Analysis of Form 3 and 4 Students’ Poor Performance in ChiShona Oral Art Forms (Zvirungamutauro). A Case of Masawi, Chitemere and Mutukwa Secondary Schools.

BY

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A research project submitted to the Department of Education of Bindura University of Science Education in Partial fulfilment of the Requirements for the Post Graduate Diploma in Education.

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JUNE 2015
 APPROVAL FORM

The undersigned certify that, they have read and recommended to the Bindura University of Science Education the acceptance of a research project titled, **Analysis of Form 3 and 4 Students’ Poor Performance in ChiShona Oral Art Forms (Zvirungamutauro). A Case of Masawi, Chitemere and Mutukwa Secondary Schools.** Submitted by Allan T. Maganga (B1438400) in partial fulfilment of the requirements for the Post Graduate Diploma in Education.

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DECLARATION

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I, Allan T. Maganga, declare that Analysis of Form 3 and 4 Students’ Poor Performance in ChiShona Oral Art Forms (Zvirungamutauro). A Case of Masawi, Chitemere and Mutukwa Secondary Schools is my work and that the sources used or quoted have been indicated and acknowledged by means of complete references.

June 2015

.................................  .......................  
Signature Date
DEDICATION

To the Maganga family.
ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

I wish to extend my sincere gratitude to the following - my research project supervisor, Ms M. Jongore for her critical, insightful and constructive comments that shaped this work. The Maganga family for the continuous encouragement and also all my colleagues for their moral support. A few of these include: Theresa Zibengwa, Ronica Muyambo, Nenduva Aphios, Jacob Ngwenya, Priviledge Dhura, Paddington Chidhakwa, Alfred Dzimiri, Farai Mukaka, Edward Dzuda and Rangarirai Chidembo.
ABSTRACT

This research project analyses ChiShona students’ poor performance in oral art forms (zvirungamutauro). The study relies on three cases, namely Masawi, Mutukwa and Chitemere Secondary School plus views of key respondents solicited through interviews and focus group discussions. Informed and guided by Vygotsky’s Socio- Cultural Theory and Ngugi (1981)’s thesis on the link between language and culture, the study’s prominent findings holds that, the students’ worldview – largely affected by the encroachment of modern technology through social platforms such as WhatsApp, Facebook, Short Message Sending (SMS) and other school policies such as the Speak in English Policy is the chief problem that precipitates the oral art problems facing students in the selected case study. It concluded that, parents and students’attitude towards oral art forms and ChiShona has exacerbated the problem to unprecedented levels. The study recommends among other recommendations that educators engage the indigenous knowledge harbingers such as the elderly in the teaching and learning process for they are convenient and ‘rich’ resource persons. It further recommends the purchasing of oral art textbooks and also the change of mentality and cooperation of parents towards zvirungamutauro.
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CHAPTER ONE
INTRODUCTION

1.1 Background to the Study

This study has been triggered by a disturbing and alarming student’s failure rate in ChiShona Paper 1 (3159/1), precisely form threes and fours, in the Nyamweda cluster of secondary schools for the past three years. What is emerging from the Better Schools Programme of Zimbabwe (BSPZ) cluster examination analysis report (post mortem) is that, pupils are performing dismally in ChiShona. The oral art forms section (Chikamu II) has been fingered as one crucial area which students are not excelling as per expectations among others.

The oral art section, especially proverbial competence, is one component of the paper where students are exhibiting poor mastery of the sociolinguistic genres. (Nyamweda Cluster Report 2014, Page 2)

Furthermore, the 2014 Cluster Report posits that, those who chose proverbial topics in the creative writing section (Chikamu I) failed to narrate stories that exhibit a sound comprehension of the proverbs or metaphors given as composition questions. It is against this background and also in tandem with the cluster examinations committee’s recommendation that ChiShona educators need to engage in practical research and probe the causes of this poor performance in this component of the paper.

1.2 Statement of the Problem

It has been diagnosed and reported that, form 3 and 4 students are performing dismally in ChiShona oral art forms (zvirungamutauro), precisely in proverbs (tsumo), idiophones (nyaudzosingwi) and metaphors (madimikira) sub-sections. A disturbing dismal performance in these sections has increased at an alarming level at Masawi, Chitemere and Mutukwa secondary schools domiciled in the Nyamweda zone cluster. Generally, this has resulted in ChiShona scoring low pass rates in the department (18%) compared to English language (21.5%), despite the popular belief that ChiShona, as a “mother tongue” is easy, hence the researcher has engaged in this research.

1.3 Aim of the Study

The aim of this study is to probe and expose the factors that contribute or impact on the students’ performance in their comprehension and mastery of these oral art aspects in the teaching and learning process. It is also hoped that, this enquiry will contribute to the alleviation of this educational challenge by proffering insights that may be used in different geographical settings. The study is therefore aimed at diagnosing problems with a view to
proffer the solutions. The present study is therefore not only committed to unravelling the challenges encountered by students in the comprehension and mastery of oral art forms but also to engender and recommend possible remedies.

1.4 Objectives of the Study

The objectives of this study are to:

- expose and interrogate the causes of students’ poor performance in oral art forms.
- proffer solutions to the challenges and in turn improve the teaching and learning processes.

1.4.1 Research Questions

This study seeks to answer the following questions:

1. How far have teachers brought in new pedagogical instructions in the teaching and learning process of ChiShona?
2. To what extent are the ChiShona educators and students aiming to redress this challenge, in oral art forms.
3. In what ways is English as both a language and a culture peripherising students’ comprehension of oral art forms

1.5 Assumptions

The study assumes that, the problem of conception and mastery of ChiShona oral art forms is a socio-cultural problem and as such, it needs socio-cultural solutions. It also assumes that solutions to this pedagogical problem is also within the reach of both teachers and learners and not in the production of literature or student guides which promote rote learning and pose challenges for students in the examination.

1.6 Significance of the Study

The significance of this study lies in its objective orientation, since it is in the field of action research. The research’s quest to expose and interrogate the challenges and in turn proffer solutions in oral art forms, makes this study vital since it will benefit, not just the current form 3 and 4 students but also other educators who face the same challenge so as to alleviate common pedagogical challenges. Apart from being a partial fulfilment towards the attainment of the Post Graduate Diploma in Education programme, this study was undertaken as action research with a view to give new critical and practical perspectives to the educator, vis-à-vis
the teaching of oral art forms. In turn, if consulted, the study will also provide a rich base to students and the relevant ministry in relation to language teaching.

