

# Investigating Methods used by Geography Teachers in the Teaching of Geography Field Project in Selected Secondary Schools in Ndola District of Zambia

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**Abstract:** The study investigated the methods teachers used to teach geography field project in selected secondary schools in Ndola District of Zambia. The objectives of the study were (i) ascertain the methods Teachers use to teach Geography field project in selected secondary schools in Ndola district, (ii) Identify the challenges faced by teachers in teaching of Geography field project in senior secondary schools. (iii) Investigate the challenges faced by learners in learning of Geography field project and (iv) Identify the solutions to the challenges in teaching and learning Geography field project. A qualitative approach with a descriptive design was used to get different views, beliefs, attitudes and perceptions about the methods teachers use to teach geography field project. The study was very largely qualitative hence the use of research questions rather than hypothesis. Sample size was 51 participants of which 45 were learners randomly selected and six (6) were teachers of Geography who were purposively selected from the selected secondary schools in Ndola district. Data was collected using focus group discussions guide, questionnaires and semi-structured interviews. The key participants were learners and teachers. Qualitative data was thematically analysed using themes and subthemes that emerged from the data. Quantitative data analysed using descriptive statistics. The study findings established that teachers had been exposed to a variety of teaching methods during their initial teacher training. However, down the line as they practiced their career very few of those teaching methods were used. In most cases, teachers opted to using the lecture method, which is teacher centred method like teacher exposition and explanation to teach Geography field project to the learners. Teachers employed lecture and notes giving method of teaching. The study further found that Learners preferred learner centered methods such as projects, field trips, debate, group discussions, pair work, quizzes, question and answer, role-play despite teachers not using them regularly. Based on these findings, the study recommends that the Zambian government should provide the schools with the much-needed teaching and learning materials in Geography field project. Administration should allocate adequate funds for conducting continuing professional development on the teaching and learning of Geography field project.

**Keywords:** Field project; geography, learning, methods, teaching

## 1. INTRODUCTION

Rambuda and Fraser (2004), states that the study of Geography in senior secondary schools provides opportunities for learners to develop their intellectual capacity for life-long learning and for generic skills such as critical thinking, information processing, problem solving, decision-making, among others. The objective of Geography syllabus should be learner-activity oriented rather than teacher-activity dominated (Olusegun, 2006).

On the contrary, most teachers practice the traditional lecture method that makes learners passive. In most Geography classrooms, learners have been taught geographical facts and concepts with minimal understanding. Thus, literature indicates that teacher-centred approaches dominate learners' engagement in the knowledge construction activity Mubita et al 2023.

Demirci et al. (2010) indicate that placing learners at the centre of learning while encouraging teachers to act as facilitators during the teaching process necessitates the use of activities in teaching and learning, which is commonly referred to as activity-based learning paradigm in pedagogical

parlance. Demirci et al. (2010) further states that activity-based learning means learning by doing and it comprises many different in-and-out of school activities practiced by learners either individually or as a group. It ranges from role-playing, discussion, field trips, group work, projects and laboratory experiments and other methods, which, engage, learners to construct their own knowledge, (Aydin, 2011).

Geography is an outdoor oriented subject in which learners could get good opportunities to construct their own knowledge through interacting with their environment. Most Geography domains such as Physical Geography, Biogeography, Economic Geography, Human Geography, field project are found outside the classroom (Olusegun, 2006). A study conducted by Dufera (2008) indicate that teaching Geography in most secondary schools in general is teacher-centered instruction and learners receive facts and concepts delivered from their teacher without their active engagement. According to Biswas (2007), Geography is one of the oldest and all-encompassing disciplines offered in schools. It seeks academically and pedagogically competent teachers to open the door of this dynamic world and prepare learners to be a global competent citizen in the 21st century through distinctive teaching methods and investigative tools such as discussion, project methods, group work, fieldwork, and powerful digital communication technologies. Therefore, the researcher's intention is to investigate the methods teachers use when teaching field project to the learners and recommend alternative strategies that initiate active learning approaches in the teaching of Geography fieldwork at senior secondary schools in Zambia.

