Formal Induction Practices of Grade 8 Pupils in Three Selected Secondary Schools in Mongu District of Zambia

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Abstract

This study sought to examine the formal induction practices of grade 8 pupils in three selected secondary schools in Mongu District. Formal induction of grade 8 pupils in secondary schools would help to integrate them into the new environment. However, this formal induction is unstructured hence fails to meet its intended purpose adequately. A sample of 3 head teachers, 3 school guidance and counselling teachers (SGCTs), 15 grade 8 teachers and 30 grade 8 pupils were purposively drawn from three secondary schools in Mongu District. A descriptive case study design was employed for this study. Data were collected through face-face interviews with head teachers and SGCTs, an open ended questionnaire for grade 8 teachers and focus group discussion guide for grade 8 pupils. Data were analysed thematically. The study found that formal induction lacked formal structure and the participation of various stakeholders such as parents, teachers and pupils. The study further established that grade 8 pupils faced challenges on transition to secondary school due to the organisational and physical differences that existed between primary and secondary schools among them; many

specialist teachers, challenging academic work, school rules and routines, bullying from older pupils, displacement from the social hierarchy, concern with making new friends and being accepted by others. In addition, the study found that the current school induction did not sufficiently guide the new pupils to cope with the academic, personal, social, physical and safety demands of their new environment. The study recommended that the Ministry of General Education (MoGE) should make formal induction of grade 8 pupils a policy to mitigate challenges on transition to secondary school. At school level, all stakeholders should be actively involved in the induction of grade 8 pupils, including senior pupils who should be utilised to guide grade 8 pupils into the school culture.

Keywords: Formal induction, transition, new pupils, intervening measure

Introduction

Transition involves passage from one place or status to another. It brings about circumstances, often arising from social and biological events that disrupt previously existing social equilibria. One such example is the primary to secondary school transition which refers to the period during which pupils move from the final year of primary school to embark on their secondary schooling. Measor and Woods (1984) assert that transition from primary to secondary school marks the *'rite de passage'* or 'status passage' which marks a time of change in the young person's life and is a passage in status from being one kind of a person with certain rights and expectations to another. Primary to secondary school transition can be particularly traumatic, nerve-wracking and stressful because it involves not one status passage but many. The transition involves the physical and

cultural passage of adolescence that is referred to as puberty where children are beginning to experience a wider transition from childhood to adult life. Over the years, children experience physical development, a rapid increase in height and weight with periods of clumsiness and self-consciousness. They go through a period of significant neurological development as their brain matures towards adulthood. Cognitive development will result in changes in thinking and reasoning characterised by a move towards independent thinking and action. Emotional and social development will progress rapidly leading to establishment of sexual identity and intimate relationships (Young minds, 2011).

Transition is about adapting to new circumstances. From infancy, children are learning to adapt and discovering ways of forming and sustaining relationships with those around them that will help them deal with diversity and embrace change and challenge. It involves the informal passage within and between peer cultures and friendship groups where different and new kinds of friendships are experienced and expected. It also involves the formal passage between two different kinds of institutions with different regulations, curriculum demands and teacher expectations. In addition to these three passages, the transition journey from primary to secondary can be further complicated by the fact that a number of gaps that include physical or environmental, personal and academic gaps needed to be bridged. Therefore, effective support around transition through induction could help to counterbalance some of the risks and prevent later problems such as disengagement from school (Young minds, 2011).

A study conducted in England by Mackenzie, McMaugh and O'Sullivan (2012) revealed that transition from primary to secondary school leads to decline in academic performance due to considerable academic differences that exist between the primary school and the secondary school environments such as greater

emphasis being placed on evaluation of students, the school being larger and more competition among pupils, many classrooms and specialised rooms such as science laboratories and computer rooms. These findings are supported by Pratt and George (2005) who assert that poor academic performance is amplified by the concurrent need to adapt to different teacher expectations and teaching styles as pupils begin secondary school. Many pupils feel they are ill-prepared to meet the academic demands of secondary school. They may find that they need more explicit instructions and time to consolidate their learning as well as with organisation and time management.