In a nutshell, this research is of great importance to the various stakeholders involved in the spheres of education. It is hoped that the research will contribute to the teaching and learning of “O” Level Shona. Since it has been successfully carried out, this research might benefit the following:

- **The Students**
  Students will be able to draw out meaningful strategies on how best to tackle Shona oral art forms as well as helping them out in appreciating the value of Shona oral art forms as part of the mother tongue.

- **Shona Teachers**
  The Shona teachers will find this study useful as more light is shed on how best teachers can help out in improving in the grades and quality of ‘O’ Level Shona results. School administrators will also realize the importance of supporting the Shona department in as far as textbooks and other Shona materials are concerned.

- **Ministry Of Education Sports and Culture**
  The Ministry of Primary and Secondary Education, as the responsible ministry, is likely to benefit as it will also realise some of the contributing factors in the poor performance of students in ChiShona oral art forms.

1.7 Ethical Considerations

Ethics are fundamental in research. Chiromo (2006:10) is of the view that

Research ethics are the principles of right and wrong that guide researchers when conducting their research. Researchers should appreciate that we are now living in a more enlightened world where people and even other animals are now demanding their rights.

Against this synopsis, this study is a practical research. Since the study has its research participants being students (pupils), consent will be sought from the responsible school authorities and also class teachers who are their guardians in relation to classroom activities. The purpose of the research will be also outlined to them so that their cooperation will be fully utilised.
1.8 Limitations of the Study

Since the research was done concurrently with Applied Science Education, time as a resource was a limiting factor, hence it utilised a small purposive sample. However, the researcher has restricted his research to schools in the same cluster so that even athletics competitions which dominated the first school term did not have much impact on the viability of this action research.

1.9 Delimitations of the Study

The study was conducted in Chegutu District of Mashonaland West province, precisely in Nyamweda cluster. Three secondary schools, namely Masawi, Chitemere and Mutukwa were engaged as the cases for the research. Chitemere and Mutukwa Secondary are geographically located within a five kilometres from Masawi Secondary school.

1.10 Definition of terms

- **Zvirungamutauro** – a collective ChiShona noun which refers to rich oral art forms such as proverbs, metaphors, similes and idiophones
- **Oral art forms** – a corpus of spoken axioms such as proverbs, metaphors and ideophones.
- **Poor performance** – refers to underachievement

1.11 Conclusion

This chapter has been concerned with laying bare the major thrust of the study which is an analysis of the students’ poor performance in oral art forms in the Nyamweda cluster, in the Chegutu District. The background of the study, statement of the problem and its significance among other issues has been laid out. Chapter 2 unravels the review of related literature and also the theoretical framework.
CHAPTER TWO
LITERATURE REVIEW AND THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

2.1 Introduction
This chapter reviews extant literature which treats matters to do with performance art, which was later on known as oral literature and then popularised as orature. The advantages, disadvantages and distortions surrounding this sociolinguistic genre are also highlighted in this ongoing discussion. Literature to be reviewed is categorised into three. The three categories are: publications by non-African researchers, publications by regional scholars of African descent and works by scholars of Zimbabwean descent. What it means is, the second group is of works by researchers of African descent who are not of the Zimbabwean origin. The third category is the category of publications by scholars of an African descent - of Zimbabwean origin. The thrust of the chapter is to establish how much those works relate to the objectives of this study. Furthermore, this chapter outlines and interrogates Lev Semyonovich Vygotsky’s Socio-Cultural Theory of learning (henceforth SCT), since his framework guides and orients this research. The Vygotsikian SCT emphasizes the interdependence of social and individual processes in the construction of knowledge (interaction). It explains the role played by language and culture in cognitive development - how human mental activity is influenced and constrained by individual cognitive functioning. Its focus is on the roles that participation in social interactions and culturally organised activities play in influencing psychological development.

2.2 Review of Related Literature
This section reviews literature of Non Africans, continental Africans and Zimbabweans sociolinguists in particular.

2.2.1 Researches by European Sociolinguists
Non African researchers pioneered research on Oral literature in Africa, especially Finnegan (1970), as documented in the book by the same title. Finnegan (1970:1) posits that,

The concept of an oral literature is an unfamiliar one to most people brought up in cultures which like those of contemporary Europe, lay stress on the idea of literacy and written tradition. In the popular view it seems to convey on the one hand the idea of mystery, on the other that of crude and artistically undeveloped formulations.

Finnegan is of the view that anything that is not written or put down on paper cannot be called literature from a Eurocentric perspective. This is the conclusion that led to earlier researchers to maintain that prior to the encroachment of Western civilisation; there was no
literature in Africa. However, as Finnegan (1970:2) points out later, the significance of oral literature lie in the actual performance instead of the written part,

Oral literature is by definition dependent on a performer who formulates it in words on a specific occasion – there is no other way in which it can be realised as a literary product. In the case of written literature a literary work can be said to have an independent and tangible existence in even one copy, so that questions about say, the format, number and publicizing of other written copies can, though not irrelevant, be treated to some extent as secondary; there is, that is, a distinction between the actual creation of a written literary form and its further transmission. The case of oral literature is different.

The debate of oral literature as literature is the main focus of Finnegan’s research. The actualisation of oral art forms through performance and in their continued or repeated performances for their continued existence led to pioneer researchers to dispute it as a body of literature. However, since in this debate, Finnegan tries to posit that there is no literature in Africa, the ongoing research places oral art forms as performance art meant to be actualised. Out of all the oral art forms as legends, narratives and epics that Finnegan utilises in her arguments, this research differs from Finnegan in the sense that it is only interested in proverbs, metaphors and idiophones which are also part and parcel of the performance art, since these short and terse art forms were and still are infused in poetry.

P’ Bitek as Taban lo Lyong cited in P’Bitek (1986:12) uses Acoli English and the influence of Songs and effects of translation,

Through his knowledge of an African literary tradition Okot has succeeded in using English as a tool to reach a wider audience without borrowing foreign elements that distort his message...this gives a sense of Africannes for African readers...The pumpkin in the old homestead must not be uprooted...

His views are useful in this study therefore they will be adopted in the analysis of oral art forms.

