in the children's learning processes. Additionally, the deduced measures used by Head Teachers to achieve excellent performance were the inclusion of basic elements, promotion of team work; supporting empowering teachers' skills and securing good performance. It was concluded that mission schools outperform government schools due to high teacher motivation, manageable class sizes, effective leadership styles, and a supportive environment, while government schools faced challenges such as inadequate resources, over-enrolment, and teacher demotivation. Recommendations included improving teacher commitment, increasing parental involvement, providing better facilities, enhancing conditions of services, and engaging into research initiatives to boost performance.

1. Introduction
1.1 Background
Historically, formal education in Zambia was originated through the work of voluntary agencies, mostly Christian missionaries. To-date, religious bodies make a significant contribution to educational provisions in Zambia through grant-aided schools and colleges. A grant-aided institution is one that receives funding from government at 75% of capital costs of approved projects and an annual grant-in-aid to cover operational running costs. In addition, the government, GRZ pays the salaries of teachers, approved personnel at the institutions and other associated monetary compensations.

For some time now, private and Catholic Church-run mission-based learning institutions provide quality education. According to the Ministry of Education (2024a) [22], there were 68.1 % of the pupils at grade twelve levels who received their certificates with private, and grant-aided schools continuing to achieve higher success rate and reflecting a slight improvement compared to the previous year. Little wonder that many parents including non-Catholic Church members choose private and Catholic

Church-run learning institutions in preference to government schools for their children's education perhaps because of assured good examination performance.

Ever since independence, the Mission Schools continue to effectively contribute to the preparation of pupils. One sign of the Mission Secondary Schools authorities' concern is with quality academic performance, and keeping a close eye on annual results of grade twelve examinations (Carmody, 1999) [8]. Over the years, there has been impressive academic performance in Mission Secondary Schools as compared to that of Government Schools at national level. Consequently, the government of Zambia is implementing measures to improve the quality of education in Government Secondary Schools. However, despite government measures to boost academic performance in public schools in Chilanga District, it has remained persistently low. In this regard, the study chose to interrogate the academic performance discrepancies between the mission and government schools in selected secondary schools in Chilanga District.

1.2 Statement of the Problem
Education is an important aspect of human resource development. Failure in national examinations limits learners' career choice, as most career choices are dependent on satisfactory results (Ministry of Education, 2016). Junior secondary leaving examinations performance determines whether or not the pupils proceeds to grade ten (senior secondary) and later enrolment to tertiary institutions (Examination Council of Zambia, 2023) [16]. Therefore, a Learner's progression in life is determined by academic performance in the national public examinations. It is for this reason that secondary school managers are expected to help improve the grades attained by pupils in junior leaving examinations so that pupils have a strong foundation proceeding to senior secondary level. Empirical evidence from studies has in recent times, showed that poor academic performance of learners in Zambia is skewed towards GRZ schools (Ministry of General Education, 2020) [25].

There are various studies in Zambia on the comparison of performance of pupils in different examinations, involving various settings, thematic areas, different levels, as well as different factors, which affect their performance (Chileshe, 2022) [11]. However, there is probably no study carried out in Zambia to investigate and comprehensively interrogate the academic performance, in totality (Simui & Kabamba, 2019). As a matter of contextualising this study, it will explore the academic performance in government and mission secondary schools regarding public examinations outcomes, highlighting marked differences between Mission and Government Schools at grades 9 and 12 in Chilanga District, in Lusaka Province.

1.3 Purpose of the Study
The purpose of the study is to explore the academic performance in government and mission secondary schools regarding public examinations outcomes. Analysis of findings providing poor outcomes would trigger the process of further dissecting the discrepancies that affect the performance of learners in Government and Mission schools in Chilanga District. Similarly, favourable outcomes could entail the capability to repeat good performance in national public examinations.

1.4 Study Objectives
The overall objective of the study was to investigate the academic performance including poor performance and determine intrinsic discrepancies between mission and public secondary schools in Chilanga District, Zambia. The initial specific objective described the relationship between the school leadership styles and the academic performance of learners in both mission, while the research objective focused on what influences do school management styles have on the performance of learners.

1.5 Significance of the Study
The significance of this study was to provide useful information required to enhance the performance of national public examinations and general management of secondary schools, in Chilanga District, and have a multiplier effect on the education management, in the country (Mulambo, 2020) [30]. In addition, the study will be useful to the policy makers and curriculum developers in devising strategies to be implemented in secondary schools to improve the performance of learners. It will also contribute towards the existing body of knowledge on academic performance in government and mission secondary schools in national public examination, while establish whether the results from prior studies could be generalised (Mulambo, 2020; Mwansa, 2018) [30, 32].

1.6 Delimitation of the Study
The study targeted four selected schools in Chilanga District. It was confined to Government and Mission Secondary Schools, leaving out Private and Community Secondary Schools in the catchment area. Further, the respondents included head teachers, deputy head teachers, teachers, pupils and parents or custodians who had children in the selected schools.

1.7 Theoretical Framework
Private schools embrace the ideas proposed by Scientific Management Theory, as elaborated by Fredrick Taylor in 1911 (Dar, 2022) [14], the proponent of the Scientific Management Theory. He analysed the management of a typical work place and came up with a number of relevant elements. Among them was the determination of standards performance. Taylor observed that prior to the scientific management there was no one who knew how much work an employee was expected to do within a specified period of time. Since the management function is typically cyclical, it ideally includes performance management approaches that have been developed, including appraisal systems. Concerning evaluation, it was also emphasized that work must be evaluated by judging the results against the goals (Dar, 2022) [14]. He further proposed that workers who produce maximum output should be rewarded accordingly. To overcome underpayment, Taylor developed the device of differential piece work, where the employee should be paid according to hours worked. However, this method of performance management in many cases is not upheld as it encourages extrinsic motivation, while neglecting intrinsic motivation. The different stages of transformation include: Input; Process; and Output; in the context of academic performance, for Learners, which simultaneously measures the competence of the teacher.