The content of the lessons may be more advanced in terms of volume and standard compared to that at primary school. The pupils equally need to take greater responsibility for their own learning. The American Psychological Association (1996) also described primary school teaching as being more task-oriented whose goal is to master certain tasks such as learning addition or subtraction. In contrast, secondary teaching is based on attaining certain grades with measuring performance as the core of the equation. Galton, Grey and Ruddock (1999) further indicated that pupils suffer a 'dip' in their academic progress after transition due to lack of effort by the pupils when repeating work already done in primary school. In Kenya, Kiplangat (2013) revealed that academic performance declined in pupils on transition because of the differences in generic skills (such as how to study, how to approach tests and how to do homework) at secondary school. The study further revealed that pupils' decreased interest in academic activities and increased interest in non-academic activities was another challenge that incubated poor academic performance.

Longaretti (2006) in the study '*School transition: Aspiration and inspiration*' explained that transition from primary to secondary school coincides with the period of adolescence. Adolescence is a period when social acceptance is typically

perceived by pupils to be of great importance. Pupils get pre-occupied with 'fitting in', making friends and missing old friends, having more freedom and opportunities to participate in a range of extra- curricular activities. Howard and Johnson (2008) concluded that another social transition challenge is that pupils are displaced from the top of the social hierarchy in primary school to the bottom in secondary school. These findings are further supported by Summerfield (1986) who asserted that during transition to secondary school, pupils are displaced from being the oldest, most responsible, best known and most demonstrably able both academically and physically to becoming the youngest, least knowing and least known members of the community in which they find themselves. This social effect according to Tonkin and Watt (2003) has the capacity to provide feelings of irrelevance and anonymity, which indicates that pupils' self-concept plunges over this period. The effects of these social concerns are heightened by their concurrent nature producing an accumulation of stress factors (Griebel and Berwanger, 2006).

Ashton (2008) explained that during transition to secondary school, pupils are challenged by the feeling of insecurity of being bullied by older pupils and the insecurity in terms of relationship with their new teachers. For others, they may be required to make the long journey to secondary school alone without their peers from the previous primary school and usually on a bus. These findings are also in line with Coffey (2009) and Mizelle and Irvin (2000) who explained that pupils are also worried about getting lost on campus with many structures, and with teachers that appear more difficult to understand and please.

In Zambia, thousands of pupils progress from primary to secondary school every year. For instance, the ministerial statement issued by the Minister of Education, Science, Vocational Training and Early Education on 14th January, 2014 revealed that 279,186 pupils were selected into grade 8. These new pupils face

the same transitional challenges as other pupils from around the globe. They generally have to ''sink or swim'' and to learn by imitation and trial and error the challenges of their new school environment and sub-culture hence, the need for comprehensive pupil induction.

To mitigate against these challenges, new pupils to a secondary school need to be inducted into that school. New pupil induction is the training provided to the new pupils by the school in order to assist them to adjust to their new school environment and become familiar with the school sub-culture and its people, learning the philosophy which permeates the school system, establishing working relations with teachers, new colleagues and the new community (Yate, 1999). The main purpose of induction in this case is to socialise the new pupils in the new school environment which is a microsystem with various social relations and act as a coping measure in the new environment. Clayton and Tailor (2001) further asserted that induction entails social learning which prepares the individual for membership in society (new school) and groups within it. Induction will increase pupil familiarity with the new environment hence mitigating the perceived challenges during transition from primary to secondary school. It conditions behaviour for the new requirements and different roles and life at secondary school. Induction enables new pupils to become social beings that follow the social order in their new environment.

