

The Significance Of Free Primary Education On The Quality Of Teaching And Learning In Public Primary Schools Of Zambia: A Case Of Kabwe District.

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Author: Ndhlovu Hampela Grace

gracendhlovuh@yahoo.com

School of Education

Information and Communications University (ICU)
Lusaka, Zambia

Supervisor: Judith Nakamba

nakambaj5@gmail.com

School of Education

Information and Communications University (ICU)
Lusaka, Zambia

Abstract: This study is an assessment of the extent to which the free primary education policy has affected the quality of teaching and learning in the public primary schools of Kabwe district. The study sought to; assess the effectiveness of the implementation of the free primary education policy; to establish the effect of the policy on the quality of teaching and learning and how the quality of teaching and learning can be enhanced under the free primary education policy. It is hoped the study would provide valuable information for the policy makers, school administrators and teachers on the challenges that have arisen with the implementation of the free primary education policy and its effect on the quality of teaching and learning.

The study used a case study research design. The target population were the public primary schools of Kabwe district. The study comprised 95 respondents which included 5 officers under the District Education Board Secretary's office, 5 head teachers, 5 deputy head teachers, 10 senior teachers, 50 primary school teachers, 20 pupils and 10 parents. Simple random sampling technique was used to select teachers and learners while purposive sampling technique was used to select officers under the District Education Board Secretary's office, head teachers, deputy head teachers, senior teachers and parents. Questionnaire and interview guides were used to collect primary data. Qualitative data was analysed according to

emerging themes while quantitative data was analysed using SPSS.

The study established that all schools were charging user fees and at one school, all the learners had uniforms while the other schools allowed learners who were not in full uniform to be in school. The free primary education policy was not well understood by the parents more so that all the schools were charging user fees coupled with other hidden costs. Apart from school fees, other school requirements such as cement, reams of paper, soap brooms, were the major causes of learner absenteeism. Inadequate infrastructure led to teaching of classes to be conducted in shifts. The schools were grappling with inadequate teaching and learning materials amidst high enrolment. The performance of most schools was average as they managed to send 50% of the grade 7 candidates to grade 8. The quality of education was compromised due to many challenges faced by the schools. Based on the findings, the study recommended that education leaders should educate parents and learners on what the free primary education policy is so that they could appreciate and support its implementation: government should ensure schools have adequate classrooms and desks: governments supply of the required teaching and learning materials should be prompt and in the correct ratios.

Keywords: free primary education, quality of teaching and learning, public primary schools

1 Introduction

Education is vital for any nation and as each child has a right to education it is incumbent on all nations to uphold this right and ensure that the Millennium Development Goal number 2 of access to education is achieved. World Bank (2004) and Sifuna (2003) attest to the fact that education is an important avenue for sustainable development and poverty reduction. According to Ministry of Education policy document, MoE (1992), education brings personal, social and economic benefits as it helps to maximize one's potential and is a productive tool that can transform a person to live a better life. More importantly, it is a solution to many problems faced by society.

1.1 Background of the study

In 1907 the British South Africa Company (BSACo) established the Barotse National School in Western province. In comparison to European education, Carmody (2004) observed that the attitude of the company towards African education was negative and financial support was very poor. The 1918 Native education proclamation urged the company to control and supervise African education in liaison with missionary. The education offered was imbalanced and segregative. The aim was to provide education to the native that was conservative and adapted to their way of life in the village. Such type of an education would not make them become aware of their rights or have political ambitions which would threaten European dominance. (Mwanakatwe 2013). Hence education for the Africans was seen as a privilege and not a right. The Phelps Stoke commission of 1924 made quite a number of recommendations aimed at improving the African education in terms of standard and quality, where the learners would be trained in character building, health and hygiene agriculture, recreation and all aspects of life. (Carmody 2004). Though the missionaries desired that the government should provide support for the schools, education during the colonial era was

marred with segregation and restrictive. Further education was designed merely to spread literacy and elementary education, as the natives were seen not only as a political threat but also that they would take over the jobs of the whites hence, the Africans were perceived to be a source of cheap labour for the mines and saved as office messengers. As a result, the levels of education for most Africans was relatively low up to the time of independence in 1964. Kelly (1999) describes colonial education as education for subordination, exploitation and development of underdevelopment.

Given the background of the education system, Zambia had a lot of challenges in 1964 which included a dual system of education, inadequate financial resources for expansion of education coupled with uneven distribution of educational facilities that lead to rural-urban drift. (Achola1990). In order to widen access to education, at independence the system of compulsory education which was suspended in 1957 was re –adopted. Carmody (2004) adds that the new government was trying to achieve universal primary education for all children who were seven years old, hence schools were desegregated, tuition and boarding fees abolished. Furthermore, in 1964 about 60% of the schools were under missionaries, but by 1967 the government took over 60% of the primary schools. Bar examinations at grade 4 were also done away with. The number of primary schools had risen from 2,000 to 3,000 between 1964 and 1975 which lead to an increase in enrolment from 57% to 76%. Learners that managed to complete Grade 7 rose from 13002 in 1964 to 120,631 in 1975.

The new government designed various innovations through education reforms which were aimed at reforming and re-organising the education sector. Some plans were short term and others long term, such as the Transitional Development plan covering the period 1963 to 1966 focused on ensuring that all children at the age of 7 should be

in school (Phiri 2016). The years to be spent at primary level were reduced from eight to seven years. The school system before 1964 had lower primary (standard A, B, 1 & 2) which lasted 4 years, middle primary (standard 3 & 4) lasted 2 years and upper primary (standard 5 & 6) lasted 2 years. Among the objectives of the First National Development plan (July 1966-June 1970) was to increase education, while the Second National Development Plan (1972-1976) focused on education for all.

In 1976, the government proposed Education for Development which was aimed at redesigning the education system by introducing equity by abolishing school fees and providing a ten-year education. However, the document was rejected because of its flaws and replaced with education reforms. Between 1975-1982 there was expansion of the school system and enrollment in primary schools rose from 872,392 to 1,348,689 with sufficient places for 92.4% of the 7-year olds. However, there were still about 350,000 school aged children who were not in school in 1982. The declining copper prices on the world market affected the ambitious education reforms negatively hence Education Implementation report of 1986 which focused so much on primary schooling observed on the need to find other sources of financing the education sector through payment of fees, encouraging private participation and involvement of the local community. Kelly (1999): states that

The principal quantitative element of the report was that population growth was so rapid, the backlog of children receiving no schooling so great and the economic prospects so bleak, that the only target that could be realistically aimed at was universal primary education (Grade 1-7) by the year 2000 ...

The report strongly favoured cost sharing at all levels proposing parental payment for teaching and

learning materials in addition to encouragement of private aided school. These strategies were upheld during the third republic given the economic status of the country by 1991 which saw the implementation of the Structural Adjustment Program (SAP) amidst declining school enrollments from 95% in 1985 to 85% in 1994. MESVTEE (2013) attests to the fact that the declining economy in the 1980s had a negative effect on the provision of social services including education.

The education policy document of 1992, Focus on Learning was drawn after the conference held in 1990 in Jomtien, Thailand which emphasized on the need of access to education for all. The Dakar Conference of 2000 renewed the ambition of achieving Universal Primary Education (UPE) in Africa and it set to eliminate gender disparities in Primary and Secondary Education by 2005, and to achieve gender equality in Education by 2015. Thus, the Zambian government sought to increase primary education to about 2.4 million by 2000. Between 1993 and 1998 the Zambia Rehabilitation Project (ZERP) was established to rehabilitate schools, procure and distribute education materials to schools. In 1996 another education policy document Educating our Future was launched. Every child was expected to have access to the first nine years of education. Thus, among other things, it placed more emphasis on basic education. (Grade 1-9). This gave rise to approaches such as the Sector Wide Approach (SWAP) and Basic Education Sub-Sector Investment Programme (BESSIP) (Mwanakatwe 2013). In order to advance equity and access, various interventions were brought on board such as the Programme for the Advancement of Girls Education (PAGE), Self Help Action Plan for Education (SHAPE) which was tasked to produce educational material, construct schools and train teachers. Donor agencies which contributed to educational needs (books, desks and other teaching and learning aids) included the Danish International

Development Agency (DANIDA), Finnish International Development Agency (FINNIDA) and the Swedish International Development Authority (SIDA). Despite the strides that were seemingly being achieved where primary school enrollment had reached 1.7million by 2001, 56% of the seven-year olds were not in school and about 700,000 school aged children were not in school. (Carmody 2004)

It is said that education can help reduce poverty, lead to an improved way of life and the general development of a nation. Given that education comes with at a cost, in form of school fees or tuition fees, as a way of ensuring that education is not for the privileged few, The Free Primary Education Policy was introduced in Zambia in 2002. Ridell (2003) states that the declaration meant that education was free for all pupils from grade 1 to 7, uniforms were not compulsory and that no child would be denied access to education. The UNESCO Institute for Statistics (2016) report adds that the government announcement of the Free Primary Education (FPE) initiative in 2002, abolished school fees, barred schools from denying children entry due to a lack of a uniform and obliged schools to invite dropouts back without hassle. Ridell (2003) adds that before its implementation the net enrolment fell through the late 1990s from 70.4% in 1996 to 65.1% in 2001. In 2002 enrollment grew by 7% and by 2011 there were 5.9 million pupils in primary schools. Mobela (2015) observes that introduction of Free Primary Education Policy (FPE) in Zambia in 2002 was supported by the country's 2002's Poverty Reduction Strategy Paper (PRSP) which outlined elimination of user fees for basic education as a way of reducing poverty.

Zambia as a United Nations member is involved in the formulation of policies/ goals such as the Millennium Development Goals of which achievement of universal primary education is one such goal. Though the introduction of free primary education was seen as a pro poor policy, this

declaration was in line with the 2000 Millennium Development Goal (MDG) number 2 which advocated for the achievement of universal primary education by 2015. Zambia has shown commitment to global aspirations through its implementation frame works which emphasizes inclusive and free primary education. The education Act of 2011 re-echoes the right free basic education for every child and compulsory attendance. Primary education is a springbok for future education and the acquisition of relevant knowledge, values and skills needed for daily living in society.