## **2. METHODOLOGY**

This study used a qualitative research approach and utilized a descriptive research design which helped to identify characteristics, trends and categories as observed in the field, therefore, a descriptive design proved most appropriate for the study so as to attain the set objectives of the study. The target population for the study was all secondary school teachers for Geography and learners in the selected schools of Ndola District of Copperbelt province. This was selected on the basis that this was where the phenomena under study had been observed by the researcher

The study sample included Chifubu secondary school, Temweni secondary school and Ndeke caritas secondary school. This selection criterion ensured that the selected school were regarded as government-gazetted established schools. By selecting gazetted schools, the study ensured that findings were representative of most government secondary schools were included on the basis that they had grade 12 who took Geography as the carrier path way. Two (2) teachers from each school participated giving a total of six (6) teachers. In addition to this, fifteen (15) learners from each school participated giving a total of 45 learners. The total number of participants therefore came to fifty-one (51). Table one summarizes the sample size of this study.

## **3. SAMPLING TECHNIQUE**

With regards to the study, homogeneous purposive sampling was used to select teachers and learners who taught and learnt Geography, respectively. Homogeneous purposive sampling is a purposive sampling technique that aims to achieve a homogeneous sample; that is, a sample whose units share the same or very similar characteristics or traits (Kombo and Tromp, 2006). Therefore, two teachers of Geography per school participated and fifteen learners who took Geography as a subject per selected school were selected as participants in the study.

## **4. RESEARCH INSTRUMENTS**

On the account of being a qualitative descriptive study design study, this research mostly used inductive data collection methods which were unstructured interview guide on teachers and Focus Group Discussion guide for learners.

## **5. DATA ANALYSIS**

Data collected in this study was analysed by use of thematic analysis. Interviews were recorded and common themes were categorized and put together under each research question so as to enable qualitative content analysis

## **6. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION**

The findings of this study revealed that the readiness of teachers and learners to use geography field project type of teaching was very much linked to the availability of funds to take learners out to areas where phenomenon they want to study are located. In most of the visited schools, it was observed and noted that teaching and learning materials/ resources were very limited and as such this demotivated most teachers and learners from using them so as to avoid the scramble for the little available resources. The study revealed that most teachers had little knowledge on how to guide learners on how to write a geography field project report. One participant said:

*Schools do not have the financial muscle to sponsor children on longer field trips, which take days to accomplish. The school fees do not cater for educational tours and it is an audit query to spend funds on programs that are not budgeted for.*

The findings of this study further showed that field project was hampered by the lack of funds to purchase research books on the field project for learners in schools. The budget for geography field project was very huge that the school fails to manage in most cases. One participant said:

*The teaching of field project is hampered by lack of funds to implement the projects with learners in schools. The budget for geography field project is very huge that the school fails to manage in most cases. For instance, we wanted to go to a local park in Nsobe, the budget was almost seven thousand Kwacha for about fifty students. This was too much for the school to manage.*

Another participant said:

*The challenges we face in teaching field project include lack of management support, shortage of resources and lack of conducive classroom environment. Others include poor blackboard quality, shortage of appropriate seats, lack of student's interest to learn and lack of sufficient textbook.*

The findings are in tandem with Mohammed (2014) who agrees that inadequate funding was really a challenge because all the stages of fieldwork hinged on the availability of funds for the programme. We can all agree that field project is equally important in Geography, but its cost is more than the procurement of teaching and learning materials hence head teachers have to weigh on the practicality of taking children out while they continue to learn without other materials. For this, it can be noted that field project has been failing to take place in schools not because the schools do not what but because the schools cannot manage to sustain the budget for the part of the subject while neglecting others. The study further established that parents were not willing to support their children with finances to enable them to go on a geography field trip. It was learnt that whenever the parents were asked to contribute towards this educational tour, they declined citing lack of funds. One participant said:

*Parents fail to help their children collect data by undertaking an educational tour. I have seen that parents are not willing to help their children go on an academic tour and conduct a study of their own. Such are challenges, which are making the Geography field project component unpopular among learners' teachers only plan for local trips where I can easily sponsor them so that I do not receive questions from parents.*

The findings are supported by Achola (2013) who states that the planning is also hampered by the lack of support from parents who fail to contribute for their children's travel expenses to the chosen geographical research sites. This demotivates the children and the teachers who work hard to ensure they inculcate the right content and procedures in learners through field projects in geography. As much as the schools were blamed for the lack of sponsorship of the field projects tour, the parents too, are supposed to accept the responsibility and take note that they have to be part of the solution and to the problem. Therefore, parents have to ensure that they come in and help their children with the academic needs in schools like sponsoring Geography tours.