The problem

Pupil induction programmes in secondary schools play a vital role in integrating grade 8 pupils into the secondary school environment. It appears that induction of grade 8 pupils is unstructured in most Zambian secondary schools. If this situation is left unchecked, the grade 8 pupils might fail to integrate into the new secondary school environment due to differences that

exist between primary and secondary schools. This can plunge pupil self-concept, lead to poor integration into the school culture and subsequently lead to decline in academic achievement. It is against this background that the researchers examined the formal induction practices of grade 8 pupils in three selected secondary schools of Mongu district in Western Zambia with the view to examine how their current practices are intervening in the transitional challenges of the new pupils and thereby helping them settle in the new environment. Specifically, the study sought to answer the following research questions:

(a) *What are the current formal induction practices of grade 8 pupils on transition to secondary schools?*
(b) *What are the effects of current formal induction practices of grade 8 pupils on their transition to secondary school?*
(c) *What challenges do Grade 8 pupils face on transition to secondary school?*

Theoretical framework

This study is anchored on the cognitive transactional theory by Lazarus (1968). The theory considers the appraisal of a particular situation as a challenge, threat or loss as being the most influential component of the stress associated with that situation. It further contends that it is the interaction of the person and environment that creates a felt stress for the individual. Stress is not a property of a person, or of the environment, but arises when there is conjunction between particular kinds of a person that leads to a threat appraisal (Lazarus, 1968).This means that individuals influence the stress experienced around the situation and vice versa. The perception of the event changes the outcome of the situation. For instance, if a situation is perceived as being threatening or damaging, psychological stress would follow as a result of anxiety about a harm or loss. If the situation is appraised

as an opportunity for growth, then a positive and well balanced emotional response will follow. Transition from primary to secondary school has been shown to be a stressful event in the lives of adolescents (Rice, Frederickson and Seymour, 2010). Lazarus' cognitive transactional theory is therefore suitable for this study because if pupils perceive transition as a challenge, they would appraise it as an anticipated harm or loss. Therefore, to cope with these appraisals, formal induction of the new pupils on transition to secondary school might be adopted as a coping strategy to bridge the perceived challenges and demands of the new environment.

Methodology

This study adopted a descriptive case study design. This allowed for the collection of in-depth information on formal induction practices of grade eight (8) pupils in three selected secondary schools in Mongu District, Western Zambia. Accordingly, non-probability sampling techniques, namely purposive and convenience sampling were used. A sample of fifty one (51) participants broken down as one (1) head teacher, one (1) SGCT, five (5) Grade 8 teachers and ten (10) Grade 8 pupils from each of the three sampled schools was purposively selected. The study used focus group discussion guide to gather data from Grade 8 pupils, an in-depth face to face interview with the head teachers and SGCTs and an open ended questionnaire for grade 8 teachers. The basis for choosing purposive sampling was the fact that the participants were custodians of the research's desired information since they had direct experience with the phenomenon under study. Three (3) secondary schools in Mongu district were selected using convenience sampling technique because of their convenient accessibility and proximity to the researcher (Msabila and Nalaila, 2013). Data were collected in the month of

November, 2016.

Data collected was analysed thematically. Major concepts or themes were identified after developing a coding system based on samples of collected data from the research objectives and questions using a cross case approach. The emerging themes were later sub categorised into refined sub themes in accordance with the responses. The analysed data was presented in form of tables, graphs, and through verbatim statements.

Results of the study

Nature of current formal induction practices of Grade 8 pupils in secondary schools

The study revealed that some form of induction of Grade 8 pupils on transition to secondary school was conducted at least once in a year in the sampled schools. However, the induction conducted was unstructured and short term; it was in the form of 'welcome sessions 'as expressed by one head teacher:

> *Induction is not part of the Ministry's culture. However, we do it once when grade 8 pupils report. Each school does it differently and I think it is possible that some do not do it at all as it is not obligatory.*

Formal induction of Grade 8 pupils was conducted in one afternoon by the head teacher who gave a face to face address with reference to school rules on the acceptance letter. That was later followed by a brief tour of the school as reported by one pupil:

> *We were welcomed to the school during one afternoon address by the head teacher in the school assembly hall where he told us to look at the school rules on our acceptance letter and later toured the school.*

The study further established that current induction practices in secondary schools did not address academic and safety aspects of the new pupils. Generally, the current formal induction practices in secondary schools did not adequately guide the new pupils in their new environment as it left them to figure out a lot of issues on their own. This is in conformity with Van Ophuysen (2008) who assert that pupils at secondary school rarely find support or help from friends or the school management, and if they do find support, it is mostly inadequate and of little help.