1.2 Statement of the problem

The government policy document of 1992 and 1996 echoed the importance for community participation in the development, maintenance and repair of infrastructure while the government bears the major costs of running the schools (MoE 1992 & 1996). These expectations do not seem to take into consideration the economic status of the various communities from which schools draw their learners and the inadequate funding from government. The governments' declaration of free primary education in 2002 saw an increase in enrolment by 2008.

Choolwe (2013) observed that while there was increased access for children at primary school level, an insufficient budget was allocated to the sector, which undermined delivery and quality of education. He adds that the state of free primary education services in Zambia has created a lot of challenges due to increasing access to schooling without improving its quality especially at primary level. UNESCO Institute for Statistics (2016) indicated that despite the achievements and strengths of Zambia's education system, challenges remain, among them the need to further improve the quality and effectiveness of the education it provides. There is concern that the quality of education does not deteriorate with greater access being achieved. It is against this background that the researcher intended to investigate the

significance of the free primary education policy on the quality of teaching and learning in public primary schools of Kabwe.

1.3 Objectives of the study

- i. To assess the effectiveness of the implementation of free primary education policy in the public primary schools of Kabwe district.
- ii. To establish the significance of the free primary education policy on the quality of teaching and learning in the public primary schools of Kabwe district.
- iii. To establish measures that can enhance the quality of teaching and learning in public primary schools of Kabwe district.

1.4 Literature Review

1.4.1 Effectiveness of the implementation of free primary education

At a global level, the implementation of free education varies from country to country. Countries like Denmark, Sweden and Norway offer free education at all levels and is financed through taxes. In Denmark, learners are not only provided with free books and other learning materials, but also transported to and from school until secondary level. (Brooks 2017). Stanek (2013) and Chavez (2017) indicate that in Brazil, education is mandatory for all children between the ages of four and fourteen and is free at all public institutions including adult education institutions, for those individuals who did not have access to free education at the appropriate age. Each municipality is responsible for the quality of education and maintenance of schools offering early childhood and primary education within its jurisdiction.

Education in Sri Lanka is stated funded and offered at all levels. In a study on the education system of Sri Lanka, Liyanage (2014) states that as a result of the free education policy introduced in

Sri Lanka in 1947, the country achieved universal primary education by 1964 and high literacy levels of 95.8% by 2016. School children are provided with uniforms and text books.

African countries have strived to be in tandem with most global practices especially provision of free primary education. Ghana introduced Free Compulsory Universal Basic Education (FCUBE) in 1996 and was supported by the World Bank and other international donors. However, this ambitious policy did not take off until 2005 after the government introduced capita grants to schools through the Education Strategic plan for 2003-2005. Sifuna (2003) observed that the enrollment at primary level rose to 22% between 2005 and 2007. However, Kwame (2009) observed that the FCUBE did not achieve its target goal as the poorest household benefited the least from it because there were some indirect costs associated with attending free primary schooling.

Malawi introduced Free Primary Education in 1994 after the election of the new government under multi-party elections. The country started working towards universal primary education in 1991, by abolishing school fees grade by grade. The policy was however not strongly enforced, and enrolments did not rise as much as policymakers had envisioned due to local authorities demanding that parents contribute to special funds, such as sports and development funds, and making school uniforms mandatory. Kadzamira and Rose (2003) state that under the free primary education policy, the government promised to not only to abolish all forms of fees, assume the financing of unassisted primary schools by merging them with government assisted schools, but also provide sufficient learning materials and teachers and be responsible for the provision of classrooms, furniture, teacher houses, sanitation facilities and boreholes, encourage the participation of girls in primary education. New classrooms were constructed and this saw an increase in enrollment of over 50%. Male and

female enrollments were comparable in 1999 and 2000 at 157.9% and 158.3% respectively.

Although households do not have to pay fees, they still incur other direct costs of education such as buying exercise books, pens and clothes for school. Despite the vast majority of the school-aged population having access to primary schooling, many households are not able to sustain their initial demand for education for a variety of reasons, often related to poverty. After children have been enrolled in school, households can find the costs associated with schooling prohibitive. They add that, in reality schooling is still not free even in the post-FPE era and the cost of schooling continues to be the main reason for children not being in school or drop out.

In Kenya, free primary education was introduced in 1963 after the country attained its independence but it was not implemented due to lack of funds and other factors. Mulinya and Orodho (2015) contend that like Malawi, Kenya saw the re-introduction of FPE in 2003 after the National Rainbow Coalition Party (NARC) was elected into power. This was in line with the United Nations recommendation on the children's right for education. The re-introduction of the free primary education was on the premise that education would contribute directly to the growth of the national income and improvement of human welfare. The free primary education policy aimed at improving participation, progression, completion rate and reduce the burden of cost of education on poor households. This saw an increase in enrolment from 92% in 2002 to 104% in 2003. The FPE policy was strengthened through the Basic Education Act 2013 which reiterated the fact that basic education which has been made free and compulsory in Kenya should be operationalized through the legal framework. However, like any other developing country, the implementation of the free primary education policy had come with its own challenges.

Free primary education was introduced in Lesotho in 2000. Morojele (2012) adds that the Free Primary Education policy's main objectives were to make basic education accessible to all pupils, make education equitable in order to eliminate inequalities. It was also meant to encourage boys and girls to enrol in schools and also to ensure that they receive equitable and good quality free primary education. The FPE was integrated with the school feeding programme increased influx of learners enrolling in the primary schools. Thahane (2012) notes that due the FPE policy, the net enrolment increased from 69% in 2000 to 84% in 2006. However, this increase was not matched by the infrastructural and human resources required for the smooth running of the schools. The free primary education policy was reinforced to Free and Compulsory Primary Education by law in 2010.

The free primary education policy was announced in February 2002 by the late president of Zambia. Dr Levy Patrick Mwanawasa. This meant that all user fees for grade 1 to 7 had been abolished and school uniforms were not compulsory. (Phiri 2016). Under the free primary education policy, no child was to be denied access to education on account of cost. MoE (2003) observes that the declaration and implementation of the FPE policy in 2002 saw the abolishment of school fees leading to an increase in pupil enrolment. MoF (2015) alludes to the fact that the free primary education policy introduced in 2002 has greatly improved the primary school enrolment rates in the last decade and Zambia is on track to achieving universal primary education. Phiri (2016) adds that the number of learners in Grade 1-7 between 2002 and 2006 rose from 1.6 to 2.6 million learners. The subsequent strategic plan which ran from 2003 to 2007 endeavored to ensure equitable access and quality education by engaging various stakeholders such as pupils, parents and community leaders, other line ministries and international donors. However, Zambia as a nation has been faced with a

lot of challenges in the implementation of the free primary education policy.

1.4.2. Impact of free primary education teaching and learning.

In Brazil, 36.1% of 15-year- students repeated at least one grade (about three times the OECD average of 12.4%). According to OECD (2015) grade repetition does not promote better student performance, is costly (an estimated USD 8 322 per repeater in Brazil) and can lead to dropout. In Brazil, 8% of 15-year-olds are not in education, compared to the OECD average of 2%. Youth primarily drop out due to a lack of interest, teenage pregnancy and the opportunity cost of education, particularly in urban areas. Schwartzman (2006) attests to the fact that children abandon education in large numbers at an early age and in 2001 by age sixteen, 19% Brazilians were already out of school without learning how to read or write properly. Soares (2004) contends that access to school, although essential, is not enough to fulfil any educational need but that the child must attend a good school on a regular basis. And the quality of an education system should be first assessed through indicators, which take into consideration attendance, evasion, and promotion to the next grade and conclusion of primary education

Students performance varies significantly depending on the school location as students in city schools were seen to perform better than students in town schools. Private schools perform better, and also have more positive reports than public schools in terms of class size, teacher shortages, infrastructure and educational resources. Furthermore, private schools have full day sessions unlike public schools that have three sessions per day of four hours each in a school day. Even though public education still holds more than 80% of the students, the number of students enrolled at private schools increased 14% from 2010 to 2013. Factors that justify the movement towards private

institutions include lack of teachers, overcrowded classrooms and general issues with infrastructure in public schools.

UNESCO (2005) observes that the question of how well students are taught and how much they learn can have a significant impact on how long they stay in school and how regularly they attend and that universal participation of children in education is dependent on the quality of education offered. Kazuma and Oketch (2008) advanced that the introduction of FPE policy is, however, a huge challenge for any national government that has experienced declining or slow economic growth and heavily relied on charging fees to parents and other sources to finance the education system. It follows, therefore, that the approach taken in implementing the FPE policy has implications for equity and efficiency in the education sector.

Liyanage (2014) observed that despite universal primary education and high literacy levels, the education system of Sri Lanka has challenges related to poor quality, 90% of the poor children versus 96% of children from rich families being in school, unclear educational policies and unplanned policy changes done by politicians from regime to regime and educational reforms based on donor agencies and not on real needs of the country. Perera (2009) contends that despite assistance of donor agencies such as World Bank, UNICEF, Swedish Development Agency (SIDA) and Asian Development Bank (ADB), there appears to be little change on the quality of education in primary schools of Sri Lanka.

National exam called the Scholarship exam written in grade 5 to allow students with exceptional skills to move on to better schools. However, exams tend to force learners seek private tuition even as early as grade one and cause a mental strain on the learners as they are forced to engage in memorising concepts thus reducing meaningful learning to take place. Absenteeism rate is high in

public schools as some learners attend private tuition where lessons are offered on all days of the week. The increasing competition in entrance exams for prestigious schools, and the expansion of private tuition as a supplement to public education raise questions of equity and quality of education provided. 37.5% learners left school before completing primary education. Furthermore, other concerns suggest quality of instruction in the Sri Lankan government schools has declined, particularly in schools serving disadvantaged communities and that rural schools are widely considered to provide lower quality education than urban schools.

Despite the attention given to primary education, particularly over the last decade, many countries in sub-Saharan Africa have fallen short of achieving the goal of primary schooling for all in both quantitative and qualitative term. Kadzamira and Rose (2003). It was observed that that teacher performance deteriorated following FPE due to low morale, which also has implications for the quality of education delivered. According to Wamba and M Gomezulu (2014) the increase in enrollment in Malawi lead to many problems such as overcrowding in schools, scarcity of teaching and learning materials and shortage of teachers, among other problems.