Vansina (1985:199) researched about oral traditions in West and East Africa and concluded that they are part of history. In the book by the same title, Oral Tradition as History, he holds that,

Oral traditions have a part to play in the part of the past. The importance of this part varies according to place and time...wherever oral traditions are extant they remain an indispensable source for reconstructions. They correct other perspectives just as much as other perspectives correct them. Where there is no writing or almost none, oral traditions must bear the brunt of historical reconstruction. They will do this as if they are written sources
While Vansina (1985) focuses on the validity and reliability of using oral traditions as historical sources using the West and East Africa case study, through a discourse and content analysis of epics, poems, narratives and music, the point of departure from her study is that the present research does not utilise the listed genres but rather focuses on the proverbs, metaphors and idiophones with respect to the pedagogical challenges they pose to ordinary level students in the teaching and learning process, rather than their validity and reliability as historical transcripts. While proverbs, idiophones and metaphors are also transcripts of history, the present study does not seek to interrogate them in that sense. Vansina focused on narratives - songs, epics and legends and this study dwells much on short and terse oral art forms – proverbs, metaphors and idiophones.

Dorson (1986:1) has researched and documented oral art of the Americans from an insider perspective. He posits that as Americans, what they know about their civilisations,

...largely is the high culture, the prominent leaders, the visible achievements. Folklorists can offer resources and strategies to fill this large gap. The folk culture stands in one sense opposed to the elite culture. We may contrast sophisticated literature with folk literature...in some way we are all folk: we all participate in traditional rituals, customs, observances, celebrations; we all engage in folkloric modes of expression such as proverbs, colloquialisms, figures of speech, slurs, curses, jokes and greetings.

The research established that to learn folklore, we learn much about what is concealed about the human condition hence Dorson’s clarion call is to engage folklore as a discipline in the United States of America. Though his research centres also on oral art forms, the point of departure from the ongoing research is that, the current one does not dwell on the American folklore but rather on the Zimbabwe’s ChiShona oral art forms. Furthermore, the oral art forms being interrogated are the short and terse proverbs, idiophones and metaphors under study in schools.

Bascom also devotes their researches to oral art forms, precisely oral stories. Bascom (1965:31) devote much of their enquiry to how oral stories that have crossed the boarders, in some cases through slave trade. They posit that,

Folktales operate within a society to ensure conformity to the accepted cultural norms and continuity from generation to generation... to the extent to which folktale contrast with the accepted norms and offers seriously accepted forms of release.

This notion as Bascom concludes in his folklore research applies to various forms of oral stories. The importance of the travelling of oral stories across boundaries and oceans is
deduced by Bascom who hold that they were and still seen as embodiments of the beliefs, customs, rituals and structures that need to be maintained. They were important in legal matters as they were used by the Indian Community in North West British Colombia and some government officials who wanted to take land claiming that it was for the government were asked, ‘If this is your land where are your stories?’. As Bascom (1965) further argue, in Canada, the Gitson and Wet Sywet’em people argued that they had Aboriginal title to the land in Canada that make up their traditional territories. In order to prove their title, they had to provide evidence that they had occupied the land for thousand years without writing to make case. Chiefs presented their oral stories in the form of dances, speeches and songs. Any approval was later on given to them for oral evidence that was given as legal evidence. This study however, does not look at oral art forms beyond the Zimbabwean boarders. Though Bascom (1965) brings out the validity and reliability of oral evidence in relation to judiciary matters, this ongoing research is engaging oral art forms, such as proverbs, metaphors and idiophones within the boarders and with particular reference to pedagogical rather than legal issues.

2.2.2 Researches by African Sociolinguists

Chessaina (1994) researched on the Kalenjin people of Kenya. The Kalenjin people of Kenya comprise of seven major dialectic groups, viz, Kipsigis, Keiyo, Merket, Nandi, Tugen Sebeei and Pokot. Chessaina (1994:8) holds that,

The oral literature of the Kalenjin people could be divided into four broad genres. These are narratives (stories), songs, proverbs and riddles...it is important for us to understand the significance, form and style of oral literature. Literature is an art and it is distinguished from other art forms (for example sculpture) by the fact that it utilises language as its medium of expression.

In the light of the above quoted statement, it is evident that Chessaina (1994) dwells much on the oral aspects of the Kalenjin people of Kenya with special emphasis on the morphology and syntax part or level. While the ongoing research also interrogates proverbs just as Chessaina (1994), it does not interrogate the Kalenjin proverbs. Furthermore, the present research unlike Chessaina (1994), focuses on Shona proverbs, metaphors and idiophones rather than narratives, songs and riddles.

Akivaga and Odaga (1994:1) also contribute to the debate of oral literature and orature in their study. They posit that,

Until recently it was not possible to agree on the definition of oral literature. Different people have come up with different definitions. Some people have even refused to
accept the term ‘oral literature,’ arguing that it is a contradiction in terms. They argue that literature means the written word and therefore it cannot be oral.

While the views proffered by the scholars are critical in the current study, the main thrust of this research apart from interrogating the challenges hampering the student performance in ChiShona oral art forms is also to place oral art forms in the context of orature and performance art. They pose a question and in turn elucidate on it,

What is oral literature then? Oral literature is a spoken, acted (performed) art whose media, like that of written literature, is words. The spoken word and performance are the important features of oral literature. Just as a sculptor uses wood or stone to create his piece of art, so does the oral artist use the spoken word to create his art. It is through the spoken word that oral literature has been kept and continues to be kept alive, is transmitted from one person to the next and from one generation to the other.

Thus they posit that, from the oral literature of a particular people and in this current research, we may be able to learn a varied lot, especially their beliefs and values.

Obiechinna (1992) demonstrates that, gurus of African literature, in the mould of Chinua Achebe, Mongo Beti and Ayi Kwei Armah among many, have truly exemplified that African oral art is still useful in the global and international world. In Achebe’s 1958 publication, Things Fall Apart, there are nine embedded narratives of which seven are folktales and mythic stories, one a pseudo-history and one an anecdote and also Igbo proverbs. As depicted by Achebe, African oral art is still useful even in the global and international sphere. The first narrative in Achebe (1958) is the cosmic myth of the quarrel between Earth and Sky. There is also the locust myth that is narrated and also performed as would be in a true oral context;

The elders said locusts came once in a generation, reappeared every yearfor seven years and then disappeared for another lifetime. They wentback to their caves in a distant land, where they were guarded by a race ofstunted men...And then after another lifetime these men opened the cavesagain and the locusts came to Umuofia. At first, a fairly small swarm came...They were harbingers sent to survey the land. And then appeared on the horizon a slowly-moving mass like a boundless sheet of black cloud drifting towards Umuofia. Soon it covered half the sky, and the solid mass was now broken by tiny eyes of light like shining star-dust. It was a tremendous sight, full of power and beauty.