2. Literature Review
2.1 Role of the school Leadership (administration) on students' performance

Armstrong (2004) [3] defines leadership as influence, power and the legitimate authority acquired by a leader to effectively transform the organization through the direction of the human resources, leading to the achievement of desired purpose. Moreover, Cole (2004) [13] defines leadership as a process where an individual within a group assumes responsibility not only for the group's results but fosters collaboration among all the members to attain collective goals within an organisation culture. The quality of the school is affected by how the internal processes work to constantly improve its performance. Basically, head teachers are responsible for influencing student academic achievement, while ensuring order through acceptable student behaviour (Moran, Carlson & Tableman, 2012) [27].

School leadership plays a pivotal role in shaping the overall effectiveness of secondary schools and directly influencing students' academic outcomes in national examinations. Effective leadership is widely recognised as the process of influencing others to achieve organisational goals, including improved teaching and learning environments (Leithwood et al., 2020). Effective school leadership is vital for converting available resources into co-curricular and superior academic outcomes, mainly in resource constrained environments (Leithwood et al., 2020). In the Zambian context, where disparities in performance between government and mission schools persist, head teachers are instrumental in fostering a culture of high expectations, professional accountability, and instructional improvement (Njovu, Daka and Mwelwa, 2025) [34].

Learners' academic achievement is very crucial at every level; from a perspective of an individual, family, school and the nation as a whole. In case of individual learners, their strong performance in Grade 12 regulates access to vocational training, future employment and higher education. At family level, social economic mobility and pride is enhanced; for the school, it acts as a key of institutional quality and towards building a skilled human resource base nationally (Examination Council of Zambia, 2023) [16].

Sheikh (2001) [39] described a leader as a person who motivates a group of people to achieve the agreed tasks and maintain team unity throughout the process. A leader unifies and embodies the opinion of people to any desired goals. In this context, Day, GU & Sammons (2016) [15] upholds that effective head teachers create positive learning climates that build teacher and pupil enthusiasm, thereby leading to sustained academic gains.

Recent studies have evidently widened the range of action of school leadership research at various organizational levels, including school managers, department heads, coordinators, and teachers (Leithwood et al., 2020). Further, contemporary research undertaken in school improvement stresses distributed leadership as an influential tool for improving collaboration, teacher motivation and quality of instruction (Leithwood et al., 2020). Instead of concentrating on authority alone, distributed leadership involves departmental heads, school managers, senior teachers and learners in decision-making (Bush & Ng, 2021) [6], being linked to what influences the school management has on the performance of learners in light of the first research question.

The leadership style of the head teacher is of utmost importance in the school performance management (Leithwood et al., 2020; Bush & Glover, 2021). Contemporary educational leadership theory does categorise leadership styles into transactional, transformational and laissez-faire methods. Transformational leadership consistently emerges as being more effective (Berkovick & Eval, 2021), characterised by a shared vision, individualised consideration and high expectations (Njovu, Daka and Mwelwa, 2025; Philips, Stewart-Fox, Philips, Griffith, and Bhojedat, 2023) [34, 37]. The head teachers display behaviours, which are transformational in nature, thereby encouraging pedagogy innovation, fostering learning in communities, aligning staff effort to examination success and translating into higher Grade 12 pass rates in mission schools (Berkovich, and Eyal, 2021) [5]. To the contrary, transactional leadership does rely on sanctions, contingent reinforcement and rewards. It also maintains basic compliance without sustained improvement (Berkovich & Eyal, 2021) [5].

Laissez–faire leadership is characterised by minimal intervention and abdication of responsibility. It is therefore linked to poor discipline, inconsistence syllabus coverage, low teacher morale and declined academic performance being more predominant in certain government schools faced with bureaucratic constraints (Phillips, Stewart-Fox, Phillips, Griffith, Bhojedat, 2023; Ministry of Education, 2023b) [37, 24]. Autocratic leadership style involves centralised decision making and limited participation, which contributes to staff dissatisfaction thereby suppressing teacher initiative, whilst democratic leadership style fosters conducive learning climate, collaboration and shared accountability (Bush & Glover, 2021). Further, these researchers established that democratic leadership style was the most widely practiced followed by laissez–faire style, and finally the autocratic, which was less empathetic. This suggests what influences the school management has on the performance of learners in view of the first research question.

In Rwanda, a recent study conducted by Harerimana and Adegoke (2017) [17] in Kicukiro in nine years basic education found that schools with democratic leadership styles were highly applied to it compared to the other remaining leadership styles. Nevertheless, this study extended to investigate the influence of leadership styles on students academic performance in selected schools in Gasabo District. This suggests that the school management style adopted by the school influences the performance of learners with regard to first research question of this study.

2.2 Supervision of Teaching and Learning process

Mpondo (2005) [28] defines supervision as evaluating the educational practices in a school to find out if its objectives are achieved or not. The school head gathers information systematically, which is utilised to create possibilities for further improvement in a schools' academic performance. Consolidating on the foregoing definition, empirical Zambian studies show that effective instructional supervision by teachers significantly correlates with improved learner academic performance in public secondary schools (Njovu, Daka and Mwelwa, 2025) [34]. In this regard, Scheerens (2016) [38], uses a classic input-process-output model to argue that improving school performance requires comprehensive examinations of how the inputs

(human/material) interact through the processes to produce outputs (academic achievement). Both the inputs and outputs form a dynamic organic element to assess the educational system, and improve its performance, in light of the first objective in which school management style adopted by the school influences the performance of learners.