The challenges that arose with this increase were not different from those experienced in Malawi and Ghana. According to Kimeyi (2013) findings revealed that learners' competence in reading and numeracy were very low and that declining quality of public primary schools soon after the introduction of free primary education gave the rise of private schools evidenced by enrolment in Kenya's private schools that had tripled between 2005 and 2009, from 4.4 percentages to 10.5 per cent. Using a descriptive study and with a sample of nine head teachers, fifty teachers and eighty pupils, Opata and Wasonga (2016) conducted a study on effects of free primary education on the quality of

education in public schools of Kanduyi Sub-county of Bungoma state of Kenya. The findings revealed that as result of the free primary education policy, the quality of education had been negatively affected due to rise in enrolment leading to overcrowded classrooms while some lessons were conducted under trees. This is confirmed by Chacha and Zani (2015) who attest to the fact that free primary education has created significant problems like overcrowded classrooms, high pupil-teacher ratio, inadequate infrastructure and lack of sanitation facilities.

Otieno (2003) cited in Opata and Wasonga (2016) confirms that enrolment continued to create ripples in quality of education under FPE program. A subsequent effect of high enrolment and was that teachers seemed to concentrate mainly on the teaching of examinable subjects such as English, Mathematics, Kiswahili, Science and Social Studies while other subjects were neglected and also led to a significant drop in the levels of direct supervision of learners by teachers resulting in a drop in the quality of education. It was also found that parents bore the burden of provision of learning facilities. Most school lacked or had inadequate teaching and learning materials hence implementation of the curriculum was hampered. Abdullah (2013) in a study on the impact of FPE on the quality of education in Mombasa, Kenya confirms that provision of instructional materials was not proportionate with the rapid increase in pupil enrolment hence free primary education in public schools had stretched teaching and learning facilities as a result of high influx of new pupils.

Though Thahane (2013) notes that due to he introduction of free primary education in Lesotho in 2000 the net enrolment increased from 69% in 2000 to 84% in 2006, results from a study by Lekhetho (2013) on impact of free primary education on access and quality of primary education in Lesotho revealed that many children were still not in school or had either dropped out of school despite the

introduction of free primary education. Factors that affected quality and completion of primary education included the anti-school practices such as the rite of passage for boys reduced their participation since it clashed with the school calendar year and school ethos, ineffective teaching, a critical shortage of physical facilities and resources, especially in the rural schools where most teachers were unqualified also discouraged some children from attending school, and many parents from sending their children to school.

Quality education can be achieved were the learning environment is conducive and facilities, teaching and learning materials are available. However studies show that despite the effort by government to ensure that the free education policy is being adhered to, most primary schools lack basic requisites to ensure quality education is not compromised and the situation not different for learners with special needs. A study by Sibanda (2016) on the impact of FPE policy on the education of learners with disabilities posit FPE policy impacted negatively on teaching and learning as the institution had inadequate appropriate teaching and learning materials hence the quality of learning compromised. The infrastructure was also not user friendly for the disabled learners and hence, there is need to explore how the FPE affects the able bodied learners hence, bringing about this study.

In another research by Mobela (2015) on the impact of free primary education in Kabwe district sought among other objectives, to examine FPE on the provision of quality of education. A descriptive study was used and a sample of twenty head teachers, twenty teachers, five learners and four officers from DEBS office. The findings from the research revealed that FPE enabled many pupils to be enrolled regardless of their socio-economic status. The progression rate was high, and high completion rate at grade seven was attributed to the increase in the number of pupils accessing education. However, the high enrolment seemed to

lead ineffective teaching and learning, inadequate educational supplies, teachers being unable to give learners enough practice through home work in comparison to private schools

1.4.3 Enhancing teaching and learning under free primary education

FPE policy benefited the most advantaged and disadvantaged schools put strains on those schools in middle performing tier, especially, those located in slums of Nairobi. Chuck (2009) states that this led to disparities in the quality of education at various public institutions of Nairobi. If the FPE was to achieve its pro-poor goals, the researcher suggested that funds should be disbursed on time, sponsored schools should receive less or no funds from government encourage schools to be self-sufficient by raising their own revenue through the support of parents and students. Furthermore, Chacha and Zani (2015) emphasized on the need to involve stakeholders such as teachers and parents. The teachers seemed not to be prepared for results of FPE such as large class sizes hence the need to be taken through in-service training on effective ways of teaching large and heterogeneous classes and also collaborate with parents to ensure learners complete their homework and monitor their performance.

The above views are also by Lekhetso (2013) who recommended that in order to increase access and quality of primary education in Lesotho, there was need for improved collaboration between different multi-level stakeholders. Marojele (2017) adds that dynamics of infrastructural and teaching resources, and increased centralisation resulted in loss of local accountability by the schools, thus recommends a coordinated approach, involving all the stakeholders as a basis for enhancing the effective implementation of Free Primary Education in the schools.

2. RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

2.1 Research design

A research design defines how the research will be structured. It is a plan, structure and strategy of investigation so conceived so as to obtain answers to research questions or problems. It also describes the procedures for conducting the study, including when, from whom and under what conditions data will be obtained. (Creswell 2014). For this research, a descriptive case study design was adopted so as to bring out the views of the respondents. A case study was adopted as it helped to understand a given phenomenon from the few examples research design defines how the research will be structured

2.2 Sampling procedure

In this study, simple random sampling was used to select five schools, teachers and learners. Random assignment involves assigning participants to groups within a research study in such a way that each participant has an equal probability of being assigned to any of the groups within the study, hence random assignment was an effective way of ensuring that the groups within a research study are equivalent. Simple random sampling accorded each school, teacher and learner a chance to be selected. Purposive sampling was used to select the officers from the District Education Board Secretary's Office, head teachers, deputy head teachers, senior teachers and parents (PTA chairperson/secretary). Purposive sampling helps researchers to gain a deep understanding of phenomena experienced by a carefully selected group of people. Thus, purposive sampling was used for these respondents because of the positions that they occupied and the sampling technique enabled the researcher to get varieties of samples that had enough information suited for the purpose of the study.

2.3 Target populations and Sample size

A target population refers as the total number of responses from which the sample is drawn. Orodho (2003), points out that target population is any group of individuals who have one or more characteristics in common that are of interest to the researchers. The target populations for this study was in two categories of population namely target population of schools for the study and the primary school teachers and pupils in the targeted school. Kabwe district has about fifty-four public primary schools. This research targeted all public primary schools in Kabwe district of central province of Zambia. The study also targeted officers from the District Education Board Secretary's Office, Head teachers, deputy head teachers, senior teachers, teachers, pupils and parents. The choice for these respondents was that they supervised, worked or learnt in public primary schools where the free primary education policy was being implemented.

2.4 Sampling techniques

In this study, simple random sampling and purposive sampling were used.

2.5 Instruments for data collection

In collecting data for this research, questionnaires were administered to the respondents in the study. Questionnaires were chosen as the main mode of data collection as the researcher can collect a lot of data in a short time and are useful to ensure participant's confidentiality is ensured (Orodho 2003). Interview schedules were used to collect data from the learners and parents. An interview allowed the researcher to clarify issues with the respondents hence was able to get a lot of information from the parents and pupils.

2.6 Procedure for data collection

The researcher obtained letter of introduction from the Information and Communications University

and a research permit from then Kitwe District Education. With these documents, the researcher booked appointments with the respondents at each selected secondary school, District resource centre and the DEBS office, which was followed by a pre-visit to the selected schools on the respective appointment dates. The questionnaires were then administered to the relevant respondents. The researcher ensured punctuality on the appointment dates, this helped to reduce inconveniences to the respondents, hence increasing the response rate. An appointment was made for interviews to get opinions from the stated respondents.

2.7 Data analysis techniques

The data from the questionnaires were analysed by coding and grouping into emerging themes. Statistical Package for Social Science (SPSS) was used to generate frequency tables and other descriptive statistics for easier analysis of quantitative data.

2.8 Ethical consideration

Ethical considerations play a significant role in the credibility of a research and its findings. Creswell (2014) states that researchers need to promote the integrity of research; guard against misconduct and impropriety that might reflect on their organizations or institutions, protect their research participants and develop a trust with them. Therefore, the researcher sought permission from the gate keepers to gain access to the sites in the study, informed consent from the respondents and ensure confidentiality during and after the research process. Participants will be informed of the purpose of the research and its anticipated benefits.

3. FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

3.1 Effectiveness of the implementation of free primary education

It was established that the district had about 54 Public primary schools, 28 private primary schools and 6 community schools. On the question of whether there were enough schools within their area, 55 of the respondents said that the number of schools was enough while 40 said that schools in their area were not enough.

Table 1 Response on whether schools in the area were enough

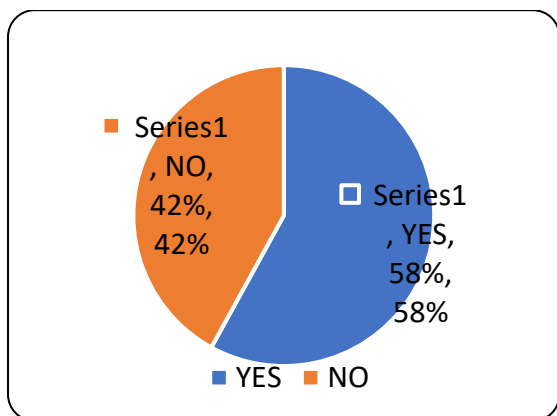
Category	YES	NO	TOTAL
DEBs	4	1	5
Chindwin	14	4	18
Kasanda	7	11	18
Lukanga	13	5	18
Nabusanga	8	10	18
Natuseko	9	9	18
TOTAL	55	40	95

Source: Field Data, 2019

The table above shows that 4 respondents from DEBS said “yes” while only 1 said “no”. In terms of percentage, 80% said “yes” while 20% said “no”. At Chindwin 14 said there were enough schools while 4 said the schools were not enough. This translated to a percentage of 78% for “yes” and 22% for “no”. At kasanda 7 said the schools in their area were enough while 11 said the schools were not enough. The response from Kasanda in percentage form was 39% for “yes” and 61% for “no” Of the 18 respondents from Lukanga, 13 said the schools in their area were enough while 5 said the schools were not enough. This resulted into 72% for “yes” and 28% for “no”. At Nabusanga 8 said the schools were enough while 10 were of the view that the schools were not enough representing a percentage

of 44% for “yes” and 56% for “no”. At Natuseko, 9 said the school were enough while the other 9 said the number of schools in their area were not enough. The response from Natuseko translated into an equal percentage of 50% for “yes” and “no”. The response gave a total of 55 with a view that the schools within their area were enough while 40 were of the view that the number of schools in their area were not enough. This represents a percentage of 58% accepting that the schools were enough to 42 % of the view that the number of schools in their area were not enough as shown in the figure below.