(Page 38)

There is also the mosquito myth,

Mosquito . . . had asked Ear to marry him, whereupon Ear fell on the floor in uncontrollable laughter. “How much longer do you think you will live?” she asked. “You are already a skeleton.” Mosquito went away humiliated, and any time he passed her way he told Ear that he was still alive. (Page53),
There is also the Abame story (page 97-8), kite myth (page 98-99) and also an extrapolated song from the folktale illustrated below (page 42)

Eze elina, elina!
Sala Sala
Ezeili kwaya
Ikwaba akwa oli gholi
Ebe Danda nechieze
Ebe Uzuzu nete egwu

-------------------------------------------

King, do not eat [it], do not eat!
Sala Sala
King, if you eat it
You will weep for the abomination
Where Danda [white ant] installs king
Where Uzuzu [Dust] dances to the drums

Achebe also presents a three page trickster folktale of the tortoise and the birds. The story is being narrated by Ekwefi, the mother to her only child, Ezinma. This true African domestic scene which presents a narrator and an audience, introductory formulae, ‘once –upon- a time’ finds its way into the global and international world through this African novel.

What Achebe proffers through these oral art forms is an attempt to restate the pristine integrity which has been so traumatically shattered by the colonial confrontation. The novel espouses the African cultural heritage while establishing the fact that Africa had a past prior to its contact with Europe. As Redding (1962:1) posits, the oral art forms inherent in the novel Things Fall Apart makes it,

a counter narrative to Eurocentric narcissm and its paternalistic verbiage. The novel is mainly written out of a need to defend an African culture and worldview against the colonial historiography that tended to project the Africans as uncultured, prehistoric savages surviving on basal passions and instincts

While this is Achebe’s position in utilising orature in the novel, Things Fall Apart, this study differs in the sense that it does not use the myths and legendary stories that Achebe engages in his quest for African autonomy. Furthermore, the proverbs which this study will utilise are not Igbo proverbs but rather ChiShona proverbs. The scope or intention of the study differs in the sense that the present study utilises Shona proverbs with the intention to improve teaching and learning in the classroom.
Just as Achebe uses the English language to express African sensibilities, Hove (1988:57) does the same in Bones, in trying to make the reader have a glimpse of symptoms of neo-colonialism in Zimbabwe. The old man states that;

There is no end to the types of madness especially after this war has eaten into lives of everybody... it is bad to see how some mad people stand in the middle of the street and eat newspapers as if they were eating...

As Chiwome (2002) aptly proffers, the oldman is a representative of oral art. This highlights the interface of orality and literacy in Zimbabwean literature.

Malunga and James (2004) have taken proverbs global and international. They hold that, they use African proverbs in capacity building, strategic planning, team building, leadership development, board development, self-development initiatives and organisational assessment processes in the Non-Governmental Organisations operations in Africa and international conferences. From this use of African proverbs in programmes facilitation, they hold that they have learnt a number of lessons, including that, in the proverbs based self-assessment tools, the proverbs act as a communication or amplifier. They also motivate participants towards change. In this context, African proverbs are therefore nuggets for African philosophy in matters of global sustainable economic development.

Wo nsa nifa hohorow benkum, na benkum nso hohorow. (Akan)
(The prosperity of man depends upon man)

Mgeni siku mbili sikuyatatu mpe jembe. (Swahili)
(Treat your guest as a guest for two days; on the third day give him a hoe)

The use of these proverbs in matters of capacity building and socio-economic development in the global and international arena has redefined the role of African proverbs compared to their traditional use. It illustrates that though proverbs are still useful in the contemporary society, they are no longer restricted to the social domain but rather to development and economics, which are the major thrusts of internationalism and globalisation. However, the current study differs from Malunga and James (2004) in the sense that it does not involve Swahili and Akan proverbs but focuses on Shona proverbs with reference to the development of the teaching and learning process in the classroom. Bhebhe and Viriri (2012:ix) also concurs on the worthiness of proverbs.

Proverbs … are part of the resources that people can draw upon in order to increase the value of their potential contribution to life and productivity. Proverbs are therefore
valuable for they promote community cohesion and vitality, foster pride in a people’s
culture and give a community its desired confidence.

Zimbabwean linguists and anthropologists have also documented and interrogated ChiShona
and Ndebele art forms. Among notable researchers on the issues of art and symbols in the
pre-colonial era are Mukanya (1997) and also Phimster and Proctor (1991). Phimster and
Proctor (1991) researched and documented the art and symbols used during the pre-colonial
era. They are of the view that, art is a way of communicating ideas, values and beliefs usually
through metaphors and symbols. A symbol as they define it is a simple image that can convey
a whole range of complex meanings and associations. The meanings they express are usually
much more complex and at times can be more ambiguous and contradictory. Their meanings
as they posits can also change as the society change.

All art is a reflection of the society that produces it. Art is a medium through which
the ideas, values and beliefs of a society are expressed. Art, in its many different
forms reflects the social, economic, political, mental and spiritual life of the people in
a society. (Phimster and Proctor 1991:9)

Phimster and Proctor (1991:10) also hold that the arts and symbols that communicated in the
pre-colonial era are totems, dances, songs, rock paintings and decorations. A totem as they
elaborate is

... a symbol which shows that a person belongs to a particular lineage group and
expresses the authority, status and other things associated with that lineage. A certain
dance might express certain beliefs or relationships between the dancers. So might the
words and rhythms of a song. A rock painting of an animal or an imaginary being
would also belong to a symbolic system. So would the painted decorations on a hut or
a pot. All are part of a coded message which can only be understood in the context of
the society of which it is a part.