Teachers' lack of innovation with regards to the implementation of the field projects in the selected secondary schools under study. The findings of the study revealed that most teachers for geography teach other subjects and are overloaded with other subjects, hence inadequate number of lessons conducted for field project.

One participant said:

*We do not have time allocated for field project on the timetable because there is so much content to be taught. This makes us fail to guide the learners according to the way we are supposed to be guiding them.*

Another participant explained that:

*Field project is supposed to be a course on its own because it is very involving and needs time for learners to understand what they are supposed to do. With limited resources and facilities like internet and computers, it is difficult to guide learners since they will only be exposed to hard copy work instead of seeing what other people have done in the world.*

## **7. CONCLUSION**

This study aimed to establish the methods teachers use in the teaching and learning of geography field project in selected Secondary schools of Ndola district so as to ensure relevance of the Geography subject to the current and ongoing methodical developments that are shaping the country's social and economic growth. The rationale was to find strategies to enhance effective methods in the teaching and learning of Geography field project in the selected Secondary schools of Ndola district by exploring the best strategies on how to teach Geography field project lessons so as to realize the benefits of learner centered strategies to the nation at large.

From the findings, there has been very minimal shift in the teaching and learning methods teachers employ in the teaching of Geography field project. It was established that teachers are still using the old methods of pedagogy which are teacher centered method which do not motivate learners in anyway. The study showed that on their plan teachers indicate learner centered methods while in actual sense they still use lecture methods to teach geography field project. This was evident with learners just as much as with the teachers. The findings point out that all respondents, teachers and learners, were of the view that use of field project teaching in Geography lesson made it easy to teach the subject and for learners to grasp concepts easily. There were a number of barriers noted leading to the failure of teachers to effectively use field project method of teaching geography, some of these included limited funds to facilitate learners and the teachers, to move to the areas where they should conduct their projects., Parents 'unwillingness to fund their children to undertake trips where the area of study are located and also lack of teaching and learning resources in geography field project. A paradigm shift is needed for both the teachers and learners to appreciate geography when appropriate methods of teaching and learning geography are utilised accordingly.

## **8. RECOMMENDATIONS**

- The study revealed that the appropriate use of right methods of teaching geography field project can help prepare learners to be self-reliant after school. It is therefore, recommended there is need to set up Continuous Professional Development (CPD's) programs as well as workshops for Geography teachers to educate and train them on pedagogical skills that will equip them with strategies to effectively conduct geography field project in their lessons delivery.
- The findings of this study also revealed Teachers should use more of learner centred strategies when teaching field project in geography so that learners can practice how to conduct a field project. This will help teachers to prepare effectively and guide learners in the right manner as needed by the curriculum.
- The study findings revealed that more time should be allocated for geography project component on the time table so that teachers would spend more time teaching learners on how to conduct field projects in geography. This can be enhanced with specific learner centred strategies like project, debate, presentations and discussion among others. This will enable learners to slowly become conversant with data collection, presentation and report writing in geography.
- Furthermore, the school managements should ensure that it provides much needed teaching and learning materials to enable learners be exposed to the benefits which field projects comes with after secondary school. This should be done through the continuous teaching of project writing in geography throughout the year as the curriculum and syllabus permits.

- The study also revealed that, School administrators and parents should make it possible for the learners to go out of school for field project site visits by providing necessary funds.
- Teachers should be conducting Continuing Professional Development on the teaching and guiding learners on how the geography field project component should be handled effectively. This will make learners have much-needed guidance in the writing process of the geography field project.
- Sufficient funds should be allocated to the implementation of field projects in geography in schools so that parents are not stressed in its implementation. This will also help teachers and pupils plan properly where to go for site visit.

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