



Investigate The Benefits Of Free Education And Its Impact On Increased Access To Education In Kefulwa Zone Of Nchelenge District

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Abstract- The purpose of the study was to investigate the benefits of free education and its impact on increased access to education in Kefulwa Zone in Nchelenge district. In this study, the researcher used a mixed method research design which involved the collection and mixing of both quantitative and qualitative data. Semi-structured questionnaire was used to collect data. This study revealed that, parents were facing a lot of challenges in terms of paying of fees for their children, hence, the introduction of free education has boosted the morale for both parents and their children for free access to education in Kefulwa Zone. The recommendation made in this study was that the government should continue with this policy of providing free education to all Zambian children in order to reduce illiteracy level and continue providing skills to all Zambian children.

Keywords- Free education, Access to education, Educational policy, Kefulwa Zone, Nchelenge District.

I. Introduction

Zambia aspires to become a middle-income and prosperous nation by 2030 (Government of the Republic of Zambia, 2006). This is to be achieved through investment in human capital in line with its education vision of promoting innovative and lifelong education and training for all by 2030. The Vision 2030 and Sustainable Development Goal (SDG) 4 have directed the government policy on education in Zambia. Through the Eighth National Development Plan (8NDP), the Zambian government pledges to improve education and skills development through expanded access to quality Early Childhood Education (ECE), Primary, Secondary and Tertiary Education (8NDP). The government has thus been putting policies in place to enhance access to quality, equitable and inclusive education. Such policies include the implementation of the Free Education Policy (FEP) to promote Education For All (EFA) from Early childhood to secondary education.

According to international human rights law, Education shall be compulsory and free of charge. ECE, Primary and Secondary education shall be made progressively free of charge (GRZ, 2012). Free education at all levels is fundamental in guaranteeing everyone has access to education. However, in many developing countries like Zambia, families often could not afford to send their children to school, leaving millions of children of school-age deprived of education.



To ensure provision of education for all, the Government under the leadership of His Excellency President Hakainde Hichilema, came up with measures to reform the education sector, create opportunities for all learners who cannot afford to pay school fees.

The Free Education Policy (FEP) is a deliberate policy by the New Dawn Government of Zambia to ensure Education for ALL (EFA) as alluded to by the 7th Republican President. School fees including Parent Teachers Association (PTA) fees and Examination fees have since been abolished in all Early Childhood to Secondary levels in all Public School. The Examination Council of Zambia (ECZ) and Schools have since been compensated with grants that are equivalent to what the parents/guardians used to pay to ensure that all the vulnerable learners easily access education (MoE, 2021).

The New Dawn Government has shown significant commitment to advancing Free Education for All through various initiatives. This includes the deployment of 30,496 teachers and 7,221 teachers, augmenting budget allocations to the Ministry of Education, enhancing the Constituency Development Fund (CDF), and establishing dedicated funds to support education for vulnerable children. Additionally, efforts have been made to facilitate the purchase of desks for schools. Furthermore, the government has initiated the construction of 120 schools nationwide. Many of the resources utilized to accomplish these milestones have been provided through donations or loans to Zambia by Cooperating partners.

Policies across various African nations frequently undergo revisions following shifts in government leadership. Each new administration brings its own priorities and approaches, often leading to modifications in existing policies. Despite the significant endeavors undertaken by the New Dawn Government to strengthen the implementation of the Free Education policy in Zambia, persistent challenges remain. The fundamental issue lies in the quest for a sustainable funding solution that can reliably support the education sector. Notwithstanding efforts to enhance policy implementation, securing consistent and adequate funding remains a formidable hurdle that requires urgent attention.

Education is a fundamental human right and a key driver of social and economic development. The introduction of free education policies in various countries and Zambia in particular has played a crucial role in increasing access to learning opportunities, reducing economic barriers, and promoting social equality. Free education ensures that all individuals, regardless of their financial background, can acquire knowledge and skills essential for personal and societal growth.