While Phimster and Proctor (1991)’s research about art and symbols as used in the pre-
colonial era, as also part of communication. They did not focus on the verbal art forms.
However, unlike their findings that dwell much more on the signs as forms of
communication, the current research focuses on the oral art forms, precisely proverbs,
metaphors and idiophones. Unlike Phimster and Proctor (1991) who researched with the
intention of documenting the African life as lived and celebrated by its entire population, the
current research seeks to interrogate the aforementioned verbal art forms vis-a-vis the
challenges they pose to students in the teaching and learning process.
2.2.3 Researches by Zimbabwean Sociolinguists

Sibanda et al (1982) researched on oral traditions as part of historical evidence. They hold that oral tradition relies on people among us who remember their chain of ancestors from the founding fathers of the dynasty. Mukanya (1997) also holds that these are ‘tribal historians’ who remember important aspects of their history for more than two centuries. As Mukanya (1997:2) posits,

Throughout the world, such people have existed and continue to exist. When such people become able to write they then commit to paper all that they remember about the past and it become a permanent part of their history. This oral traditional history is sometimes called remembered history because it comes from memory.

It is against this review that the present research notes that oral tradition, as Mukanya (1997) focuses on recording past events. Though it has its disadvantages which are noted as distortions of the short and distant past, it should also be noted that as older people die, more history gets lost until it is written down. Sibanda et al (1982:13) hold that,

First, historical evidence is obtained from oral traditions. These are the spoken stories passed down through families. This information can be gathered by talking to the older people who remember events of the past, or who have been given such information by their elders...stories about the past are often told to young people by their elders. These stories are called oral traditions and they are one way of collecting information and learning about the history of the families and the community.

The point of departure from Mukanya (1997) and Sibanda et al (1982) is that while they also focus on the oral tradition in as much as the current study does, this research does not focus on gathering data of past events but rather African philosophy as encapsulated in old adages as proverbs, idiophones and metaphors. Though proverbs, metaphors and idiophones as oral art forms are a product of past events, they are not static as history hence this research seeks to scrutinise the challenges they pose to students in the teaching-learning process. 

Kahari (1990)’s *The Rise of the Shona Novel* and also *Aspects of The Shona Novel* demonstrate the pivotal role that Oral art forms play in influencing the writing of Shona novels. Kahari (1990:141) aptly demonstrates,

By way of further demonstrating the link between oracy and literacy, I shall begin by working from the outside, that is, from the title page, through the inside to the end....some titles are taken from folktales. For instance *Garandichauya* comes from a traditional folktale in which Gudo (the baboon) is deceived by Tsuro (the hare). The later is asked by the former to support a tilted rock (*kubatiswa dombo* – to be made to hold, support a rock) and is told to wait until he comes back - *Gara,*
Songs which punctuate the traditional ngano are also found in almost all modern narratives.

Though Kahari (1990) is focusing on the oral art forms that informs and shapes the Shona novel, his views concerning the metaphors, idiophones and proverbs are also in tandem with the ongoing research. The point of departure from Kahari is that the present study is not interrogating oral art aspects in relation to the novel. The emerging gap that this study seeks to fill is the challenges these oral art forms seek to pose in the teaching and learning environment.

Bhebhe and Viriri (2012:80) have of recent, researched and documented Shona proverbs. Extrapolated from their publication are some of the proverbs,

\[
\begin{align*}
\text{Chembere mukadzi hazvienzani nokuvata mugota} \\
(\text{To have an old woman is better than sleeping in a bachelor’s quarter}) \\
\text{Tsapata rukukwe; hazvienzani nokurara pasi} \\
(\text{A worn out mat is better than sleeping on the floor}) \\
\text{Gengezha mukombe ; hazvienzani nokumwa mudemhe} \\
(\text{An old ladle is better than drinking from a broken gourd}) \\
\text{Une ganda une nyama hazvienzani nowakabata howa} \\
(\text{One who has some skin has some meat and is better of than one with mushrooms}) \\
\text{Mombe yetsiru manhenda waikama} \\
(\text{The future milking of a heifer is doubtful}) \\
\text{Totenda dzamwa dzaswera nebenzi} \\
(\text{We shall believe when they have drunk, viz cattle tended by a fool}) \\
\text{Totenda maruva tadya chakata} \\
(\text{We shall believe in the blossoms after eating the fruit})
\end{align*}
\]

While Bhebhe and Viriri (2012) provide a corpora of proverbs in the VaShona culture, which is handy in this study, the point of departure is that the ongoing research differs with their findings in the sense that it goes on to look at idiophones and metaphors also in relation to pedagogy, compared to mere documentation as a preservation method.

Makubaza (2011) has also studied the contributing factors of students’ poor performance in ChiShona as a subject at ordinary level. His study is limited to Gweru urban district. His
findings points out that, the chief contributing factor to the poor performance of students in ChiShona is the teacher morale which is low because of their low renumeration. While his study focuses on the ChiShona subject as a whole, this study differs from his in the sense that it focuses on one aspect of the ChiShona subject and interrogates it from a totally different setting, which is the rural area.

2.3 Theoretical Framework

The Socio-Cultural Theory (SCT) of learning has its chief proponent as Vygotsky, a Russian psychologist. While much of the framework for this perspective was put forth by Lev Vygotsky, elaborations and refinements are also documented in Leontiev (1981) and also Engestrom (1994), among others.

One of the major tenets of the SCT as Vygotsky (1979:30) cited in Wertsch and Bivens (1972) argues is that,

The social dimension of consciousness is primary in time and in fact. The individual dimension of consciousness is derivative and secondary.

Unlike Piaget’s notion that children’s development must necessarily precede learning, Vygotsky from this tenet is of the view that, learning of the individual is not simply derived from social interaction; rather, the specific structures and processes revealed by individuals can be traced to their interactions with others. According to Vygotsky, psychological functions can be divided into two types: lower mental functions and higher mental functions. The major thrust of Vygotsky’s theoretical structure is that social interaction plays a deep-seated role in the progress of cognition. Vygotsky (1978:57) is of the view that everything is learned on two levels. Initially, through interaction with others, and then integrated into the individual’s mental structure.

Every function in the child’s cultural development appears twice: first, on the social level, and later, on the individual level; first, between people (interpsychological) and then inside the child (intrapsychological). This applies equally to voluntary attention, to logical memory, and to the formation of concepts. All the higher functions originate as actual relationships between individuals.

According to Vygotsky’s learning theory, in the cultural development of children, every higher mental function appears twice at two levels. He posits that the origin of higher mental functions is not within an individual organism but outside of it, and can only be found in social life and interpersonal interaction. Since individual psychological development is a
transfer process of social sharing activities to internal psychological processes, the social relationships are internalised to form individual psychological structure by studying the general rules of socioculture development. This theme is further elaborated in Vygotsky’s ‘genetic law of development’ which posits that,

Any function of the child’s cultural development appears on the stage twice, or on two planes, first the social, then the psychological, first between people as an intermental category then within children as an intramental category, (Vygotsky 1997:105-106).