Most of the recent studies insist on the use of teaching materials since they render discovered facts to be firmly glued to the memory of students. Further studies confirm that head teacher's instructional supervision directly improve learner outcomes and teaching quality in the public secondary schools (Mugala & Kabeta, 2023) [29]. The foregoing is complemented by both the procurement of textbooks, chalks, and apparatus that affect knowledge retention and teaching smoothness (Muzyamba & Changala, 2019) [31].

2.3 Frequency of Staff Meetings in a School Term
Studies have shown that full meetings are held merely one to three times per term with departmental meetings being more frequent, though irregular (Kalabo, 2015; Mugala & Kabeta, 2023) [18, 29]. In terms of mission schools, they tend to hold more regular meetings, translating into better coordination and monitoring of performance (Machila et al., 2022) [20]. To the contrary, low frequency of meetings leads to poor teacher collaboration, delayed resolution of curriculum issues, weaker monitoring and reduced instructional supervision (Mugala & Kabeta, 2023; Chanda et al., 2024) [29, 9].

2.4 Frequency of Checking Teachers' Schemes of Work and Lesson Plans
Heads of departments have the duty to check teachers' schemes of work from time to time so as to check the syllabus coverage. A teacher's lesson plan is a professional document prepared by every teacher for the purpose of presentation of a lesson (Mugala & Kabeta, 2023) [29]. The responsibility of approving the professional documents like teachers' schemes of work and lesson plans lies in the hands of the head of department (Mugala & Kabeta, 2023; Muzyamba, & Changala, 2019) [29, 31]. This may be done in person or delegated to the head of section.

2.5 Post Examination Analysis
Examination analysis is a diagnostic program in which a student and an instructor identify why the student failed to answer specific questions correctly in an examination. The process familiarises learners with the format of exams, boost self-confidence, improves examination taking skills, and promotes familiarity with examination demands (Mugala & Kabeta, 2023; Muzyamba, & Changala, 2019) [29, 31].

This research showed that preparing students for examinations, allows them to become familiar before proceeding with the actual writing of the examination.

2.6 Monitoring of Continuous Assessment
Studies have indicated that Continuous Assessment in Mission and Private Secondary Schools influences pupil academic performance. The foregoing is categorised into either internal or external assessment. Internal assessment refers to school-based assessment, which includes class assignments, teacher-made tests, recap exercises, field studies, which form part of the classroom continuous

assessment strategies (Ministry of Education, 2023a) [23]. On the other hand, external assessment is a form of assessment where question papers, assignments, and. tasks are specified by an independent awarding institution. The question papers are taken under specified conditions, including supervision details (Ministry of Education, 2023b) [24], and subsequently marking is made by the independent awarding institution before benchmarking with other schools.

Motivated teachers conduct meaningful Continuous Assessment in Mission Schools in contrast to resource-constrained government schools (Mugala & Kabeta, 2023) [29]. Continuous Assessment is not simply continuous testing as it does not solely depend on formal tests. It involves every decision made by the teacher in class to improve students' achievement. Continuous Assessment takes the form of formal questions given to students during class, take-home assignments and recapitulation exercises. Some teachers might be brought in to do continuous assessment during the beginning of first term. Besides testing, assignments and recap exercises, projects are other forms of continuous assessment strategies, which are sometimes used in A ' level secondary schools to improve learner performance. In the case of mission schools, assessments are a very serious undertaking and are conducted as monthly, midterm, and end of term tests, along with mock examination (Muzyamba & Changala, 2019) [31]. These are conducted systematically, with the sole purpose of raising learner confidence for success (Mugala & Kabeta, 2023) [29].

2.7 Measuring Learners' Performance
Evaluating what students have learned throughout the course or syllabus, can be accomplished in many ways, depending on the course objectives and how students' performance is measured. Invariably, typical engagements such as black board usage, homework, class participation, papers and tests are traditional methods for assessment, created and recorded within typical records. Recent evidence also confirms effective evaluation in the use of traditional methods alongside alternative ones in measuring mastery in a holistic manner, including implementing challenges and inconsistent definitions (Ministry of Education, 2023a; Banda et al., 2023) [23, 4].

The measurement of performance is hindered by the lack of a universal definition with intangible and non-material nature of performance being tied in ambiguous rules, especially in resource constrained settings (Muzyamba & Changala, 2019) [31]. At the outset, the quality of school administration plays a vital role in pupils' quality academic performance as it is concerned with pupils, teachers, rules, regulations and policies that govern the school system. Effective school administration is pivotal for pupil performance as it encompasses motivation, regular staff meetings, frequent lesson plans, teacher preparation and classroom observations (Mugala & Kabeta, 2023; Chanda et al., 2024) [29, 9].

3. Methodology
3.1 Choice of Study Areas
The study was undertaken in four schools, namely, St. Maurice, Mwembeshi, Mary Immaculate and Parklands Secondary Schools in Chilanga District. The selection of these schools was motivated by a common non-probability method of sampling utilised in qualitative research (Mwanza, 2017) [33]. The schools were selected on the

criteria of: not being too distant from the researcher's place of residence as to allow for undertaking of fieldwork and at the same time to enable the researcher to teach being an economic preoccupation. The other reason was geographically located close to one another, thereby making it easy to reach them at minimum cost, although environmental influences could be uniform due to their proximity.

3.2 Research Design
The study was planned to be a qualitative one. Therefore, data generation (and the sampling approach), as well as data analysis employed techniques and processes used in the paradigm of qualitative studies. "Qualitative studies cover smaller geographical areas, whereas quantitative studies mainly cover wider geographical areas. A qualitative study may cover only a town, while a quantitative study may cover a number of provinces." Qualitative methods are utilised to evaluate an intervention with justification linked to the resources to undertake them (Chisulo & Samson, 2024) [12]. Further, qualitative methods are vital due to their ability to provide insights into the thought processes of respondents and work in tandem with Focus Groups. The appropriate research tools (interview guides) were prepared, one-on-one in-depth interviews, and Focus Group Discussions (FGDs).