Current formal induction practices of Grade 8 pupils in secondary schools and their effects on pupils' adaptation

The study findings revealed that the current formal induction practices in secondary schools had some positive effects although they were minimal due to the way it was conducted. Figure1 illustrates these positive effects as reported by the participants. *(Source: Field data, 2016)*
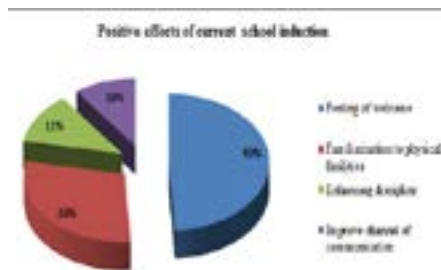

Figure 1: Positive effects of current formal induction

From Figure 1 above, 25 participants (49%) revealed that the current induction practices in secondary schools enhanced a feeling of being welcome to the new secondary school environment, 15 participants (29%) said the current induction practices familiarised the new pupils to the physical facilities in the secondary school environment while 6 participants (12%)

said current induction practices enhanced new pupil discipline. In addition, 5 participants (10%) revealed that the current induction practices in secondary schools had a positive effect on the channel of communication at secondary school level as indicated by one head teacher:

> *The school rules the grade 8 pupils are given helped the pupils to know who to approach at a given time. Induction helped them to feel at home. It introduces them to the dos and don'ts of their new school environment.*

Weaknesses of current formal Induction practices in secondary schools

The findings revealed that the current formal induction practices in secondary schools did not give academic guidance to the Grade 8 pupils in terms of the new subjects offered, the academic pathways or academic curriculum available at secondary school as one teacher reported:

> *Well informed pupils can make good choice of career pathways in line with their abilities and career of choice. However, our programme for new pupils here does not cover that. We simply allocate the pupils classes even before they report.*

This study also found that the current formal induction practices of Grade 8 pupils on transition to secondary school did not cater for learners with special educational needs (SEN). For example, the school rules were not transcribed in Braille for the visually impaired (VI) as one pupil submitted:

> *Visually impaired pupils felt lost and out of place because the school rules were only available in print and not transcribed into Braille.*

Additionally, the current formal induction practices in secondary schools did not involve other stakeholders such as teachers, returning pupils, parents or any other school community members. This came to light when one of the school guidance and counselling teachers (SGCTs) during the face to face interview reported that:

> *'The returning pupils and parents play no role in the grade 8 pupil induction programme. The programme is done by school management'.*

The study further found that safety concerns of pupils whilst in school were not addressed by the current formal induction practices in secondary schools as one pupil in support of this assertion reported that:

> *My friends and I were worried of being bullied by senior pupils when we got accepted into grade 8.I thought the head teacher would talk about it but he was rather silent on this issue. Hence we lived with this fear every time.*

Challenges faced by Grade 8 pupils on transition from primary to secondary school

Academic challenges faced by Grade 8 pupils on transition to secondary school

The study found that the Grade8 pupils faced numerous academic challenges as illustrated in figure 2 below.

(Source: Field data, 2016)

Figure 2: Academic challenges faced by Grade 8 pupils on transition to secondary school

The study revealed that the use of English language as a medium of instruction at secondary school level was a serious challenge that culminated into language barrier for the grade 8 pupils on transition to secondary school. This came to light during face to face interviews when one of the head teachers asserted that:

> *These pupils are used to speaking the local language 'silozi' at primary school level in all school activities including during the teaching and learning process. The primary school teachers teach the pupils using the local language, a practice pupils have come to terms with. Hence, these pupils find English language foreign upon entry into secondary school thereby affecting both their academic and social life at secondary school level.*

