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CHALLENGES FACED BY SECONDARY SCHOOLS IN THE TEACHING AND LEARNING OF CHEMISTRY IN HWANGE DISTRICT

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ABSTRACT

Students in Hwange District are not performing well in chemistry as compared to other subjects. As a result, this study was conducted and the aim was to identify the challenges faced by schools offering chemistry and also to determine the strategies that can be used to effectively deal with these challenges to improve learner performance in this particular subject. In order to clarify the problem, related literature in chapter two was reviewed. Various similar studies showed a number of common challenges faced by schools in teaching and learning of chemistry, of which some of them were time allocation for the subject, availability of teaching and learning material and incompetency in the chemistry teachers. To collect data for the research, the sample of ten schools, ten school heads, ten chemistry teachers and forty students was used. The research instruments used for data collection were questionnaires and structured interviews for students, chemistry teachers and school heads. The data collected was analysed using computer software known as Microsoft Excel (MS Excel 2010 for windows) and was presented using bar graphs and pie charts. Descriptive statistics such as percentages was used to interpret graphs and charts. After the analysis of data collected from the sample it was discovered that most chemistry teachers were female of which 60% of the sample were qualified to teach chemistry at secondary level hence shortage of qualified teachers was noted. 70% of the sample pointed out the shortage of chemistry teaching and learning material as well as little time allocated for the subject per week. Heads and learners also pointed out the same issue of shortage of chemistry teaching and learning material as a contributing factor to underperformance in chemistry by students. The strategies recommended therefore were the conduction of seminars with neighboring schools that have both the expertise and materials and take with them the little materials that they have to the seminars. Team teaching was also recommended for the district chemistry teachers. To the heads, it was recommended that motivational measures be taken so as to retain the chemistry members and reduce the rate of staff turnover. In-service training for the chemistry teachers was recommended so that they grow professionally and improve the pass rate of chemistry in the district. Facilities like the Lupane State University that are also nearby may be utilized for the benefit of the future chemists. Schools should work hand in hand with industries and other corporate bodies aiming at financing chemistry so as to provide enough infrastructure and teaching resources and facilities for the learners.

Key words: Chemistry, Teaching and learning, Challenges