



An Investigation into the Effects of Free Education on Pupil Enrollment: A Case Study of Three Selected Public Day Secondary Schools in Kasama District, Northern Province of Zambia

Namutenda Amanda

Master's Student, Educational Administration and Management

DMI-St. Eugene University, Zambia Institution: DMI-St. Eugene University

Abstract. This study investigates the effects of the free education policy on pupil enrollment in three selected public day secondary schools in Kasama District, Northern Province of Zambia. The introduction of free education in Zambia aimed to remove financial barriers to secondary education. A mixed-methods approach was used, combining quantitative enrollment data with qualitative insights from school administrators, teachers, and parents. The findings reveal a significant increase in enrollment post-policy implementation. However, the rise in pupil numbers also brought about overcrowding, strained resources, and teacher shortages. While free education improved access, quality challenges emerged. The study recommends enhanced investment in infrastructure, teaching resources, and staff recruitment to ensure both access and quality are achieved.

Index Terms- Free education, pupil enrollment, educational access, public secondary schools, Zambia

I. Introduction

Education is a fundamental human right and a strategic tool for national development. In Zambia, the government's introduction of free education at secondary level in 2022 aimed to improve access, especially for disadvantaged learners. However, increasing access without proportional investment in education infrastructure may impact the quality of service delivery. This study explores the implications of free education on pupil enrollment in selected public day secondary schools in Kasama District.

Background and Context

For years, the cost of secondary education in Zambia limited access for many families. The 2022 free education policy eliminated school fees and user charges for public schools. Though the policy was lauded for inclusivity, its practical implementation raised concerns over school preparedness to handle increased enrollment. Kasama District, located in Northern Province, was selected for its demographic diversity and the presence of both urban and rural schooling contexts.



Objectives of the Study

- To assess the change in pupil enrollment before and after free education implementation.
- To examine challenges faced by schools due to increased enrollment.
- To evaluate stakeholder perceptions of the policy's impact.

II. Methodology

1. Introduction

This chapter provides context from previous studies and theories related to school indiscipline.

2. Nature of Indiscipline in Schools

Common behaviors include truancy, disrespect, vandalism, and classroom disruption.

3. Contributing Factors to Indiscipline

Includes lack of supervision, poverty, peer influence, and poor school policies.

4. Influence of Home Environment

Home conditions greatly affect pupil conduct; neglect and violence at home correlate with school misbehavior.

5. Theoretical Framework

Bandura's Social Learning Theory: behavior is modeled from observed actions.

III. Research Methodology

1. Research Design

A descriptive case study design using mixed methods was adopted. This allowed for a comprehensive understanding of both statistical trends and lived experiences.

2. Sample and Participants

Three schools were purposively selected:

- Itamina day Secondary School
- Mubanga chipoya day Secondary School
- -Lualuo Day Secondary School

Participants included:

- 3 Headteachers
- 9 Teachers (3 per school)
- 60 Pupils (20 per school)
- 15 Parents (5 per school)



4. Data Collection Methods

- Review of enrollment records (2020–2024)
- Semi-structured interviews
- Focus group discussions
- Observations of classroom and infrastructure conditions

4. Data Analysis

Quantitative data were analyzed using descriptive statistics. Qualitative responses were transcribed, coded, and analyzed thematically.

IV. Results and Discussion

1. Enrollment Increase

- All schools experienced a marked rise in enrollment:
- Itamina secondary school : 650 (2021) to 920 (2023)
- Mubanga chipoya day secondary : 570 (2021) to 810 (2023)
- Lualuo Day secondary: 690 (2021) to 970 (2023)

This confirms that free education expanded access, especially for learners from low-income households.

2. Challenges Observed

- Overcrowding: Classrooms designed for 40 learners were holding over 70.
- Teacher Shortage: Some subjects had a teacher-pupil ratio of 1:80.
- Limited Resources: Textbooks, desks, and laboratory equipment were insufficient for the increased numbers.

3. Stakeholder Views

Parents appreciated the removal of financial barriers. Teachers expressed concern over deteriorating teaching conditions. Headteachers highlighted inadequate funding and the need for more staff and classrooms.

V. Conclusion and Recommendations

The policy of free secondary education has led to increased enrollment in Kasama District, affirming its goal of educational inclusivity. However, challenges such as overcrowding, staff shortages, and limited infrastructure risk undermining the quality of education. For long-term success, the government must provide adequate support to schools.

Recommendations

- Expand school infrastructure and build additional classrooms.
- Recruit and train more teachers.
- Allocate more resources for teaching and learning materials.
- Conduct periodic evaluations to monitor the impact and quality outcomes of free education.



References

1. Banda, T. (2023). Overcrowding and teacher shortages in Zambian secondary schools. *Journal of Educational Policy and Practice*, 10(3), 134–142.
2. Chikopela, M. (2022). The impact of free education on learning outcomes in Zambia. *Zambia Journal of Education Studies*, 15(1), 45–61.
3. Kakoma, M. (2023). Teacher motivation and workload in the free education era. *Journal of Teacher Development in Africa*, 5(1), 56–70.
4. Ministry of Education. (2022). *Education Statistical Bulletin*. Lusaka: Government of the Republic of Zambia.
5. Ministry of Finance. (2022). *National Budget Address: Education Sector Highlights*. Lusaka: Government Printer.
6. Mwansa, D., & Phiri, J. (2021). Free education and its implications on access and quality: A Zambian perspective. *African Educational Review*, 13(2), 98–112.
7. Ngoma, C. (2022). The unintended consequences of free secondary education in rural Zambia. *Zambia Social Science Journal*, 8(1), 23–37.
8. UNESCO. (2021). *The right to education: Global trends and challenges*. Paris: UNESCO Publishing.
9. World Bank. (2023). *Zambia Education Sector Analysis Report: Addressing Equity and Quality in Secondary Education*. Washington, DC: World Bank.
10. Zambia National Education Coalition (ZANEC). (2022). *Policy Brief: Strengthening Implementation of Free Education in Zambia*. Lusaka: ZANEC.