Figure 1 Response on whether schools in the area were enough



Source: Field Data, 2019

Table 2 School Enrollments

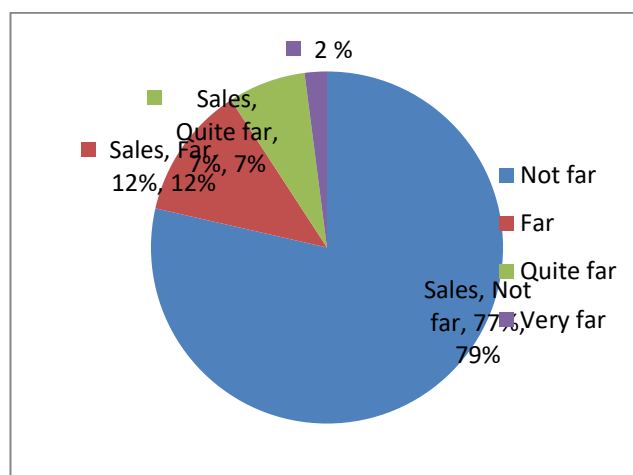
School	School enrollment	Average class enrollment	Number of sessions
Chindwin	1226	35	4
Kasanda	1928	70	4
Lukanga	1100	45	4
Nabusanga	580	40	3
Natuseko	763	35	3

Source: Field Data, 2019

On pupil enrollment, findings revealed that school enrolments ranged from 600 for the least enrollment to about 2000 for the highest enrollment, with an average class enrollment ranging from 35 to 70 respectively. Table above shows that Kasanda

primary had the highest enrollment of 1928, followed by Chindwin primary with 1226 pupils, Lukanga primary had 1100, with Nabusanga primary having 580 and Natuseko primary with 763. Chindwin had an average class enrolment of 35 pupils while Kasanda had an average class enrolment of 70 pupils. The average class enrolment for Lukanga was 45 while that of Nabusanga was at 40. Natuseko had an average class enrolment of 35. Chindwin, Kasanda and Lukanga were found to have more than three sessions were lessons for upper primary (grade5-7) run from 7 00hours to 12 hours and 13 00hours to 17 00hours. And 07 00hours to 10 30hours and 11 00hours to 13 00hours for the lower primary (grades 1-4). However, Nabusanga and Natuseko had three session which comprised of the morning session, mid-morning session and afternoon session.

Figure 2 Distance to school



Source: Field Data, 2019

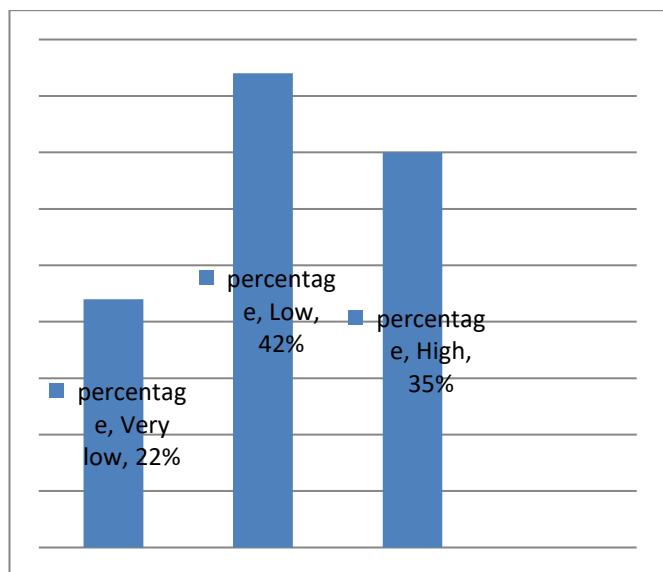
The schools draw their learners from within their catchment arrears. While Lukanga is located in the central business center, the other schools are located in high density areas. Learners come from compounds and neighboring unplanned settlements. Most of the learners walk to school. As regards the distance of the schools one (01) said the school was very far while eleven (11) Said it was

far, seven (07) said it was quite far seventy-four (74) Said it was not far.

Response on the rate of absenteeism by percentage

In terms of attendance, all the ten pupils stated that they attended school very often representing a response of 100%. The absenteeism rate in the school was rated as follows as shown in the figure below with nineteen saying ‘very low’ at 22%, while 36 felt absenteeism was “low”, representing 42% and 30 felt it was high representing 35%.

Figure 3 Response on the rate of absenteeism by percentage

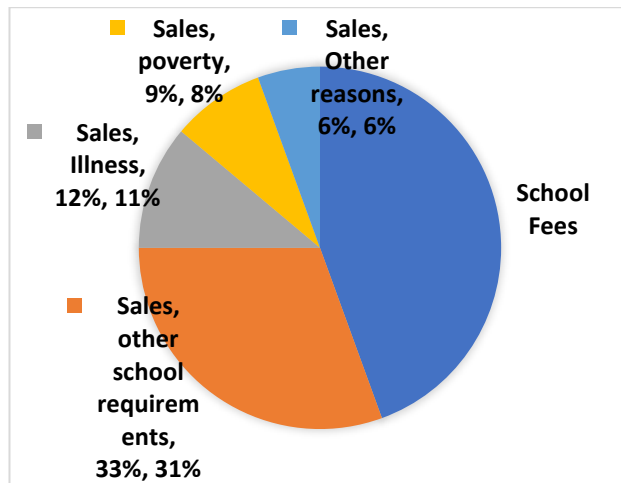


Source: Field Data, 2019

The findings showed that the majority were of the view that absenteeism was low. There were various reasons attributed to causes of absenteeism among the learners. They included bad weather, poor nutritional status, pregnancies, long distance to school, truancy, illness, unpaid school fees, house chores, child labour and poor educational background of the learners. Among these, school fees and other school requisites, poverty, illness rated highly. Education leaders observed that absenteeism was seen to be high among learners from the high-density areas (compounds and

unplanned settlements) as these were more likely to be involved in helping their parents with house chores or selling various items to supplement family income.

Figure 4 Causes of absenteeism



Source: Field Data, 2019

When asked on how absenteeism could be lowered or eradicated, educators suggested that the learners be offered guidance and counseling on the importance of school, summoning parents to discuss their child’s absence and introduction of school feeding program for selected pupils as some illnesses and absence of learners was due to poverty or poor nutritional status.

Parents felt that as school requisites were the main cause of absenteeism, they suggested that their children should not be sent away but instead school administration should summon the parents to school to discuss how best the fees and other needs could be paid. Parents also suggested that the government should pay for the most vulnerable.

The school fees in the schools visited ranged from K200 to K300 as shown in table below. Chindwin and Lukanga charged K250 while Kasanda charged K200 and Nabusanga charged K300. At Natuseko the fees were at K150 at the beginning of the year but those who transferred to the school were charged K200.

Table 3 Fees in the schools

School	School fees
Chindwin	K250
Kasanda	K200
Lukanga	K250
Nabusanga	K300
Natuseko	K150-200

Source: Field data, 2019

On the ability of parents to pay the fees the table 10 below shows that, of the 75 teachers, 19 said the parents were able to pay the fees while 56 said parents were not able. Among the parents 1 had a response of 'yes' while 9 responded with a 'no'. The pupils had 3 responding to 'yes' while 7 responded by indicating 'no'

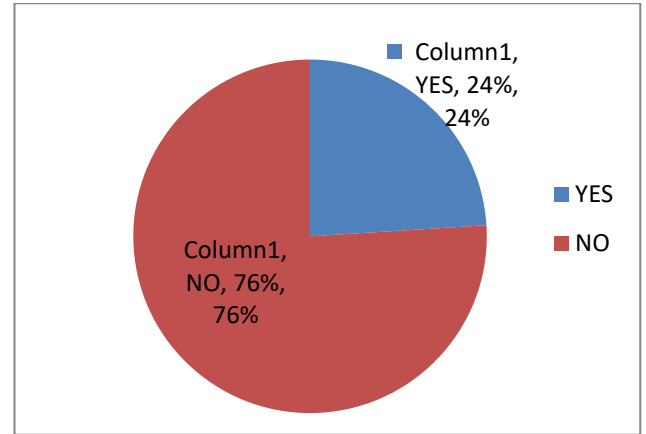
Table 4 Response on parents' ability to pay school fees

Category	YES	NO
Teachers	19	56
Parents	01	09
Pupils	03	07
Total	23	72

Source: Field data, 2019

The figure 4 below shows response by percentage on the ability to pay school fees is shown in the figure below with 76% saying parents were able to pat the school fee, while 24% said parents were not able to pay the school fees.

Figure 5 Ability to pay school fees by percentage



Source: Field data, 2019

Findings revealed that most parents complained about the high school fees. Teachers added on that the payment of fees was very slow and some pupils would complete the whole year without paying any thing.

As to whether learners had enough books or pens, findings reveals that 41 of the teachers felt pupils had enough school requisites while 34 said the books were not enough. The response from the parents was in the ratio 3 to 7. for pupils the response was in the ratio 2 to 8. This represented a percentage of 48% for 'yes' and 52% for 'no'.

Table 5 Response on availability of books and pens

Category	YES	NO
Teachers	41	34
Parents	3	7
Pupils	2	8

Source: Field data, 2019

Though the district has about 54 primary schools and 6 community schools, the district has a good number of privately owned primary schools. The schools in the district where divided into seven zones implying that each zone had an average of six public primary schools. While the district had a

good share of private schools, sending of children to private schools depended on the financial ability of the guardian. Thus, those that felt that the schools are not enough focus on whether the school is a public or government school. To an extent, upgrading of some primary schools into secondary schools had reduced the number of primary schools in some areas and eventually led to an increase in the enrollment of the surrounding primary schools. The enrollment for each school tallied with the locality of the school. Those that are located in high density areas or near the central business area such as Kasanda and Lukanga had a higher enrollment and subsequent high average class enrollment. This tallies with the findings of Chucks (2009) revealed that schools that were located in the slums experienced a high rise in enrollment as the parents who could not previously afford education show an opportunity to send their children to school after the introduction of the free primary education in Kenya.