The study also revealed that the presence of many specialist teachers at secondary school level posed a challenge to the grade 8 pupils. This is because the pupils were used to one teacher teaching them in grade 7 as one pupil lamented that:

> *Being taught by many teachers in various subjects is a problem. These teachers do not even know us very well and*

> *they don't care compared to our teacher who was teaching us in grade 7. She knew us by name and was very caring. I greatly miss learning in primary school and my Grade 7 teacher.*

The study further established that more challenging academic work, assignments and generally increased volume of work at secondary school compared to what they experienced at primary school posed a challenge to the new pupils. This was revealed when one pupil during focus group discussion in conformity with others said that:

> *Teachers at secondary school give too many assignments that are bulk and challenging. Each teacher gives work without considering what other subject teachers have already given to the same pupils. This gives us too much pressure.*

Personal and social challenges faced by Grade 8 pupils on transition to secondary school

The study revealed that the Grade 8 pupils faced the daunting prospect of being displaced from the hierarchy of responsibility at secondary school level. This was because at primary school, they were the most senior and everyone looked up to them. They had opportunities to be involved in school representation including positions of responsibility. One pupil submitted that:

> *'In Grade 7, I was highly regarded. I was known by everyone.....I was at the top leading the other pupils unlike here where I am little involved and recognised.'*

The study further found that grade 8 pupils faced the shock of losing their old primary school friends and the challenge of making new friends especially that pupils at secondary school came from different backgrounds and culture as one pupil said that: *'I really miss my old primary school friends so much. Those guys were so nice'.*

Safety challenges faced by Grade 8 pupils on transition to secondary school

The study found that Grade 8 pupils on transition to secondary school were pre occupied with physical safety challenge or fears of being bullied by the senior pupils as one pupil during the focus group discussion submitted that:

> *Senior pupils especially grade twelve (12) pupils get our groceries and food and threaten to beat us if we do not comply or if we report them to our teachers. They sometimes send us to do duties such as washing for them.*

Physical (Environmental) challenges faced by Grade 8 pupils on transition to secondary school

The study found that the pupils on transition from primary to secondary school were faced with the challenge of change of environment as the pupils had to adapt to the new secondary school environment with many buildings and getting used to moving from their classrooms to the specialised rooms such as science and computer laboratories. This came to light during the focus group discussions when one pupil reported that:

> *I had the problem of getting to my classroom in these numerous buildings. I always had the fear of getting lost in the buildings especially when changing rooms. It was really scaring.*

Discussion of the findings

Nature of current formal induction practices of Grade 8 pupils in secondary schools

School inductions were mainly for welcoming new pupils to the secondary school environment; however, in the schools under study it was clear that the induction programmes lacked formal structure and was limited to handing out school rules

followed by a tour of the school. They were brief and constituted nothing more than mere 'welcome sessions.' This finding agrees with Nolan (2012) and Kiplangat (2013) in Ireland and Kenya respectively who said that induction of new pupils on transition to secondary school was unstructured and shallow. This goes against the tenets of induction as argued by Gove (1986) who termed ideal induction as a longer term assimilation of new pupils into the ways in which the institution operates particularly relating to teaching and learning methods. Therefore, there was need for secondary schools to restructure their induction practices so that the programme graduates from being a shallow welcoming session to a supportive long term assimilation of new pupils into the operations of their new environment in order to avoid what Olebe (2005) referred to as integration by imitation and trial and error. This means that the induction practice fell short of time required to meet its purpose fully as a proactive and preventive approach to behaviour management and nurturing a positive school climate (Borgmeier, 2007).

Current formal induction practices of Grade 8 pupils in secondary schools and their effects on pupils' adaptation

The study found that the practice of giving school rules to the new pupils was a welcome component. This was because *it reduced on the indiscipline cases as it made pupils aware of what was expected of them thereby maintaining the school culture* as reported by one head teacher. This finding is in tandem with Khoza (2014) who revealed that induction is valuable for maintaining the school organisational culture. However, there was need for secondary schools to strengthen this positive aspect by explaining the school rules thoroughly during induction so that the rules could become a preventive measure not a reaction tool if induction is to act as an intervening measure.