Gao and Ren (2004) holds that we can clearly elucidate the individual learning processes from this perspective as learners participate in a broad range of joint activities and internalise the effects of interacting together. They acquire new strategies and knowledge of the world and culture. Typically this tenet has been illustrated by examining ‘the interactions between individuals with disparate knowledge levels such as children and caregivers, or experts and novices,’ as Cole (1996) stresses. As Gong (1985) proffers, that is to say, the human specific psychological function is not generated internally but from people’s collaborative activities and interactions. The human’s structure of psychological processes, as Gao (1999) elucidates must be formed initially in people’s external activities and then transferred to the internal and becomes the internal structure of psychological processes. Shi (2007) also agrees with Vygotky since he holds that, the characteristic of humanity is ‘sociality,’ and all of the higher mental functions of humanity are derived from social interactions. The psychological development should be understood from socio-cultural points instead of abstract points, from its indivisible relations with the social environment instead of isolations from social environment. Wang (2009:10) also concurs with Vygotsky since he says,

The intermediary principle of higher mental functions is an important component of Vygotsky’s sociocultural-historical theory. Compared with lower mental functions, higher mental functions have an additional intermediary means in functional structure and have the property of indirectness. Its realisation depends on a variety of supplementary means like language and all kinds of symbol systems that can be called psychological or mental tools.

From a Vygotskian perspective, learning takes place through interaction and internalising ideas as a result of interaction with the social world. In this theory, ‘knowledge of culture is transmitted from one generation to the next through the use of tools such as language via social interaction,’ (Fielding 2000:32).
Lientov (1981), cited in Newman et al (1989:63), a colleague of Vygotsky, used the term ‘appropriation’ to characterise the process of interaction and internalisation,

[Children] cannot and need not reinvent artefacts that have taken millennia to evolve inorder to appropriate such objects into their own system of activity. The child has only to come to an understanding that, it is adequate for using the culturally elaborated object in the novel life circumstances he encounters.

Vygotsky’s other important feature is the construct of the Zone of Proximal Development (henceforth, ZPD) as a fundamental approach to the problem that learning should be matched in some manner with the child’s level of development. He argued that to understand the relationship between development and learning, two developmental levels must be distinguished – that is the actual and the potential levels of development. The actual refers to those accomplishments a child can demonstrate alone or perform independently; in contrast to potential levels of development as suggested by the ZPD – what the children can do with assistance,

...the distance between the actual developmental level as determined by independent problem solving and the level of potential development under adult guidance or in collaboration with more capable peers, (Vygotsky 1978:75).

This refers to the difference of what the learner can do without help and also what he or she can do with help. This is the difference between what a child’s actual ability and their potential ability or level of development. Fielding (2000:35) seem to concur with Vygotsky’s tenets,

Working with skilled peers actively and socially develops children’s knowledge of the customs, the ways of thinking, knowing and behaving. If adults interact with children, it is as good as children’s play with peers and adult play creates a zone of proximal development, which is beneficial for both cognitive development and social skills development.

This "zone" is the area of exploration for which the student is cognitively prepared, but requires help and social interaction to fully develop. A classroom teacher or More Knowledgeable Other (hereafter MKO) is able to provide the learner with "scaffolding" to prop up the student’s sprouting understanding of knowledge domains or growth of complex skills. Collaborative learning, discourse, modelling, and scaffolding are strategies for supporting the knowledge and skills of learners and promoting intentional learning, as Cobb and Yackel (1996) points out. Development according to the SCT occurs while children learn general concepts and principles while from Piaget’s perspective, learning is constrained by development.
Furthermore, Vygotsky’s SCT has an edge over other theorists such as Piaget for his emphasis on social factors contributing to cognitive development. Piaget on the other hand underestimates this since he is of the view that cognitive development stems largely from independent explorations in which children construct their knowledge. Vygotsky again places more emphasis on the role of language in cognitive development and learning. For Vygotsky, thought and language are initially separate systems from the beginning of life, merging at around three years of age for the production of verbal thought (inner speech). He holds that cognitive development results from an internalisation of language. Piaget does not emphasis on this since he is of the view that language depends on thought for it to develop.

The SCT as Tomassello et al (1993:13) posits is advantageous in the teaching and learning processes for it depends on interaction with people and the tools that the culture provides to form their own worldview.

There are three ways a cultural tool can be passed from one individual to another. The first one is imitative learning, where one person tries to imitate or copy one another. The second way is by instructed learning which involves remembering the instructions of the teacher and then using these instructions to self regulate. The final way that cultural tools are passed to others is through collaborative learning, which involves a group of peers who strive to understand each other and work together to learn a specific skill.

However, educational researchers such as Lave (1988), Lave and Wenger (1991) and Roggoff (1990) have demonstrated that social interaction, which they refer to as ‘apprenticeship learning’ is not unique to children but is also an integral part of formal and adult learning throughout the world. In this view, they argue that, learning whether by children or adults is not an isolated act of cognition, but rather a process of gaining entry to a discourse of practitioners via apprenticeship assistance from peers and teachers.

In the light of the above exposition, Perie et al (2005) holds that, the tenets of the SCT are consistent with inquiry based approaches, in which teachers and students are co-inquirers but with teachers mediating among students’ personal meanings, the meanings emerging from the collective thinking and talk of the students and the culturally established meanings of the wider society.

The SCT does explicitly place the role of language in interaction at both the elementary and higher level, therefore, the current research embraces the ‘interaction’ tenet of the SCT and merges it with Ngugi (1981:9)’s thesis which holds that ‘language, any language has got a
dual purpose. It is both a means of communication and a carrier of culture.’ Ngugi (1981)’s thesis being sociocultural in scope complements this research since it is sociolinguistic and pedagogical in scope. Moreover, the researcher is of the view that this framework will lead to the production of “emancipatory knowledge” as Kershaw in Mazama (2001:399) posits.