The researcher tried to find out the number of sessions that each school had so as to establish the amount of time the learners spent in the school. It was found that pupils in the lower primary spent about three hours while the pupils in upper primary spent five hours. The various sessions are necessitated as the learners had to share the same classrooms. For example, one classroom used by grade 1's from 07 00hours to 10 00hrs was used by grade 3's from 11 00hours to 13 00hours. In the same vain, grade sevens and sixes would also share one classroom.

It was evident from the research that schools drew their learners within their communities. This is evidenced by the larger percentage of 77% of respondents who said that the school was not far. This implied that learners where able to reach their schools in good time for lessons. However, it was observed that there were those learners who came from distant places to the school such as the farming areas around who felt that there were not enough schools in their area as they had to cover long

distances to reach the nearest school. Some learners such as those from farming areas had to cover more than five kilometers on foot every school day. This could wear the learners out and eventually led to irregular attendance of school due to fatigue. The researcher also observed that as parents' preference determines which school their child would attend, other children had to travel long distance to access the preferred school. For example, some parents preferred sending their children to schools in or near town than those within their local communities.

The major causes of absenteeism were related to the needs of the school such as school fees. The parents brought to light that their children were not allowed to be in school for unpaid school fees. Some schools asked the learners to bring to school others things such as cobra, brooms, reams of paper, pockets of cement, tissue and bathing soap. At times learners were asked to bring more than one item and whenever parents failed to meet such demands, their child would not be allowed to attend lessons until such a time that they were able to do so. In some families, learners would be sent to sell different merchandise so as not only to supplement house need but also to pay school fees or buy the required school requisites. As for the time which the learner would be out to source for money, their long absence from school had in the long run impact negatively on the learners as they would miss out a lot on school work. Many parents who rarely completed payment of the school fee made learners stay away from school or completely dropped out. Williams et al (2015) suggest children continue to contend with a range of school-related costs that impact attendance, performance and completion

Evidently both the teachers and the parents acknowledged the importance of dialogue so as to maximize the contact between the teacher and the learners. Eradication of absenteeism would require the consented efforts of all stake holders in the primary schools. There was also need to educate the parents on the importance of education as it would

be through their child that the family would be rescued from poverty. There was need to request the parent to send their children on house chores or engage in merchandising during off school hours

The introduction of Free Primary Education abolished the payment of school fees however findings revealed that schools were charging one kind of a fee or another (project fee or user fees). Though the learners were not charged project fees in monetary terms, some schools indirectly levied project fee by requesting that learners bring pockets of cement. This was mostly requested from the grade one learners or those that had come into the school on transfer. Though the introduction of free primary education had greatly reduced the financial burden of public primary school going children, the parents still incurred some costs. The response on the cost of education clearly showed that the parents had challenges paying the school fees. They preferred school fees be reduced as they were seen to be too high. The coming in of the government's provision of bursaries for the most vulnerable would be a welcome move by the parents. Very few parents had paid the school fees all at once. Most could have paid over a period of time. It was common for parents to enter into a payment plan, were a small amount could be paid monthly or termly. Entering into a payment plan would ensure to an extend guarantee the learners continued presence in school. As evidenced from the occupation of the parents and the location where most of the learners were drawn from, most of the parents complained about the high cost of education. Most households had a family size of above five hence catering for the need of each family member including other needs was a problem for most families. Hence with the many arrears that needed money amidst a financial challenge, parents complained about the high cost of education.

The findings on all learners having a uniform revealed that while in some schools all learners had

uniforms, in other schools there were a few learners who did not have a complete uniform. There was a variation in the response among schools and within the schools, this could have meant that learners who were not in full uniform were still allowed to attend lessons school. However, it could also be true that in schools where all learners had uniforms, no learner was allowed to be in school without a complete uniform

It was observed that percentage of learners not having adequate books, pencils or pen at 48% was quite high implying that it was common to find learners without a book or two in a given subject area. Lack of adequate books would lead learners to using a single book for more than one subject and in a event where a class was handled by more than one teacher, a learner would be at a loss as they would have no book to write in if a book was taken by any one of the teachers to mark or check the learners work.

3.2 Impact of free primary education teaching and learning.

On the question as to whether the classrooms were enough, 40 said they were enough while 55 felt they were not enough, representing a percentage of 42% and 58% respectively. Of the five officers under DEBs, 1 said the classrooms were enough while 4 said classrooms were not enough. At Chindwin only 4 said the classrooms were not enough while 14 said the classrooms were enough. At Kasanda all the 18 respondents said that the classrooms were not enough. At Nabusanga 7 said that the classrooms were enough while 11 said that the classrooms were not enough. At Natuseko 13 said that the classrooms were enough while 5 said that the classrooms were not enough.

Table 6 Response on availability of infrastructure

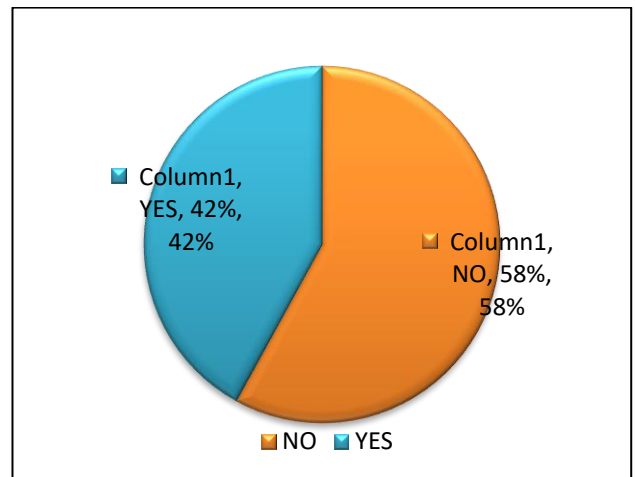
Category	YES	NO
DEBS	1	4
Chindwin	14	4
Kasanda		18
Lukanga	5	13
Nabusanga	7	11
Natuseko	13	5
TOTAL	40	55

Source: Field data, 2019

On the question as to whether the classrooms were enough figure 11 below illustrates the response representing a percentage of 42% for “yes” and 58% for “no” respectively

Four of the schools had a playground were physical education lessons, sporting activities and other recreational activities were conducted. Nabusanga did not have a playground and had to use the neighboring school’s playground only for sporting activities during the sporting season. All the schools had electricity. Of the five schools, Kasanda and Lukanga had boreholes while three depended on water supply from the utility company. Natuseko and Nabusanga had pit latrines only, Kasanda and Lukanga had flush toilets and only Chindwin had both pit latrines and flush toilets. 85% of the respondents said the schools did not have enough desks while 15% were of the view that the schools had adequate desks. It was noted that a lesson at lower primary lasted 30-35 minutes while a lesson lasted 40 minutes at upper primary.

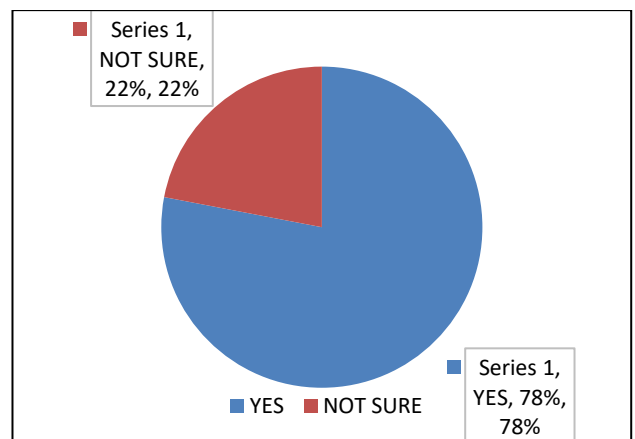
Figure 6 Response on availability of infrastructure



Source: Field data, 2019

On the question as to whether schools had enough learning materials, all the respondents (100%) said the schools did not have enough text books and other items such as supplementary readers and equipment. While 78% of the respondents said schools received educational materials from the government, 22% did not give any response to this question as shown in figure below.

Figure 7 whether educational materials are received from government.



Source: Field data, 2019

The response to whether the school received educational equipment from the government, 57% said ‘yes’ while 43% said ‘no’.

In all the schools, it was learnt that the schools had enough teachers and were well qualified to handle the primary section. As to whether they had adequate teaching materials 23 of the respondents said the materials were enough while 72 said the teaching material were not enough. This response represented a percentage of 24% for 'yes' and 76% for 'no'.

Table 7 Availability of teaching materials

Category	Frequency	Percent (%)
YES	23	24%
NO	72	76%

Source: Field data, 2019

Teachers indicated that they did not have proper teaching materials that could support the teachers when teaching and that some of the available materials were in were in a bad state and needed to be replaced. Apart from teaching materials, teaching aids were a problem and teachers had to use local materials to make teaching aids. The learners attested to the fact that at times their teachers would ask them to bring old calendars or cardboard boxes so that the teacher would make teaching aids. The teachers indicated that lack of teaching materials was associated with poor funding to the schools by the Government.

Table 8 Workshops attended

Category	Freq	Percentage
SBCPD	37	49%
SBCPD/District workshops	27	36%
District workshops	6	8%
SBCPD/District workshops/Subject Association	3	4%
District workshops/Subject Association	2	3%
TOTAL	75	100%

Source: Field data, 2019

On which workshops the teachers from primary schools mostly attended, 37 teachers said School Based Continuous Development workshops or meetings (SBCPD), 27 mentioned SBCPD and district stake holders workshops, 6 identified district stake holders workshops, 3 stated that teacher usually attended SBCDDs and subject association meetings and only 2 mentioned all the three types of workshops SBCPD, district stake holders workshops and subject association meetings. Four of the parents were aware that teachers had meetings at school though they were not sure of the nature of the meeting while 6 said teachers mostly attended SBCPDs.