This study also found that current school induction contributed, although in a very minimal way, to making the new pupils feel welcome in their new environment. This positive aspect of current school induction could reduce the experience that Cumming (2006) described as nerve-wracking, problematic and stressful following the transition into a secondary school from a primary school.

The study further revealed that the school tour helped familiarised pupils with their new physical environment. This is in agreement with findings by Graham and Hills (2003) who asserted that the concept of touring the school is helpful in reducing some of the differences that exist between primary and secondary schools through increasing pupil familiarity with the new school physical environment. However, this aspect needed to be improved further from being an ordinary school routine tour by attaching explanations to some physical facilities if induction was to meet its goal as a coping measure.

Weaknesses of current formal Induction practices in secondary schools and their effects on pupil performance

The current formal induction practices of Grade 8 pupils transitioning to secondary school lacked guidance and counselling that could have enabled the new pupils to make informed decisions on career pathways and subject choices that met their interest and preferred career. The current programme did little to promote curriculum continuity in the new pupils as it did not direct them in the academic path that matched with their interest and abilities. This practice could have a potential of dampening academic interest in the new pupils which is said already to be suffering a decline during this transition period due to peer pressure to not appear 'too academic' (Galton, Grey and Ruddock, 1999). This could lead to poor academic performance

of the pupils as there was a mismatch between pupil's interest and career pathway followed. This finding is in agreement with Nolan (2012) who argued that if transition from primary to secondary school does not provide curriculum continuity, then pupils' academic performance is likely to suffer. Therefore, there was need for the current formal school induction practice to reduce this effect by providing academic guidance through the office of the SGCT.

Furthermore, the study revealed that current formal induction practices in secondary schools were carried out exclusively by the head teacher leaving out other key stakeholders such as teachers, parents and pupils. This defeated the tenets of an ideal induction which requires children in a new environment to have interaction with various stakeholders in order to develop friendship, higher esteem and confidence (Coffey, 2013).In this type of induction setup, Grade 8 pupils were not availed the chance to learn and mingle with their peers and learn more from various personnel. Because of this, new pupils missed out on the input of senior pupils who could have played the role of older sibling in the transitional phase thereby guiding the new pupils on the expected norms and values in their new environment (Mackenzie, 2012).

The study further established that the current school induction practices did not address safety concerns of pupils and parents and failed to conform to the traits of an ideal school which Sirsh (2003) said should be a safe, warm and protecting place for all who come and stay within its premises.. New pupils lived in fear of being bullied by older pupils. Therefore, there was need to include safety facets during school induction.

The current formal induction practices in secondary schools were not inclusive as they lacked a component for pupils with special educational needs (SEN) such as those with visual impairment. This finding is in contrast to Whitney and Katrina (2012) who argued that inclusive education fostered a school culture of respect and belonging, acceptance of individual

differences and promotion of co-existence between differently bodied persons.

The study also revealed that the current formal induction practices in secondary school did not take into account the stress involved when one changes their environment. This could lead to high pupil drop outs from secondary school as new pupils perceived transition as a threat or stressful event. This finding was in agreement with Lazarus (1968) through the theory of cognitive transitional theory used in this study as it stated that the perception of the event changes the outcome of the situation. In this case, ideal formal induction should be used to perceive a situation positively in order to enhance self-esteem among the learners.

Challenges faced by Grade 8 pupils on transition to secondary school.

Academic challenges

The study revealed that the presence of many specialist teachers at secondary school was a serious challenge to the Grade 8 pupils. This is because these groups of pupils were used to one teacher teaching them all the subjects at primary school. This teacher knew the pupils' personalities, background and names and the pupils equally knew the teachers' personality and teaching style. This finding is in agreement with Pratt and George (2005) who asserted that pupils on transition from primary to secondary school need to adapt to different teachers' expectations, personalities and teaching styles. Hence, there was need to cover this aspect of secondary school life.