2.3 Conclusion

This chapter reviewed related literature on oral literature and also exposed the advantages, disadvantages and distortions associated with it. Furthermore, the chapter has explored Vygotsky’s Socio-Cultural Theory (SCT) of learning as he and other theorists espouse it. It has been noted that, the major tenets of the SCT emphasize on the interdependence of social and individual processes in the construction of knowledge and also the role played by language and culture in cognitive development. It also adopted Ngugi (1981)’s concept on the relationship between language and culture. The next chapter unravels the methodology that was instituted by the researcher.
CHAPTER THREE
RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

3.1 Introduction

The primary focus of this chapter is to give an in depth exposition of the methodology that was instituted in carrying out this research. It focuses on the study’s research design, research participants and the techniques utilised in carrying out the research, instruments and procedures used to gather data and the procedures engaged in data analysis.

3.2 Research Design

The qualitative research design was used in this study. Strauss and Corbin (1990), cited in Chiromo (2006:8), describe qualitative research as, “that research that produces findings not arrived at by means of statistical procedures or other means of quantification e.g. research about other people’s lives, stories, behaviour, social movements or interactional relationships.” Hancock (2002:2) also concurs with Strauss and Corbin and she posits that, “qualitative research is concerned with finding the answers to questions which begin with: why? how? in what way?” Furthermore, she makes a contradistinction of the features of the qualitative and quantitative research paradigm and argues that:

- Qualitative research’s concernsments are the opinions, experiences and feelings of individuals producing subjective data.

- Comprehension of a position is gained through a holistic perspective.

- Qualitative data are gathered through direct encounters with persons, through one to one interviews or group interviews or by observation.

- Data gathering is time consuming. The intensive and overwhelming nature of data collection entails the use of small samples.

In the light of such clarity, this research, being a case study research settled for the qualitative paradigm, due to its compatibility with the objectives of this study. The adopted design appeared favourable as opposed to the quantitative design which prefers precise procedural descriptions and the utilisation of statistical data.
3.3 Population and Sampling Strategies

The population of this study is geographically domiciled at three secondary schools namely, Masawi, Chitemere and Mutukwa Secondary in Mashonaland West Province, precisely in the Nyamweda Schools Cluster of Chegutu District. These schools are the case for this study. Participants in the study were selected ChiShona teachers and selected ChiShona ordinary level students. The researcher mostly employed purposive and convenient sampling techniques to come up with the research case.

Sampling strategies are always determined by the research endeavour. This study utilised non-probability sampling techniques. Tshuma and Mafa in Tichapondwa (2013) are of the view that this type of sampling could be referred to as unscientific. As Chiromo (2006:18) proffers, non-probability sampling “is used when the application of probability sampling is not feasible.” That being the case, in this study, the researcher adopted purposive sampling. Purposive sampling, as Maree (2007) holds, is employed so that particular individuals are selected because of some defining characteristics that make them the canons of specific data required for the research. As Tshuma and Mafa in Tichapondwa (2013) aptly posit, in purposive sampling, handpicking individuals is done on the basis of their bearing to the study. In tandem with this proposition, three (3) ChiShona ordinary level teachers were purposively and conveniently included in this study for they were regarded as the information rich teachers compared to their fellow Shona ZJC counterparts. Maxwell (2002: 53) says that, “The sort of sampling done in qualitative research is usually purposeful sampling…rather than random sampling.” Chiromo (2006: 18) has this to say of what he has termed purposive or judgmental sampling, “This involves researchers handpicking the cases to be included in the sample. The subjects are selected on the basis of the researcher’s judgment of their typicality”. Purposive or judgmental sampling is related to the “key-informant technique” and/or the “expert-opinion survey”. The key-informant technique “involves conducting exploratory research by seeking out and talking to respondents with known expertise in the research area” (Muranda 2000: 55). This was mainly because the focus of the research was on ordinary level students rather than ZJC students. Patton (1990) is also of the view that, the logic and power of purposive sampling is embedded in its selection of information affluent cases for in-depth research.

A sample of thirty six (36) form three and four students was selected. The sample size of the study was largely resolute on the basis of theoretical saturation (the juncture in data collection when new data no longer bring supplementary insights to the research). As Patton and
Cochran (2002:9) aptly states, “sample sizes are typically small in qualitative work. One way of identifying how many people you need is to keep interviewing until, in analysis, nothing new comes from the data.” It is this warning to researchers that this study took heed from in its sample designing and data collection strategies.

In designing the sample, the researcher utilised the services of his assistants who were also Post Graduate Students from Great Zimbabwe University (GZU), and the University of Zimbabwe. These assistants were also on Applied Education, so they understood the nature of the research and coopered effectively. Since the schools are within the same cluster, within a five kilometre radius, the researcher utilised the convenience and used favourable sampling techniques with the help of the colleague educators, who became more of his, colleagues during the processes.

In the light of the above, the researcher preliminarily stratified the students vis-a-vis their intellectual competence at the three schools per each form under study. This was done using the results of psychometric tests for the Performance Leg Address Programme (PLAP). Pupils were put in three strata at each school and also each form (3 and 4) basing on the teachers’ knowledge. The three strata were the slow learners, mediocre and the fast learners. This was less tiresome since all the form threes and fours have one class each, of an average number of 18 out of 40 pupils doing Shona. Simple random sampling was then employed using the hat system with the YES/NO cards as the criterion for the students’ inclusion and exclusion to the study. From each class, six pupils (three girls and three boys) were included in the study. Thus at each school, a sub sample of twelve pupils was selected, satisfying both gender parity and parity between gifted and non gifted learners. Totally, the sample had 36 students, made of 3 focus groups, each having 12 students from the respective schools. This is in tandem with Anderson (1993:10) who holds that:

The focus group are generally composed of six to twelve participants and groups greater than twelve tend to break apart into various factions while groups less than six generally are not ideal enough to provide the required synergy. Working with three focus groups would be ideal for a study, with the first two groups giving considerable new information and thereafter, the new insights rapidly diminish

It is against this background that the study favoured form threes and fours together with their educators for this study. What the researcher took note of before he used purposive sampling was that, purposive sampling and/or key-informant technique has the potential to yield good results if and if only a researcher manages to select experts in the area who will be willing to
participate in the research. That means, if a researcher either fails to come up with a list of experts or if he comes up with that list and the chosen experts show no real interest in participating in the research, the technique will be rendered ineffective and dysfunctional.

