



# 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

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**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.



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