3.3 Target Population
The data was collected from the school managers, teachers, parents and the pupils from four selected secondary schools in Chilanga district, in the Lusaka province of Zambia. Furthermore, the senior officers from the District Education Board Secretaries (DEBS) were involved in the study. The educational officers were interviewed because they have vast knowledge on the subject matter under investigation.

3.4 Sample Size
The total sample comprised 50 participants was chosen as it was perceived to be adequate for the study (Adam, 2020) [1]. Respondents spread out in the four (4) schools, focusing on examination classes, of whom 26 respondents were involved in in-depth interviews; and 24 respondents were isolated for FGDs (i.e., 6 Learners in each FGD) as shown in Table 1 below. This was aimed at making the study more balanced and ensuring the validity of the findings, in each school was equitably represented, as the case was in prior studies (Mulambo, 2020; Mwansa, 2018) [30, 32]. The participants were chosen on an equal basis from each of the four (4) schools, except for DEBS' office where only two participants were selected. The teachers and the school managements were selected on an equal basis (i.e.,4 ordinary teachers and 2 administrators per school). According to Almeida, Faria and Queirós (2017) [2], qualitative studies, in comparison with quantitative studies, employ smaller sample sizes, because the purpose of qualitative studies is to delve into issues and have comprehensive understanding.

3.5 Sampling Procedure
All the respondents were selected through a purposive sampling technique. Purposive sampling was preferred instead of screening a large number of would-be participants. The researcher avoided screening irrelevant people and targeted the required participants. In this study,

the researcher, used purposive sampling, went straight to the required categories of the sample groups (i.e., parents, teachers, learners, secondary school administrators and members of staff of DEBS). These were the groups, which were administered with two interview guides (Almeida *et al.* 2017) [2]. Person-to-person interviews were the preferred technique of collecting richer and confidential information. Distribution of the In-Depth Interviews and FGDs was as shown in the following table below.

Table 1: Distribution of interview respondents

A	In-depth Interviews (I-DIs)	Respondents
	2 Non- Committee PTA members (teachers) per school X 4 schools	8
	2 Committee PTA members (one parent and one teacher) per school X 4 schools	8
	2 School Administrators (Head and Deputy) per school 4 schools	8
	2 Personnel from DEBS office	2
	Sub-total	**26**
B	**Focus Group Discussions (FGDs)**	**FGDs Learners**
	1 FGD St. Maurice Secondary School (6 participants per FGD)	1 (6 Learners)
	1 FGD Mwembeshi Boarding Secondary (6 participants per FGD)	1 (6 Leaners)
	1 FGD Parklands Secondary School (6 participants per FGD)	1 (6 Learners)
	1 FGD Mary Immaculate Boarding Secondary School (6 participants per FGD)	1 (6 Learners)
	Sub-Total	**FGDs 4 (24 Learners)**
	Grand Total Population Sample Respondents	**50**

Source: Researcher, 2022

3.6 Research Instruments
Research instruments were Interview Schedules and FGD outlines. Further, the Research Instruments were also augmented with check lists as a means of verifying that critical components were addressed. The different stages of implementation of the research instruments were essentially because the quality of the Study was based on this tool.

3.7 Target Group: a) In-Depth Interviews
Almost always, disclosure during interviews with respondents created dialogue allowing for the effective distillation of all relevant information to facilitate quality decisions based on the best information. It is certain that In-Depth Interviews reduce the risk of focusing on irrelevant information and ensures that the study remains relevant, focusing on critical information, which does not compromise quality. Implementation of the study at this stage if not carefully addressed, may suffer setbacks, as a direct result of potential redundant data. In addition, it is likely that different decisions could be made but lack critical factors and affect the findings, and implementation, in general.

3.8 School Managements, Parents and Teachers
As indicated in Table 1 above, two (2) respondents (Head and Deputy) were selected per school, making a total of eight respondents from four (4) schools. Similarly, two (2) Committee PTA members consisting one parent and one teacher per school was selected, making a total of eight respondents from four schools. Two (2) teachers who were

non- PTA members were selected per school, making a total of eight (8) respondents from four (4) schools. All interviews were recorded on a micro-cassette recorder and later transcribed on paper for analysis.

3.9 Target Group: b) DEBS Office Personnel

Two (2) DEBS staff members (a male and female) at DEBS office Chilanga) were interviewed. They were interviewed and proceedings captured on a micro- cassette recorder. Interviews were later transcribed on paper for analysis. Their views remained important for comparison with the views of school management, as they were part of the school monitoring and supervision system. As policy implementers, they possessed detailed information on both the functioning of the schools and the topic under study.

3.10 Target Group: c) Focus Group Discussions: Learners

In this category, four FGDs were held; with each FGD comprising six (6) participants, giving a sub-total of twenty-four (24) respondents. FGDs were also recorded on the micro-cassette recorder and transcribed for analysis. By and large, involvement in FGD processes demands for considerable energy, required to elicit meaningful participation from respondents leading to consensus in elaborating a pragmatic direction. FGD process is aimed at refining the pertinent issues that are agreed relating to the issues at hand. FGD improves quality of the information captured and ensuing smooth implementation.

3.11 Data Collection Procedure and Instruments

Procedurally, all different components of data collection were interrelated and each component was dependent upon the components that preceded or succeeded them. The organization's mission and vision, the goals and objectives reflected this, in the procedures and the instruments used. Primarily, the goals and objectives of the processes, aimed to secure critical success factors and simultaneously identify barriers to issues at hand.