The study also revealed that low knowledge levels of the official English language that was used in all aspects at a secondary school was a barrier in the academic performance of the pupils in secondary school. Most Grade 8 pupils on transition to secondary school had difficulties using English because in most primary

schools especially those in the country side, local languages were used in the teaching and learning process as one pupil reported that:

> *Teachers at secondary school did not use the local language during the teaching and learning process as it was at primary school.*

Furthermore, the study reported that more challenging academic work at secondary school level posed a threat to the Grade 8 pupils on transition to secondary school leading to a decline in academic performance. This finding corresponds to that of Pratt and George (2005) who said many pupils are ill-prepared to meet the academic demands of a secondary school where the content of the lessons maybe more advanced and more voluminous compared to what prevails at primary school.

Personal and social challenges

The findings revealed that during transition from primary to secondary school, Grade 8 pupils felt very displaced, lost and of little importance in their new learning environment. They became the youngest and least known and without any positions of responsibility. This was because at primary school, these pupils whilst in Grade 7 were the oldest, most reliable and most trusted. All leadership responsibilities were given to them and they were involved in almost all school activities ranging from academic to co-curricular activities. This displacement plunged the self-concept and confidence in the pupils as they felt irrelevant in their new secondary school environment. This finding is in agreement with Summerfield (1986) who asserted that the pupils were displaced from the top of the social hierarchy in primary school to the bottom, from being the oldest, most responsible, best known and most demonstrably able both academically and physically to becoming the youngest, least knowing and least known members

at secondary school. Therefore, formal induction of grade 8 pupils on transition to secondary school should include components that rebuilt and consolidated their self-esteem and confidence levels.

Making new friends and losing old ones was one daunting experience that the study revealed. According to Lazarus' cognitive transitional theory (Lazarus, 1968) on which this study was anchored, the pre-occupation by the Grade 8 pupils of 'fitting in' and making new friends and losing old ones would be a perceived threat. Therefore, formal induction was needed as a coping measure to help overcome the perceived threats.

Safety challenges

The study reported that in secondary school, Grade 8 pupils experienced bullying from senior pupils, a situation which bred loneliness. This finding conforms to the finding by Ashton (2008) who asserted that, pupils are challenged by the insecurity of being bullied by older pupils. These acts of bullying which included offensive language dampened both the physical and psychosocial safety of the Grade 8 pupils leading to decreased interest in school and had huge potential to cause some pupils to drop out of school if unchecked.

Physical challenges

The study revealed that adjusting or adapting to the new learning environment is yet another challenging experience the Grade 8 pupils faced on transition to secondary school. The pupils had the fear of being lost in numerous buildings and the aspect of changing learning rooms such as from classroom to science or computer laboratories. These aspects could bleed stress according to the cognitive transitional theory (Lazarus, 1968) used in this study. Hence, formal induction should act as a coping measure to such stressful events.

Conclusion and recommendations

The study concluded that the current formal induction practices of Grade 8 pupils on transition to secondary school were not of much help to pupils in helping them settle in their new schools. Given the many challenges that were clustered into academic, personal and social, physical and safety challenges, the current induction sessions were no more than short term unstructured 'welcome sessions' that did little to help the new pupils acclimatise to their new schools. Ultimately, pupils' academic performance tended to suffer. There was need, therefore, to repackage the current formal induction practices in secondary schools to effectively act as a coping or intervening measure to perceived challenges faced by new pupils during this transition phase.

Based on the findings, the study recommends that the Government of the Republic of Zambia, through the Ministry of General Education (MoGE), should make formal induction of Grade 8 pupils on transition to secondary school a matter of policy. This might help in creating a more welcoming and supportive school environment where all new pupils will get to know and acclimatise into secondary school smoothly. Additionally, secondary schools should actively involve various stakeholders such as parents, teachers senior pupils and MoGE officials in the formal induction of Grade 8 pupils on transition to secondary school. Further, secondary schools should be transcribing all literature used during formal induction of new pupils such as school rules into braille in order to cater for visually impaired pupils.

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