Free education is viewed as a means to combat poverty, enhance literacy rates, and foster economic development. Studies have shown that providing free education leads to increased school enrollment, reduced dropout rates, and improved academic performance. Additionally, it contributes to workforce development by producing skilled professionals who can contribute to national progress. Hence, the New Dawn Government deemed it worth to introduce.



II. LITERATURE SURVEY

World Statistics of Countries Implementing Free Education

In recent years, there has been enough evidence globally on the negative impact of user fees on the poor that many governments, often with the support of development agencies and Non-Governmental Organizations, have begun to champion user fee elimination for basic public services, including secondary education. This is rooted in the November 1948 declaration of human rights where members of the United Nations declared the right to education for all people (Siaciwena and Lubinda, 2008). Worldwide, the aspect of “Investment in Education” has been a key element in the development process. Knight and Sabot (1990), established that primary education improves the earnings of its graduates by 19 percent in Kenya and 13 percent in Tanzania. In such a noble process, there is always apparent social benefit that accrues from primary schooling, which includes reduced fertility, better health care and decreased child mortality. Due to social benefits of primary education, most countries Worldwide have prioritized education. In the United States of America (USA) elementary schooling is free and compulsory to all children (World Education Services, 2004). In India, the Central government provides 80 percent of financing Free Primary Education, while the local states implement and provide the rest of financing (Government of India, 2021).

Global Initiatives for Free Education

The global survey results on the impediments of user fees have helped policy makers to understand their effect (user fees) of limiting education opportunities for the poor. The survey conducted by the World Bank and published in 2004, showed user fees to be especially burdensome to poor families in countries experiencing slow economic growth and inflation (Kattan, 2006). Prior to the above survey, the study under the United Nations Project “Task Force on Education and Gender equality” revealed that the support by donors to ensure quality basic education was not adequate. According to Kaulule (2006), the study further acknowledged that there were more than 100 million children out of school at that time. Therefore, the study made recommendations of alleviating the problem, which included interventions and actions such as removing school fees.

In support of this move, the School Fee Abolition Initiative was launched by UNICEF and the World Bank in 2005 and has grown into partnership between government representatives, agency partners, and research and academic institutions (Nielsen, 2009). This was to re-emphasize the Jomtien 1990, Dakar 2000 and other educational conferences which insisted on Education for All by 2015. The focus was exclusively on elimination of basic education fees because it is at this level that the Education for All movement had declared that education should be free (World Bank and UNICEF, 2009). The basic or primary level is also the only level at which most governments’ constitutionary pledge to provide state-sponsored schooling due to the reasons stated above.

To reinforce EFA, Nielsen (2009), states that in 2002, the World Bank and UNICEF, together with development partners launched the Education for All Fast Track Initiative to help low-income countries in their efforts to meet the education related



MDGS and the EFA goal that all children complete a full cycle of basic education by 2015.

By 2005, 32 countries joined the School Fee Abolition Movement. These include 19 from Africa, 5 from Europe/Central Asia, 4 from Asia, 3 from Latin America and 1 from Middle East/North America (Nielsen, 2009). Some of the countries mentioned are Central African Republic, Haiti, Nepal, Saotome, Norway, France, Sweden, Denmark, Brazil, Finland, Belgium and Austria (Kaulule, 2006).

Most of the middle-income countries especially those from Europe provide free education for children at the age of three and almost 100 percent of children enroll in school (Kaulule, 2006).

However, globally, there is an overall recognition that elimination of basic school fees must be carefully planned and widely negotiated if it is to make a positive and sustainable impact on access to schooling and improved student teaching (Das et al, 2004). Therefore, the school fee abolition is a complex undertaking that cannot be done well without careful planning and policy adjustments on multiple fronts (Chukwumelum, 2007). It is for this reason that out of the 93 countries worldwide, almost all (81%)-77 countries who have implemented FBE/FPE have some type of fee. Only sixteen (16) countries have no type of fee at all and these are Bangladesh, Cambodia, Cape Verde, Chile, Costa Rica, Guatemala, Iraq, Nepal, Peru, Senegal, Srilanka, St. Kitts and Nevis, Tanzania, The Gambia, Tunisia and Zambia. In these countries, basic/primary education is completely provided by the government (World Bank, 2008).