3.12 Desk Research

The first step of data collection was to conduct desk research as the study's research foundation. This entailed collection of secondary data from a wide range of documents, such as books, journals, seminar papers, conference papers, local and international publications. This component helped clarify the objectives and purpose of the study.

3.13 Research Tools: Interview Guides

The study relied to a great extent, on primary data collected by means of field work in the four schools and Chilanga DEBS office. The main research instruments or tools were two structured interview guides, one for in-depth interviews and another for FGD.

The interview guides contained questions requiring the respondents to give their answers or responses in their own words and in great detail, without any hindrance. This process, assisted by the technique of probing, led to the collection of enriched data. The interview guides were the main instruments or tools of data collection. They comprised sub-sections; each sub-section represented a different group of respondents being School Managements; Parents; Learners; Teachers; and DEBS. In addition, Person-to-

Person Interviews were essential in capturing individual and confidential views. FGDs were also important in capturing individual and group views. This process of capturing data was holistic, as it entailed tackling aspects that affect humanity. Issues raised during FGD discussions affected economic, social, political and cultural factors.

3.14 Data Analysis

Data analysis for qualitative studies has been traditionally done by means of the tally sheets or ethnography. Recently, specialized computer programmes are also being used. "Tally sheets are specially, prepared sheets of paper, which show all possible responses and are useful for summarizing and analysing information". Owing to the qualitative nature of this study, established techniques of analysing this type of data were employed. First, data coding and analysis were done manually, using laid down procedures (Mwanza, 2017) [33]. Secondly, thematic and content analysis was conducted. By this technique, major themes and points arising from the data collected were identified and summarized.

There were two main procedures in which data generated from in-depth interviews was analysed and compared with data from FGDs, to determine any differences and /or similarities in the responses from the respondents. In this way, the effectiveness and challenges of the PTAs were identified and corrective measures immediately suggested. Data from fieldwork was compared with data from desk research as a means of ensuring data validity and eliminating contradictions arising from two data bases. Since the sample was relatively small, figures and statistics were also manually analysed. As a qualitative study, data analysis focused on the depth of the collected data. Dissertation writing emphasized prose, detailed explanations, extrapolation and cross-tabulation of data.

3.15 Ethical Considerations

This study was conducted by following the required ethical standards expected of the researcher and in accordance with academic and professional research practice. The study followed the laid down procedures for conducting academic research. Appropriate permission was obtained from the University of Zambia, District Education Board Secretary, and the selected Secondary School administrators to conduct the study. In addition, information obtained from the respondents was treated with the required confidentiality and their consent.

3.16 Limitations of the study

The difficulties in conducting field work was the logistics of administering the research instruments in the four study sites and at the same time doing full time work as a teacher, particularly in the wake of the COVID 19 Pandemic. Locating the respondents and securing their availability was elusive and time consuming. This state of affairs required sufficient investment in arranging virtual meetings as opposed to face-to-face interaction, which was opposed to the COVID 19 Pandemic social distancing dictates.

Further, the investment in virtual interaction required the practical involvement of all parties, over whom the researcher might not had total control.

4. Presentation of Findings

The research study targeted four (4) schools which comprise St. Maurice Secondary School, Mwembeshi Boarding

Secondary School, Mary Immaculate Boarding and Parklands Secondary Schools in Chilanga District.

4.1 Demographic Information
This part of the analysis dealt with the basic data on the respondents' longevity and showed how long the respondents worked at the station, to help reflect the reliability and validity of the responses. These specific characteristics affected their participation in the study, because individual responses on issues were subject to variations. The data involved respondents' gender, age and number of years worked at these selected schools, and not necessarily as a teacher, supervisor and manager. The ensuing analysis of the findings was based on the data collected. This stage of the study required to think hard and carefully, and argue persuasively, in the interpretation of results and evaluate their implications for the participating respondent schools, the District Education Board Secretary Office (DEBS), and Ministry of Education headquarters. For brevity, this information is presented as follows:

Table 2: Age Distributions of Teachers

Response	Frequency	Percent
25 years and below	1	11%
26 – 35 years	4	56%
36 – 45 years	2	22%
46 years and above	1	11%
Total	**8**	**100%**

Source: Researcher, 2022

Table 2: Age Distribution of Teachers above, illustrates the age distribution of the respondents (teachers), 4 (56%) of the respondents were within the age brackets of 26 years to 35 years. Two (2) teachers, (22%) were within the age category of 36 years to 45 years, One (1) teacher representing (11%) within the brackets of 46 years and above, while one (1 teacher or (11%) was in the age class of 25 and below.

4.1.1 Gender Distribution of Study Respondents
The gender status of the interviewed head teachers, teachers, parents and learners.

Table 3: Gender Status of Respondents

Respondents	Males	Females	Total
Head and Deputy teachers	6	2	8
Teachers	5	3	8
Learners	12	12	24
Parents	4	4	8
DEBS Personnel	1	1	2
Total	**28**	**22**	**50**

Source: Field Work 2022

Table 3. shows the gender distribution of the respondents. It can be seen from the table that male respondents dominate, though the dominance is at 56% of males over females with 44%.
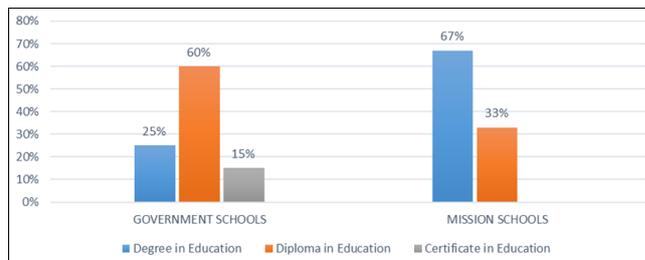
Source: Researcher, 2022

Fig 1: Academic or Professional Qualifications of teachers

The data in the graph above shows that the staff establishment in the two categories comprising Government Schools and Mission Schools. There were 60% diploma holders, 25% diploma holders and 15% certificate holders in Government Schools. In Mission Schools, there were 67% degree holders, 33% diploma holders and none certificate holders in Mission Schools.