Table 9 Evaluation of quality of learning

SCHOOL	VERY GOOD	GOOD	FAIR	POOR
Chindwin	05	07	02	
Kasanda	04	06	03	01
Lukanga	03	10	01	
Nabusanga	03	10	01	
Natuseko	04	08	02	
TOTAL	19	41	09	01

Source: Field data, 2019

The response by the teachers when asked about the quality of learning at their schools, the response from various schools is shown in the table 15 below. Out of the 70 teachers, a total of 19 said the quality of learning was very good, 41 said it was good, 9 said it was fair and only 1 said it was poor. At Chindwin 5 said the quality of learning was very good, 7 said it was good and 2 said it was fair. Kasanda had 4 saying very good, 6 said it was good, 3 felt it was fair and 1 said it was poor. At Lukanga and Nabusanga the responses were similar, 3 said it was very good, 10 said it was good and 1 said it was fair. At Natuseko. 4 said the quality of learning was very good while 8 said it was good and 2 said it was poor.

Six of the pupils said the quality of learning was good while four said it was very good. An equal number of parents (5 each) said the quality of learning was good while other said it was fair. Only one Officer under DEBS office said the quality of learning was very good. The other four said the quality of learning was good. A total number of 24 said the quality of learning was very good representing 25 %, 56 (59%) said it was good, 14 (15%) said it was fair and only 1 (1%) said the quality of learning was poor.

Table 10 Percentage of learners selected to grade eight

SCHOOL	YEARS				
	2014	2015	2016	2017	2018
Chindwin	67%	70%	72%	69%	62%
Kasanda	54%	57%	56%	59%	54%
Lukanga	75%	80%	79%	82%	85%
Nabusanga	71%	69%	73%	71%	60%
Natuseko	55%	60%	57%	63%	59%

Source: Field data 2019

The results in table above shows the performance of the schools in the past five years that's from 2014 to 2018. The percentages represent the number of pupils selected to grade eight from each school. From Chindwin the pass rate was 67% in 2014, 70% in 2015, 72% in 2016, 69% in 2017 and 62% in 2018.

At Kasanda the pass rate was 54% in 2014, 57% in 2015, 56% in 2016, 59% in 2017 and 54% in 2018. Lukanga recorded 75% in 2014, 80% in 2015, 79% in 2016, 82% in 2017 and 85% in 2018. At Nabusanga, the pass rate was 71% in 2014, 69% in 2015, 73% in 2016, 71% in 2017 and 60% in 2018. Natuseko recorded 55% in 2014, 60% in 2015, 57% in 2016, 63% in 2017 and 59% in 2018.

The researcher observed that of the five schools in the study, Chindwin and Natuseko had enough classrooms. These two schools saw an increase in accommodation after junior secondary level (grade 8-9) was phased off from the basic schools turning them into primary schools. The two schools had few classrooms that were either in one or two blocks. Though 58% said the classroom accommodation was adequate, most classrooms were shared between two classes or grades. At Kasanda, 18 classrooms were being shared between the secondary and primary section. Of the eighteen classrooms, only eight were specifically allocated to the primary section. The other ten are used by the secondary section from 07 00hours up to 13 10hours after which the primary section would take up the eight of the classrooms. The other two classrooms were used by the examination classes (grade 9 and 12) for afternoon study (prep). This meant the other none examination classes were not conducting prep. Furthermore, the primary section had reserved three rooms which were only for reading lessons only, one for early childhood education and the other for Special education unit.

The researcher also observed that apart from Kasanda, Lukanga also had a classroom reserved for pre-school. The restrictions placed on certain classes reduced the number of classrooms available to the other grades. The high enrollment levels at Kasanda of about 2000 translated to high average class enrollment of seventy. The accommodation crisis at this school was against the recommendation by MOGE (2018) that the upgrading of primary schools into secondary schools should be done at a point where there was secure school and classroom space in that area for those at primary level to avoid overcrowding. The school was found to have had the highest enrollment which translated into high class enrollments as the school lacked adequate classrooms. The implication of shared rooms was that the first class to start had to leave the room

quickly when knocking off so as to allow the next class to start. The safety of the teaching and learning aids and other materials stuck on the wall or left around the classroom was not guaranteed. Inadequate classrooms were seen as a factor that led schools to have at least three sessions. To an extent having more than one session in the school reduced the contact session between the teacher and the learners as the pupils had to spend three and a half hours for the lower grades and five hours for the upper grades. In comparison to private schools were the learners spend almost eight hours in school, the learners in public schools seemed to spend more time away from the school, and thus they had more time to play than engage in meaningful learning, remedial lesson or doing their homework.

An average enrollment of over seventy per class was not only against UNESCO (2005)^{42]} recommendation of forty pupils per class but also reduced quality contact between the teacher and the learners. Lessons would be taught through lecture method and less interactive. As Mobela (2015) attest that high teacher-pupils ratio makes teachers not to give a lot of work as marking too many books would be tedious, reduced individualized attention to learners and conducting remedial work. Hence the weak learners or those with special educational needs would be disadvantage and eventually perform poorly at grade seven. Chacha and Zani (2015) also observed some schools performance continued to be poor due to the large classes that made it impossible for teachers to administer regular assessment and provide prompt feed back to the learners. Abdullahi (2013) alluded to the fact that an uncomfortable student will never gain quality education whatsoever, an excessively filled class will not get quality of education from a single teacher no matter what and a congested class will never be suitable for offering quality services to the student. Thus, the prevailing situations in the

schools will high average class enrolment were not ideal if quality education was to be attained.

All the schools had a shortage of desks. In some classrooms, three pupils had to share a desk. Some desks were also not suitable for the learners as they were either too big or too small making it difficult for the learners to write comfortably. The schools were dependent upon the government to supply the desks and could only wait for their stocks to be increased. It was noted that the schools seemed not to work on the damaged desks in time, thus those that minor problems had to be discarded as the problem worsened overtime of not rehabilitating them.

The play grounds were not only used for lessons and other sporting activities but learners who had lessons in second and third session would wait from the play grounds before their turn came to go to class. Not having a playground deprived the learners of practical physical education lessons. Such lesson could not be conducted elsewhere as time would be consumed in moving to and from the playgrounds.

Though the schools all had electricity, Only the administrative blocks were adequately connected to power while very few classrooms were supplied with power or well-lit. Some schools did not have windows but blocks placed apart on the windows for ventilation and allow a bit of light. This caused a challenge for the learners especially during winter when the rooms were dark because of the continued cloud cover.

The schools that had boreholes did not have a challenge of water and were able to maintain the flush toilets well. Those that depended on water from the utility company were faced with erratic water supply hence opting to construct pit latrines. The schools had enough pit latrines to cater for the school population. One school had pit latrines as the flush toilets were vandalized. Having both flush and pit latrines was ideal as in an event that the school

had no water, learners would not be sent away as the practice had been for schools that did not have pit latrines. Pit latrines were also preferred by the girls because of sanitation reasons.

Learning materials were a problem for all schools. 22% were not sure if the school had received educational materials from the government. It is important that teachers know the sources of the materials they use in school so that they can appreciate the role that government and the school play so as to have a smooth teaching and learning process. Though MESVTEE (2013) recognizes that quality education requires the availability and use of educational materials, the schools had very few text books thus impacting negatively on the teaching and learning process. While some subject had a few copies, other subjects had only one or two. Text books had to be share among pupils. It was observed at one school that 20 English books had to be shared among seventy pupils in a grade six class. Generally, all the schools had a very high pupil-book ratio. The state of the few available books was damaged with the passage of time as the books were handled by many pupils. The scenario was similar for core subjects were books life span was short. Learners had to crowd for one book and other would not even get a good view of the book. In some cases, teachers had to write a full passage on the board for the learners to read during a comprehension lesson. It is of great importance that learners have access to print material other than depending on the written work on the board. Print material exposes learners to wider reading and spellings of words and would ease anxiety during the exams. The schools also lacked the necessary educational materials to support learning of certain subjects such as creative and technology studies. The learners were subjected to abstract lessons and semi concrete learning aids such as charts or pictures and not the actual physical objects.

Findings revealed that lack of teaching materials was amongst the challenges that were explained by the responded. They explained that books, teachers' guides and other teaching materials were needed. It was observed that the introduction of the new curriculum had posed new challenges for the schools as they needed to use the new recommended books in the revised curriculum. In the initial stages of the implementation of the revised curriculum, the government had provided some books, however it was observed that not all the required books were provided, hence some subjects were lacking books. Some subjects had only received learners' books without the accompanying teachers' guides or teachers' guides without learners' books; hence the teachers had to use the learners' book as a text book and reference book at the same times. Furthermore, this problem was experienced between different grades. A situation would also arise where in a certain subject such as English, books would be available for one grade but not available in the subsequent grade thus there was lack of continuity in terms of unfolding the revised curriculum to the learners. The teachers were then forced to use text books and other references books from the previous curriculum so as not to create a vacuum in the learning processes. Findings also revealed that in some cases, schools only managed to buy a copy for the teachers to use. However, this would still pose a challenge as the same book would be shared among more than three teachers a situation that would inconvenience the preparation of lessons by the teachers and handling on one book by too many people would eventually wear it out easily.

In some cases, schools continued to receive the same books leading to schools having too many books in one subject area and a deficit in other areas of dire need. Such a practice meant there was uneven distribution of books to primary schools by the government. It would be better if the government worked with the schools by asking the

schools to submit the types of books they needed and quantities. This would lead to schools receiving books and materials that they need and in the right amounts.

Other teaching and learning materials were still insufficient, absolute or not available. Teachers had to be more resourceful in order for the lessons to be conducted effectively. Teachers had to source for materials from other schools or bring in their personal materials to facilitate teaching. The researcher observed that the primary schools lacked things such as computers. If a school had any, they could be one or two and these would be used for administrative purposes. This led some teachers to bring in their own laptops just to help learners understand concepts taught. This situation had disadvantaged pupils who came from vulnerable homes where a computer or television did not exist. It is therefore incumbent upon the government to ensure that schools have the necessary equipment and materials that would be needed in the course of a given curriculum. While teachers asked learners to bring some items so that teaching and learning materials could be made, not all learners had the materials being asked for and not all manufactured materials can be improvised.

Continuing professional development (CPD) has a crucial role to play in improving the quality of teachers and overall quality of education. The findings on attendance of workshops showed that 69 out of the 75 teachers agreed that teachers mostly attended SBCPDs. All teachers were expected to attend SBCPD for their own professional growth and to share experiences and learn new ideas. Though six mentioned district stakeholders' workshops, it is very unlikely that a teacher would not attend a SBCPD but attend a district workshop as it is a requirement that each teacher attends SBCPDs.