3.4 Research Instruments

The qualitative data gathering instruments that were preferred for this study are in depth personal interviews and focus group discussions. The interviews were carried with the three (3) respective ChiShona teachers for the respective three secondary schools. Thirty six (36) ChiShona students, split into three groups of twelve engaged in focus group discussions at their respective schools. All these respondents were on target for this research and were the researcher’s key informants on students’ competence in relation to ChiShona oral art forms.

3.4.1 Interviews

The researcher carried out in depth personal interviews, precisely six (6) interview sessions so as to solicit data from respondents. By definition, “an interview is a process that involves at least two people in a face-to-face oral discussion with the aim of wanting to get information one from the other. The two people are interviewer and interviewee (candidate) respectively,” Awoniyi et al (2011:57). Kothari (2001) holds that interviews provide a method of data collection that involves presenting oral-verbal stimulate and collecting the oral-verbal response. The interview questions were “semi structured so as to allow the interviewees to express themselves at some length, but had sufficient structure to prevent aimless mumbling,” Awoniyi et al (2012:77). In addition to that, they gave the researcher a chance to probe for more information whenever it was necessary. These were also preferred for this study since they gave the interviewees enough chance to give as much detail as they would like on the topic in question. Such interviews facilitated more balanced and objective opinions since the respondents (ChiShona educators) were aware also of the oral art form challenges faced by learners, raised in this study. Patton (1990) argues that the purpose of interviewing is to find out what is in someone’s mind and to depict the respondent’s perceptions and experiences about a phenomenon under review. Cohen, et al (2006) posits that by providing access to what is ‘inside a person’s head’ makes it possible to measure what a person knows (knowledge or information), what a person likes or dislikes (values and preferences) and what a person thinks (attitudes and beliefs).
The other advantage of choosing semi-structured interviews was that, all informants’ responses were also compared on the staple questions while other issues extemporaneously raised by the interviewees could be taken account of. The only problem with those questions was that, some of the interviewees had a tendency of getting hold of the interview guide and discuss the interview questions without stopping.

However, the Nokia voice recorder captured all the conversations. Recording of data proved worthwhile since the researcher got the time to go over the session at his own spare time. The phone recorder was advantageous since it allowed the researcher to play back the sessions more than once. That helped him to make sure he got all the key points which each interviewee raised, especially for transcription.

3.4.2 Focus Group Discussions

While interviews were used to solicit views from the educators, Focus Group Discussions were used to implore data from students. Interview questions were read out and then interpreted into the Chishona language for communication and comprehension purpose. Though this was time consuming, it facilitated easy solicitation of views from the students.

By definition, a focus group is quite simply a group interview or a group discussion of about 6-12 people who meet together to express their views about a particular topic defined by the researcher. A focus group discussion is defined by Kark and Williams (2002) as a small gathering of individuals who have a common interest or a characteristic, assembled by the researcher who uses the group and its interactions as a way to gain in-depth information about a particular topic. Krenger (1998) views a focus group discussion as a carefully focused discussion designed to obtain perceptions, attitudes, feelings and experiences in a defined area of interest in a permissive non-threatening atmosphere of disclosure from a predetermined and limited number of people. Generally, focus group discussions last one and a half to two hours and are recorded.

In the light of the above exposition, three Focus Group Discussions were conducted successfully and effectively. The duration spend on each discussion was almost one and half hours. One focus group discussion at each school (12 students), systematically represented in terms of academic performance, gender and classes (ordinary level forms) at each school was conducted, with the help of the subject teachers. The focus group discussion strategy is based on the assumption that group interaction is productive in widening the range of responses, activating forgotten details of experience and releasing inhibitions that discouraged participants from disclosing information as Maree (2007) asserts.
As a facilitator / moderator, the researcher led the groups and guided the discussions with the participants. Focus Group Discussions enabled the researcher to explore students’ views and experiences on ChiShona Oral Art forms in depth. This tool provided the researcher with an in-depth insight into how students themselves also construed the challenges they face in comprehending and mastering ChiShona oral art forms in the teaching and learning process. The researcher had also to record the proceedings so as to easily manipulate data since he was the moderator during all the sessions. Through audio replays, recorded data was later transcribed on paper for effective data analysis since the voice projection in one of the recordings is low.

3.5 Data Analysis

Data analysis involved tabulation of data from interviews and focus group discussions in relation to the staple questions that were asked. It was analysed on the basis of comparison. What the educators and the students asserted when responding to the questions was compared as a means of fact finding. Data was discussed on the basis of Vygotsky’s Socio-Cultural Theory (SCT) and Ngugi (1981)’s thesis on the dual nature of language – both as a means of communication and a carrier of culture, as standpoints that were adopted for the research. Furthermore, it was discussed on the basis of information gathered using the participant and observer technique. Qualitative data analysis, “is essentially about detection, and the tasks of defining, categorizing, theorizing, exploring and mapping are fundamental to the analyst’s role,” (Ritche and Spenser, 2002: 309). The present researcher performed those tasks of a qualitative research analyst when he grappled with some four key issues which are central to qualitative research. Denzin (2002) exposes those four issues. The issues are: 1) Conceptual – identifying the form and nature of what exists. 2) Diagnostic – examining the reasons for or causes of what exists. 3) Evaluative – appraising the effectiveness of what exists and the reasons why it exists, and 4) Strategic – identifying plans or actions.

The researcher got involved in conceptual work when he identified the students’ poor performance in the teaching and learning process as reflected by their BSPZ Cluster Examinations. Over and above, the researcher engaged in conceptual work when he established strategies schools use to perpetuate the sidelining of the mastery of ChiShona oral art forms.

The researcher got involved in diagnostic and evaluative work during the preliminary and actual research of the study. Using the Socio-Cultural Theory (SCT) and Ngugi (1981)’s
thesis on the dual nature of language, where he holds that language is both a means of communication and a carrier of culture. He also carried it when he resorted to the three secondary schools, Masawi, Mutukwa and Chitemere, as case studies for the purpose of evaluating the effectiveness of teacher centred approaches engaged in the teaching and learning of ChiShona oral art forms. Finally, the researcher somehow, engaged in strategic work when he mapped out and proposed a Socio-Cultural Approach to the teaching and learning of ChiShona Oral art forms.

3.6 Summary

This chapter has discussed the research methodology for the whole study. It has given the major research design for the study. The chapter has presented the major participants in the study and the research instruments that were used to gather data. Furthermore, the next, chapter, that is Chapter 4, presents and analyses research findings from interviews and focus group discussions.