4.2 Relationship between leadership styles and the academic performance
The researcher prepared questions for the interviewees and their responses were recorded appropriately, without any form bias. Data collected is presented in the table below. Table 4 which has summarised different activities has disclosed interesting findings which include the timeliness of students responding to instructions on time.

The first objective presented the views on the relationship between school leadership and students' academic performance on the relationship between school leadership and students' academic performance the majority strongly agreed (60%), followed by those disagreeing (20%) and then those recorded as neutral (10%). In the case of learners agitating for group correction with teachers in case of any academic failure', there was a tie between respondent strongly agreeing and disagreeing (40%), followed by leaners strongly disagreeing (12%) and neutral (8%). In terms of the school providing rewards to well performing students, the majority strongly agreed (70%), followed by students strongly disagreeing (16%), disagreeing (8%) and neutral (6%), with most learners acknowledging the reward systems.

As in the case of 'students often demanding for cross academic program with other schools, it was revealed that the majority strongly agreed (76%), followed by a tie between those students disagreeing and strongly disagreeing (12%). With regards to working in groups, findings showed close to half of the student strongly agreed (48%), followed by those disagreeing (30%) and neutral (12%) with the least strongly disagreeing (10%). In motivating teachers' contribution towards good academic performance, all the respondents agreed (100%). When it comes to the key beneficiary recognition, slightly half of the respondents strongly agreed (52%) and the rest strongly disagree (48%), with nothing for the rest of the categories.

Table 4: School Leadership style and students' performance

Committed to school academic activities	Score			
	A N%	SA N%	D N%	SD N%
Students hand in their assignments on time.	30 (60) 60%	10 (20) 20%	5 (10) 10%	5 (10) 10%
Students agitate for group correction with teachers in case of any academic failure.	20 (40) 40%	20 (40) 40%	6 (12) 12%	4 (8) 8%
The school provide rewards to students who performed well	35 (70) 70%	4 (8) 8%	8 (16) 16%	3 (6) 6%
Students often demand for cross academic program with other schools.	38 (76) 76%	6 (12) 12%	6 (12) 12%	0 (0.0) 0%
The school encourages the students to work in groups	24 (48) 48%	15 (30) 30%	5 (10) 10%	6 (12) 12%
The school motivates a teacher who produce good result	50 (100) 100%	0 (0.0) 0%	0 (0.0) 0%	0 (0.0) 0%
The school congratulates the brilliant students in the presence of parents.	26 (52) 52%	0 (0.0) 0%	24 (48) 48%	0 (0.0) 0%

Source: Researcher, 2022

Key: SA: Strongly Agree, A: Agree, D: Disagree, SD: Strongly Disagree

The first objective seeks to declare that there is a big relationship between school leadership and students' performance. The leadership style is firmly rooted and positively contributes to students' performance.

The study findings are consistent with Maluma and Banja (2019) [21], whose study highlighted that autocratic leadership styles among school managers negatively impacted teacher morale and enthusiasm, resulting to reduced commitment to school goals in public schools. Conversely, school with participative leadership in decision-making, provided with adequate teaching resources, and supported with a conducive work environment had better academic outcomes. Maslow's theory of human motivation contends that if lower needs are unmet the higher-level needs cannot be fulfilled. Thus, every work place should have conditions to satisfy human needs beginning with the lower needs. Other study findings consistent with findings are the works of Ogalo and Yambo (2017) [36] whose study suggested that autocratic leadership styles, characterized by directive and authoritative approaches enhanced teacher productivity in public schools.

In order to establish whether there was any kind of relationship between performance and the leadership style, the participants were asked if the head teacher's leadership style had an effect on the overall performance of the school. A number of responses were elicited from the participants. The head teacher from one Government school pointed out:

"If the head teacher's leadership style is bad or when there is no consultation with teachers in issues pertaining to teaching and learning in the school, it might be difficult for the school to achieve its objectives".

Teachers in the same school reiterated the same views. The teachers pointed out that in most schools where the head teachers had some kind of cooperation with the teachers and the students, there was commendable performance. Similarly, the students interviewed were of the view that poor leadership, lack of communication and effective consultation were responsible for the protests in schools.

The findings align with Mwansa's (2018) [32] conclusion that fostering a strong sense of educational development within school ownership structures may significantly enhance school improvement.

The deputy head teacher from one Mission school pointed out:

"Leadership is critical in the school and because of this we are for democratic leadership. This is because we want to build a collaborative relationship in the school. This has helped to create teamwork and as members of the school we can easily work together, and in so doing we have been in position to produce good results".

In order to triangulate the findings from the head teachers, it was deemed fitting to establish the views of the teachers. The responses from the teachers indicated that their participation was recognized when the students performed well. During the evaluation of results in the staff meetings, the head teachers and the School Management Team would always call upon the teachers to identify the reasons for the poor performance in the school. When the problem had been identified, teachers and the head teacher and if necessary, parents would sit together as a team to solve the problem. In most cases they would agree on extra tuition for relevant candidate classes and learners. This, according to the teachers, had gradually improved the academic performance in the school as a whole.

Through the school's vision, mission, values and traditions, a well-built culture of excellence and discipline plays a pivotal role in the enhancement of the school's progress. Indeed, schools with a strong culture of excellence will always remain so irrespective of a change in headship and leadership style. In a focus group discussion, one of the parents commented:

"We are proud to send our children to good performing schools. We do not mind about the fees paid but to find whether the school's culture of success is strong as ever before. Some of our schools are schools that have always excelled academically because of their strong culture of working hard, intolerance for undisciplined students, moral values and the strive to keep among the top academically excelling schools in the country".