Only five teachers mentioned that teachers usually attended subject association meetings. The

interpretation of this would be that teachers in primary school rarely attended subject association meetings. This is not to say SBCPDs are not significant but Subject-specific CPD that is sustained tends to have bigger impact. Subject association meetings can complement SBCPDs. Subject associations can enhance community building and It is important that teachers have opportunities to network with other teachers so that they can build self-supporting networks. The Association for Science Education (2015) observed that any CPD is more likely to have lasting impact if it is linked to or based in the classroom practice of the teacher in teaching their subject. Only two respondents showed the ideal situation where teachers would be expected to attend to all meetings that are meant to improve their output and ultimately improved learner performance. The findings revealed that teachers normally attend meetings conducted within their schools. The schools can link with other neighbouring schools as to widen their scope of CPDs.

The response on the amount of homework given showed that generally the learners were being given home work. The variations in the response showed that local school policies determined how much home work was given to the learners. On average the schools with lower class enrollment seemed to give more homework than those with higher class enrollments. This tallies with Chuck (2009) findings that amount of work kept reducing as the teachers were unable to mark 79-100 students' homework every night. Reduced homework meant that the learners were not given enough practice and were unable to enhance their study and research skills. Another inhibiting factor to homework not being very often could be attributed to very few or unavailability of text books. Rather than give pupils the text books for them to refer to for the given work, teachers were forced to write the homework on the board. The 3% that said home work was

rarely given could have expected more work to be given and in a range of subjects.

A high number of respondents felt that the quality of learning at their school was good or that there were happy with the quality. This gave a total percentage of 84% which was relatively high in comparison to those that said to was fair or poor at only 16%. The researcher sought to find out the pass rate in terms of the number of pupils who were selected to grade eight at a secondary school or basic school.

The performance at the Chindwin showed that from 2014 to 2016 the school had a progression rate of 3% and 2% and was followed by a negative progression rate of 1% in 2017 and 7% in 2018. Table 10 and figure 8 show that the school had not performed well in the past two years hence there was need for the school to put in the necessary interventions to improve learner performance. The school performance in the past five years had fallen within the range of sixty to seventy percent. The performance of the school meant that between the five years, the school had failed to send between 28% and 38% of the learners to grade 8.

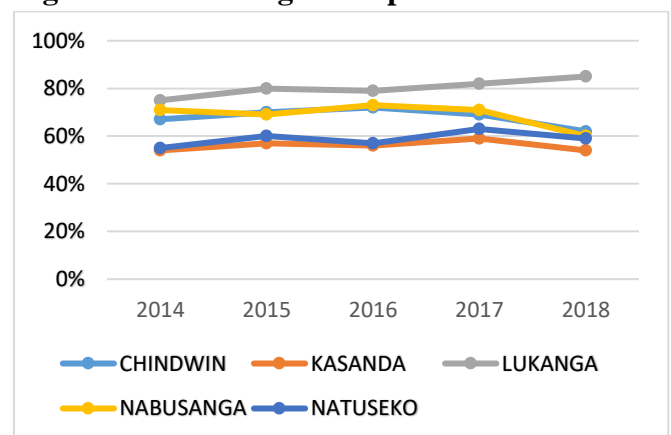
The performance for Kasanda ranged from fifty-four to sixty percent in the past five years. The results were rising and falling from positive 3% followed by negative 1% to positive 3% and negative 5%. The school performance had not gone beyond sixty percent between 2014 and 2018. The results show that the school had managed to send almost half of the learners to grade 8. This average performance of the school could be attributed to the high-class enrollment levels coupled inadequate classroom space among other problems

It can be seen that the performance at Lukanga show a progression of positive 3% in between 2014 and 2015 followed by a negative progression of 1%. The school then maintained a positive progression rate of positive 3% for two years. The school had a

maintained a pass rate of above 75% with its highest being at 85% implying that the school was able to send more than three quarters of its pupils to grade 8. Despite the high enrolment, the school had an average class enrollment of forty-five learners which was according to the recommended standard. The school drew most of its learners from low density areas around town. These learners could have had better facilities and a better home environment in comparison to their colleagues from high density areas.

The performance at school Nabusanga was fluctuating with its maximum in the past five years being 73% and the minimum at 60%. The enrollment at the school was quite low at only about 600. The performance at Natuseko showed a rise and fall beginning with a progression of positive 5% followed by a negative 3% and the a positive 6% and lastly a negative 4%. The general pass rate fell between 55% and 63%. The results showed that the school was an average performing school being able to send half of its grade seven candidates to grade 8.

Figure 8 Trends in grade 7 performance.



Source: Field data 2019

When the performance of the five schools was compared, it was found that Lukanga was the best performing of the five schools followed by Nabusanga, Chindwin, Natuseko and Kasanda. It was established that the minimum percentage was 54% and the highest was 85%. Lukanga had a

failure rate ranging from 15% to 25%, while that of Nabusanga was 27% to 37%, Chindwin was at 28% to 33%, Natuseko was at 37% to 45% and Kasanda had 41% to 46%. It was revealed that the school with the highest population had the highest failure rate. Though the government had pronounced that all grade seven candidates who had attempted the exam had all qualified to grade 8, not all the learners were selected to proceed to grade 8. After the secondary schools had selected candidates who had scored above 600 those below ended up in basic schools.

The findings on performance of individual schools in comparison to other school revealed that 66% indicated that the performance of their school was good. This implied that the respondents felt their schools were on course and their schools were competing favorably with other schools within the same area. Of the ninety respondents, 34% represented those that felt the performance was very good, fair or poor distributed as 21% very good, 12% fair and 1% poor. The response was similar in the various schools as a larger percentage showed that the performance of the school was good. Two school had an equal number saying the performance was either very good or fair while in the other three schools the number of those that felt the performance was very good was higher than those that felt that the performance was fair.

However, though most respondents from Kasanda and Natuseko said their performance was good, this did not tally with the ultimate performance at grade 7. Though Chindwin, Nabusanga and Natuseko lay in the same locality and Nabusanga was performing far much better than the other schools yet the other school felt the performance was good. The same could be said about Lukanga and Kasanda. It was observed that the performance at Lukanga was far much better than at Kasanda. It is important that the schools do not compromise on the quality of education given to the learners and ensure that a higher percentage

of learner's progress to grade 8. Except for Lukanga, all the other four school experienced a downward trend between 2017 and 2018. As MoF (2015) alludes to the fact that the free primary education policy introduced in 2002 has greatly improved the primary school enrolment rates in the last decade and Zambia is on track to achieving universal primary education. However, few Zambians progress to secondary school, and tertiary level enrolments are very low. Hence the need to ensure that a higher percentage of candidates successfully proceed to grade 8.

3.3 Enhancing teaching and learning under free primary education policy.

On the question as to whether the respondents knew about the free primary education policy, 6 of the pupils said they knew about the policy while 4 said they did not know. All ten parents said they knew about the free primary education policy. However, when the respondents were asked if parents understood the Free Primary Education Policy, 50% said yes, 45% said no while 5% were not sure. As to whether the parents were educated on the free primary education policy during PTA meetings, four of the parents said yes while six said no some parents said they had learnt about the policy from politicians and their friends. When queried further they said the explanations given by the schools was not comprehensive.

Table 11 Teachers' evaluation of FPE policy by schools

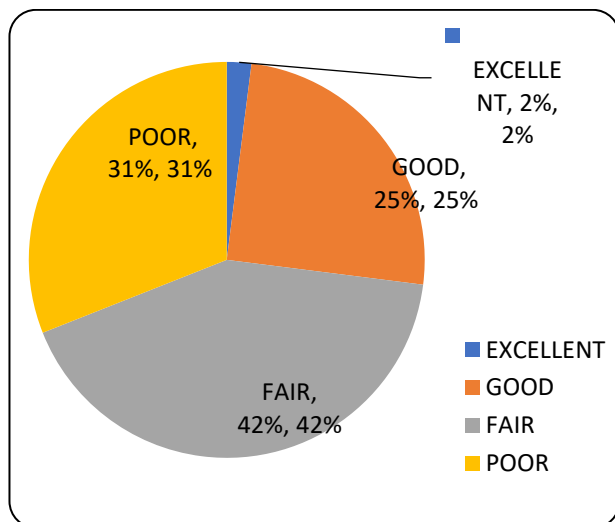
Category	Excellent	Good	Fair	Poor
Chindwin	0	07	07	0
Kasanda	0	06	08	0
Lukanga	0	04	06	04
Nabusanga	0	0	0	14
Natuseko	01	02	07	04

Source: Field data, 2019

Response according to schools showed that at Chindwin primary and Kasanda primary the

responses were only between good and fair. Lukanga primary had four each for good and fair and six for good. At Nabusanga primary, all the respondents unanimously said it was poor. At Natuseko primary evaluation on how the FPE policy had faired, had one for excellent, two said well, seven said fair and four said poor. When asked on how the implementation of the free primary education policy faired so far in the various schools, figure 20 below shows that 2% said it was excellent, 25% said it was good, 42% said it was fair while 2% said it was poor.

Figure 9 Teachers' evaluation of the FPE policy



Source: Field data, 2019

Table 12 Officers under DEBs evaluation of FPE policy

Category	Number of respondents
EXCELLENT	01
GOOD	02
FAIR	02
POOR	

Source: Field data, 2019

One of the officers under DEBS office evaluation on the FPE policy was of the view that it was excellent while two said it was good and the other two said it was fair.

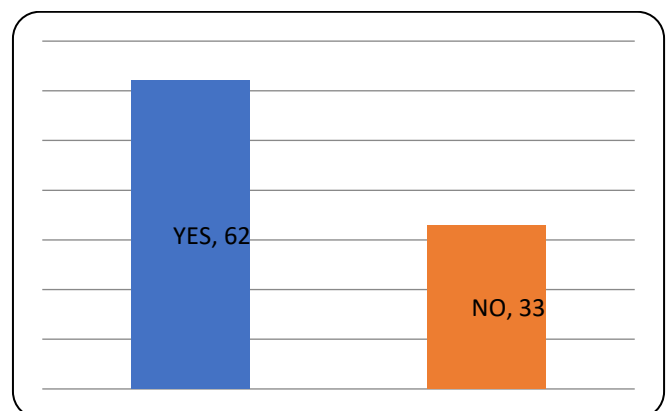
According to the parents, the performance of the policy was either fair or poor as six said it was fair while four said it was poor as shown by their response in table 20 below. This translated into 60% of the view that the free primary education policy had performed fairly while 40% were of the view that it was poor

Table 13: Parents evaluation of FPE policy by schools

Category	Chindwin	Kasanda	Lukanga	Nabusanga	Natuseko
EXCELLENT					
GOOD					
FAIR		02	02	02	
POOR	02				02

Source: Field data, 2019

Figure 11 FPE helping the quality of teaching and learning

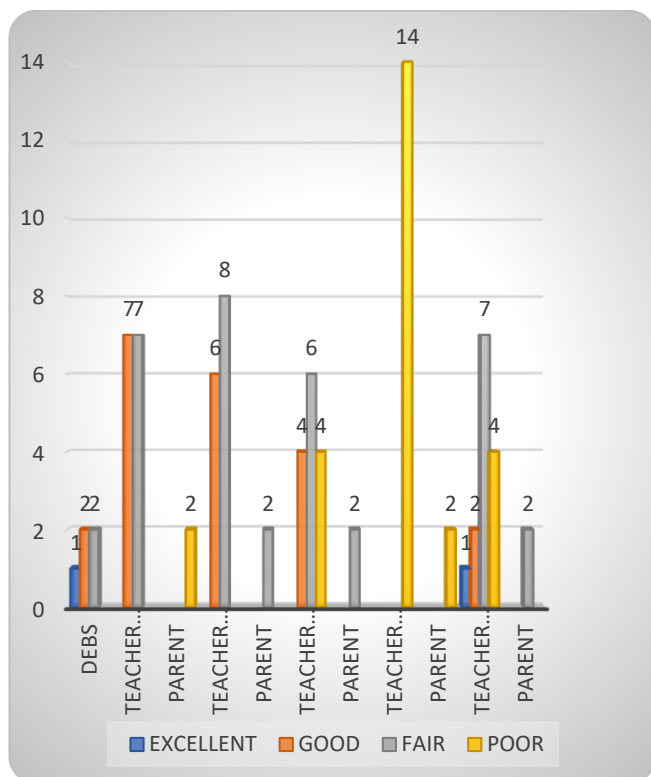


Source: Field data, 2019

When asked whether they felt the Free primary education had or could help quality of teaching and

learning sixty-two of the respondents said yes while 33 said no this translated into 65% and 35% respectively. It seemed not to be well understood by the learners and parents. The information they had about the policy was scanty. All they knew was that the learners were exempted from paying of school fees and that all the other running costs of the schools were to be borne by the government. The learners who at the center of the education system seemed not to fully understand what the free primary education policy was all about. Even the parents as valuable stakeholders in the education system were not given the correct and adequate information by the school.

Figure 10 Evaluation of the performance of the FPE policy



Source: Field data, 2019

Only 50% understood what the FPE policy. This left the other 50% not knowing about the policy. Of the 50%, 45% could have had an idea about the policy while 5% seemed not to be sure about the policy as they remained mute. Only four acknowledged that they were educated about the

free primary education policy during PTA meetings. The other six declined to ever having been educated on the FPE policy during PTA meetings. This revelation brought to light that the schools were not doing enough to ensure that the stakeholders knew about the FPE policy as some parents said the explanations were not comprehensive. This meant that the parents did not understand the various roles the FPE policy assigned to the stakeholders such as the government, school administration, PTA and parents in the course of educating their children. It would be expected that as valuable stakeholders, parents should have been engaged fully so that they support the schools in the successful implementation of the FPE policy.

Some parents said they had learnt about the FPE policy through the politicians and friends. The acquisition of knowledge on policy issues through the politicians and friends could have led to distorted information. And usually politicians in a bit to get more votes would tell the electorates information that would make them popular. In most cases, not all the full contents would not be divulged to the electorates thus with such incomplete information, the parents sent their children with very high expectations about what the government was supposed to do in as far as educating their children was concerned. The parents were disappointed as their expectations of a complete free education, was not meant as earlier envisioned during the political campaigns.

On the performance of the free primary education policy, a larger percentage (42%) of the respondents felt that the FPE performance was fair a very small fraction (2%) said it was excellent or good while 25% said it was good. It was seen that the performance of the FPE policy was far from being excellent. At one school all the respondents said the policy had fared poorly. This could be attributed to specific challenges that the school had been facing. The school had an incomplete

classroom block where works had stalled for over five years as the parents had grown weary of contributing for project funds year in year out. This was exacerbated by the low enrollment levels at the school.

Parents felt the performance of the policy was either poor or fair. This could be attributed to their lack of understanding the policy, having high expectations or that they felt overburdened by the schools as they were expected to pay school fees that had proved to be a challenge coupled with other school requisites such as reams of paper, cement, cobra and many other items. A high number (73%) of teachers felt that the performance of the FPE policy was fair or poor. This implied that there was still a lot that needed to be done to make the policy a success

The findings revealed that a large percentage of the respondents were of the view the FPE policy could help the quality of teaching and learning. A smaller percentage felt that the FPE policy could not help improve the quality of teaching and learning. This response showed that a good number would have loved the schools and government to continue with the policy while the others would have the policy discontinued as it would impact negatively on the quality of teaching and learning as school had faced a lot of challenges such as inadequate infrastructure teaching and learning materials.

For meaningful learning to take place, the learning environment, teaching and learning materials should be available. Though the respondents felt that the FPE policy could improve the quality of teaching and learning, this could be attainable if all necessary conditions were met. The respondents were mindful that the school were lacking the necessary teaching and learning materials especially with the revised curriculum. Though some schools had teaching and learning materials, they were inadequate hence the need for

more and continued restocking as they were destroyed over time. The schools also need teaching aids such as charts and equipment. It was observed that the government needed to supply more books and regularly. As schools need to procure goods and services, it was observed that funding from the government was not only irregular but inadequate. Hence there was need for the government to improve funding the schools to enable the schools run smoothly. Very few respondents suggested fundraising ventures. This could be attributed to the fact that fund raising ventures would target the same parents who had failed to pay school fees.

Reducing learner absenteeism was also cited as a measure to improve the quality of learning. Though it is accepted that learner absenteeism makes the learner lose out on school work it was important to tackle the factors that lead to learner absenteeism. Most of the learners' absence was as a result of lack of school requirements. As MoE (1996) states that no child will be excluded from school or any school activity on grounds of failure to pay or for being unable to afford the necessary materials, school uniform or similar item, it was incumbent upon the school administration to come up with payment plans for the parents. Since some learners' families had a problem of poverty, introducing school feeding programs would help the nutritional status of the learners. Furthermore, MoE (1996) recognizes the fact that good health and nutrition is an essential pre-requisite for effective learning and enhances enrolment, retention and performance of learners in school. This means that to a large extent, the school feeding program would compel children, especially the most vulnerable, to attend school regularly

Evidently when learners are given more attention and remedial work, their performance is bound to improve. The respondents felt that more attention needed to be paid to the teaching and learning process. The teachers were expected to develop a positive attitude towards all the learners and show

commitment towards duty. While the teachers would have loved to offer remedial work, this could only be done through homework and during lessons as most schools lacked adequate classrooms space to enable conducting remedial lessons after knocking off. Introduction of specialization at primary level would have led to adequate utilization of resources as one teacher would move with the same books and other teaching and learning materials from one class to another. Unlike a situation where more than one class would require to use a set of books or the same teaching and learning materials at the same time. It can be seen that for quality teaching and learning to be upheld in the primary schools it would require the combined efforts of the government, school administrators, teachers' parents and the learn

4. CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

The findings revealed that there were variations as to how the free primary education was being implemented in various schools. However, its implementation was seen to be fair due to the many challenges that schools experienced during the implementation of the free primary education policy. Learners were levied school fees and there were variations in the amounts among the schools. Furthermore, learners were tasked to bring other school requisites in addition to the school fees. This led to an indirect raise in the school fees. Though relatively low, the fees were not affordable by most parents. The hidden costs affected the learners' attendance and subsequently their performance. The pupils and parents also lacked adequate and comprehensive knowledge about the policy hence the parents felt betrayed when schools demanded for school fees and other things.

The schools had enough teachers however, the quality of teaching and learning had been affected as the school were grappling with inadequate teaching and learning materials amidst a revised

curriculum. The high number of sessions reduced teacher contact time hence learners were subjected to a lot of homework. Though all the school had managed to send above 50% of the grade seven candidates to Grade 8, close to 38% of the pupils who were not selected to grade 8 had to repeat their grade seven. The teachers were not accorded an opportunity to attend subject association meetings due to the poor financial status of the schools caused by challenges in collecting school fees and irregular funding by the government. Not attending subject association meetings deprived teachers of an avenue through which they could enhance their skills and competence in a specific subject more so that specialization had been introduced to the primary section.

The government should formulate policies that complement each other. While the government said that all who sat for grade seven exams had qualified to grade eight, such a declaration was seen not hold as learners were subjected to cut off points which determine whether they will be selected to grade eight or not. It is therefore incumbent upon the government to ensure that learners in public schools receive quality education by ensuring that schools have the required teaching and learning materials and the learning takes place in a conducive environment.

The government and the PTA needed to be proactive if the FPE policy was to be a success. The PTA had a major role in educating the parents and other stakeholders. It was important for schools to engage the parents through PTA to venture into fundraising ventures so as to supplement government efforts. Though fundraising ventures would bring in the much-needed resources, these ventures would still target the same parents who seemed not to have understood their role in the implementation of the FPE policy. Thus, parents needed to be enlightened and fully engaged in the various school projects.

Based on the findings, the following recommendations were made:

The government should ensure quality education is maintained in the public primary schools. If the Free primary education policy is to be appreciate and achieve its intended goal, the status of the schools should be checked regularly to ascertain that all the require resources and materials are available on time and in the right quantities.

1. Education leaders should educate the parents and pupil on what the Free Primary Education policy is so that they can support its implementation.
2. Government should ensure schools have a constant supply of desks and the necessary teaching and learning materials in order to maintain quality education, and also construct more class rooms for the existing schools in order to meet the growing enrollments and avoid overcrowding
3. Schools should avoid over dependency on the government by engaging in fundraising ventures so as to raise funds needed to buy various school needs.

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