It was also revealed by the head teachers that most of the schools had mission and vision statements which had been collaboratively developed. On how the mission and vision leads to school excellence, the head teachers replied that the mission explains the reason why such a school is in existence whilst the vision stipulates where and what the school aspires to become. On how the vision influences academic excellence, one of the head teachers revealed that the vision sets standards and helps to galvanize the efforts of all staff towards a common goal. One of the respondents said the following "where the vision is well articulated and translated in all the school activities, the school must achieve its objectives". Finally, one head teacher pointed out

that the vision inspires them to strive to achieve, whilst a teacher in the same school argued that the vision provides the focus for all members of the school.

From the responses of the teacher, this school can be described as an effective school. For example, the teacher pointed out:

"The school admits students with dismal passes after the primary level leaving examinations but at the end of the day such students manage to make it to the advanced level. All this is facilitated by the good leadership and the support of the parents".

One school manager indicated that in effective delegation:

The employee must understand the assigned task. The manager must possess the ability to communicate tasks unambiguously. Clearly, defining the boundaries of a task, without defining the method, allows the employee some creative leeway to accomplish tasks.

From these views one can describe this school as an effective school. An effective school is one where the teaching and learning processes in the classroom are effective. It was also found in this school that leadership was critical to the performance of the school as a whole. In this school it was also found that leadership played a major role in the school's academic performance. One of the teachers in this case pointed out:

"It is the role of leadership to mobilize the resources and putting them to proper use and again, it is the head teachers to set the direction. When this is in place, then the school has to perform".

In addition, departments were empowered to lay strategies in order to improve teaching and learning in the school. One of the teachers revealed:

"The head teacher allows us to outsource for subject experts so that we improve the performance of the school. This, however, depends on such departments that feel that this is important, and eventually this has drastically improved our performance".

This was a reflection of teacher leadership. Teacher leadership in a school is a sign of democratic leadership.

4.3 Teacher motivation and supervision

When teachers asked about motivation and supervision by the school managers, out of 8 teachers interviewed, four from Mission schools representing 60% indicated that they were motivated. 3 teachers from Government schools representing 35% said that the style of supervision exhibited by their school administrators did not motivate them.

They indicated that the supervision of most school managers used eclectic (wide-ranging) leadership, in which all teachers are engaged and consulted. One teacher indicated that:

Unlike at my former government school where only few privileged teachers had their say in the school affairs, here every one is considered important and feels to be an integral part of school management.

Another component assessed in examining the roles of school heads in supervising teaching process was assessment procedures. In this aspect, the purpose was to examine how school heads ensured effective assessment procedures to students in mission secondary schools. The focus on school internal assessment procedures included class exercises, tests, quizzes, weekly tests, monthly tests, mid-term test, homework assignments, termly and annual examinations.

Where administrators were weak, they could not control the situation and the end result was poor academic performance. In this vein, one head teacher from the low performing public schools studied said:

The situation I inherited my dear was not good. It was pathetic. There was no control of teachers. Some teachers were too much into beer drinking in villages. There were excessive movements among teachers as they would just get permission every now and then at the expense of the poor pupils who needed to learn. There was no proper supervision, that is to say; the school was not properly managed. I am determined to bring teacher to order and ensure quality academic performance at all levels. (In-depth interview on 13.08.2022).

Table 5: Frequency of supervisors checking teaching instruments at schools

Responses	Government Secondary Schools		Mission Secondary Schools	
	Frequency	Percentage (%)	Frequency	Percentage (%)
One Per Week	0	0	25	100
Once Per Month	23	92	0	0
Never Checked	2	8	0	0
Total	25	100	25	100

Source: Researcher, 2022

Table 5 above shows that 92% of the teachers at Government secondary school stated that their work was only checked once per month while 8% stated that the work was never checked.

Table 6: Awards/Prizes for Outstanding Teacher Performance at Target School

Responses	Government Secondary Schools		Mission Secondary Schools	
	Frequency	Percentage (%)	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Prize Giving	5	20	25	100
No Prize	20	80	0	0
Total	25	100	25	100

Source: Researcher, 2022

Table 6 shows that 20 (80%) of the teachers interviewed at Government Secondary Schools stated that the school did not award hard working teachers while only 5 (20%) stated that the school had a practice of awarding outstanding teachers.

5. Discussion of the Findings

5.1 Relationship between school leadership styles and students' academic performance

The question set for first object were to present the views on the relationship between school leadership and students' academic performance. In this regard, the researcher asked whether students handed in their assignments on time. Only 10 (20%) disagreed and 5 (10%) strongly disagreed whereas 30 (60%) agreed and 15 (30%) strongly agreed. These figures meant the school leadership and organization make a follow up of these assignments. This seems to create hardworking behaviours in students and helps them to revise their lessons to secure success. The researcher again had set another question of how students agitate for group correction with teachers, the respondents from one mission Secondary school presented their views where 20 (40%) agreed and 20 (40%) strongly agreed to make correction with teachers, another part of the respondent disagreed at low rate 6 (12%) and strongly disagreed with 4 (0.08%). This implies that students in Chilanga were ready to interchange with their teachers in order to expand their knowledge.

The research was carried out in Secondary Schools of Chilanga district on their Leadership towards students' academic performance, the researcher set question on whether the school administration provide rewards to teachers who produced good result in national examination and other academic exercises. Among the respondents from the select four schools in Chilanga District Secondary Schools, 30 (60%) agreed and 10 (20%) strongly agreed another part of the respondents disagreed by default for lack of information at 7 (0.14%) disagreed and 3 (0.13%) strongly disagreed. The implication on this question manifested that the school leadership used effective style to manage these schools where teachers are motivated in case of performance, thereby creating behaviours of competition among teachers leading to students' academic performance.

Further, the respondents were requested to react on how students did their group work at their respective schools with the view of finding out the relationship between school leadership and students' performance. The pupils at Mission school A agreed to use group work as the best style to raise the level of students, 24 (48%) agreed whereas 15 (30%) strongly agreed, 5 (10%) disagreed and 6 (12%) were strongly disagreed. The contribution of this figures, proved that when pupils worked in groups, the benefits derived were useful. In addition, the style was very fruitful mostly for weak learners because they benefited from their fellow stronger students.

5.2 School Administration

The quality of school administration plays a vital role in pupils' quality academic performance as it is concerned with pupils, teachers, rules, regulations and policies that govern the school system. In establishing the efficiency of school administration, the research study reviewed the frequency of staff meetings in a term and frequency of checking teachers' schemes of work lesson plans.

5.3 Frequency of Staff Meetings in a Term

The research revealed that staff meetings were frequently held within a term, in the Mission Secondary Schools. The researcher, however, observed that in most public schools, staff meetings were held a few times in a single term. The majority (90%) of the respondents from Mission Schools revealed that it was agreed that staff meetings be held at least twice a month, while 10% indicated only once in a month. Staff meetings could be a better place for schools to discuss pertinent issues affecting teachers and collective resolutions reached on how best such issues could be resolved. Few staff meetings lead to poor coordination of curriculum implementation.

5.4 Frequency of Checking Teachers' Schemes of Work Lesson Plans

Heads of departments have the duty to check teachers' schemes of work from time to time for syllabus coverage. As revealed in the data presentation, 100% of the teachers at Mission Secondary Schools stated that their work was checked at least once per month. Therefore, this has escalated pupils' quality academic performance in Mission Schools than Government Schools. All teachers revealed that preparation and use of schemes of work enhanced sequential teaching and resulted into improved academic achievement. Interestingly, findings of this study were that out of all the teachers interviewed at the two-government school, 90% of the teachers at Government Secondary School, stated that their work was only checked once per month, while 10% revealed had their work not checked by their supervisors.

On the basis of these findings, it can be inferred that Mission Schools performed better than Government Schools partly because teachers at Mission Secondary Schools were regularly supervised than their counterparts from Government Secondary School. This finding is consistent with (Mwansa, 2018) [32] whose study revealed that Mission Schools outperformed Government Schools in national public examinations owing to regular teacher supervision, better teaching resources, and higher teacher morale.

6. Summary, Conclusion and Recommendations

The researcher found great collaboration between school head teachers, teachers and students where they interchange to attain the best academic performance. From this collaboration, the respondents gave credence to practical customs including recognition of hard work and celebrating success. Schools congratulated the effort of brilliant students who demonstrated their great performance, and were commended to others, 40 (80.2%) agreed and 10(19.7%) strongly agreed for this recognition of the best students. The researcher reiterated by asking whether or not the school whose pupil excelled in academic performance, also motivated the best teachers. 50 (100%) of the respondents testified that teachers who produced good results through students' academic performance in certain subjects received a reward. The foregoing findings demonstrated that there was a great relationship between school leadership styles and students' academic performance in the four schools studied.

The overall analysis of school leadership style and student academic performance produced 80% correlation between the independent and dependent variables in a study (Obilan, no date) [35]. This implied that there existed a strong significant negative relationship between school leadership styles and the students' academic performance. Therefore, the current democratic and laissez-faire leadership style observed, indicated a great attempt by the relevant leaders to improve certain aspects of management anchored on

leadership choices.

Leadership style to improve the overall management of the school, could be negating students' academic performance, if the reward for good academic performance is not incorporated. This fact was observed in the study of Chansa, Bwalya, Phiri, Kabombo & Mwansa (2025) [10]. The study encouraged professional development, shared vision and promoted a supportive environment. To the contrary, schools subjected to laissez-faire leadership or autocratic styles recorded reduced innovation, lower staff morale and uneven academic outcomes. By adding autocratic leadership style ingredient into the school leadership soup, it merits a more stimulating cause for academic performance. Further, a mix of leadership styles could be required subject to the situation.

6.1 Conclusion

The study yielded important findings with respect to the academic performance in mission and government schools. It was established in complete agreement with the literature reviewed that mission schools continued to outperform government schools in academic performance. The reasons for the excellent performance include high teacher motivation, manageable classes, combining leadership styles and conducive work environment. The study gathered that motivated teachers were dedicated, effectively assessed learners, prepared adequately for teaching and attended to learner's individual needs.

6.2 Recommendations

In light of the findings of the study, the recommendations are as follows:

- Encouraging the teachers in government secondary schools to adopt a service-oriented approach to teaching and understand their vital roles in shaping learner's future as it influences school management styles and impact on learner performance.
- The Ministry of Education to ensure that all head teachers are afforded an opportunity to undergo training to acquire management skills as most head teachers tend to appointed due to their long service in teaching practice.
- The school leadership to be trained to judiciously apply autocratic elements in circumstances requiring quick decision - making or strict enforcement of academic standards, while maintaining participative approaches in other areas.
- The heads of schools ought to focus on pedagogy processes, such as regular class observations, scheme of work adherence, continuous assessment, and teaching aids, supported to improve academic performance of the schools.
- The Ministry of Education should ensure that the supervisory management roles are made more effective at their schools and reflect the serious nature of pragmatic school management for success.

7. Suggestion for further research

With the limited scope of this study, as findings were based on only four schools, making broad generalization was difficult. A more extensive study integrating additional schools is suggested for comprehensive insights by undertaking a similar study with a bigger sample size to compare management styles appropriate for schools.

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