Further, Global initiatives have been launched to universalize access to education, with the World Conference on Education for All in 1990 reaffirming the need for free basic education. The Jomtien Conference on Education emphasized the need to mobilize resources for free basic education. The Jomtien Conference on Education emphasized the need to mobilize resources for free basic education. The Millennium Development Goals of 2015, the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) and the Africa Agenda 2063 continue to influence national policies to promote equitable access to education. The Global Campaign for Education 2023 aims to provide inclusive, equitable, quality education and lifelong learning opportunities by 2030 (Global Campaign for Education, 2023).

III. DISCUSSION/METHODOLOGY

Free education, access to education and literacy rates

In the field of ports, the researcher found out that free education has increased enrollment in schools. All the 30 representing 100% of the respondents agreed that free education has increased school enrollment in your communities. Free education significantly increases school enrollment by removing the financial barriers that often prevent children from attending school. When education is provided without tuition fees, families—especially those in low-income or developing regions—are more likely to send their children to school. The elimination of school fees directly reduces the economic burden on households, making it more feasible for children to access education. According to UNESCO (2015), countries that abolished school fees saw



immediate increases in enrollment. For instance, after Uganda implemented free primary education in 1997, enrollment rates nearly doubled, rising from 3.1 million to 5.3 million students within a year (UNESCO, 2015).

Moreover, free education promotes inclusivity and equality by enabling marginalized groups, such as girls and children with disabilities, to attend school. The World Bank (2018) notes that fee abolition tends to have the greatest effect among disadvantaged populations who are most sensitive to costs. In many cases, families prioritize sending boys to school when resources are scarce, but when education is free, girls' enrollment rates improve as well. Free education also leads to long-term benefits, such as improved literacy rates, better employment prospects, and reduced poverty, which reinforce the value of education in society and further encourage enrollment.

Research design

Research design refers to the framework of methods and techniques chosen by a researcher to combine various components of the research in a reasonably logical manner so that the research problem is efficiently. Thus, the study used a survey research design on the benefits of free education. The survey design in this study adopted both qualitative and quantitative research models, which aimed at describing and interpreting the benefits of free education.

Target population

Target population refers to the population to which a researcher wants to generalize results of a study. Therefore; in this study the researcher targeted all the teachers, learners and Head teachers in Kefulwa Zone of Nchelenge District.

Sample population

Sample population refers to the subset of the subjects that is the representative of the entire or target population. Hence, the sample size for the study was 30 respondents. These include 20 teachers, 7 learners and 3 head teachers from the 3 selected schools making a total of 30.

Sampling techniques

Sampling techniques refers to the procedure of selecting a number of individuals for a study in such a way that the individuals selected represent the entire or target population. The study used both systematic random and purposive sampling. The teachers were selected using systematic random sampling technique and head teachers by purposive sampling. Purposive sampling was ideal for the present study because specific persons are involved in the implementation of the policies. On the other hand, systematic random sampling has the characteristic of providing each member of the target population an equal chance of being included in the study while at the same time keeping the size manageable.

Research instruments

The instruments that were used for data collection are oral interviews and questionnaires. Interviews were being specific for the respondents who did not claim to be busy. Questionnaires were also used because of their ability to collect data from large sample, rigidity against biasness, it assures confidentiality and it is of less time



consuming. And they were specific for respondents who claimed to be busy and enough time was given for them to answer the whole questionnaire.

Data collection

Both for legal and ethical considerations, the researcher was given an introductory letter by DMI ST Eugene University Management of which the researcher used to obtain a permit from the DEBS office before embarking on the study. Care was taken to ensure that the data is scored correctly, and systematic observations were made. The data were collected mainly utilizing quantitative and qualitative methods to obtain in depth information of the study variables. Every respondent was approached through the management separately, interviewed and appropriate responses were filled in the questionnaires. The use oral interviews were focus on obtaining both quantitative and qualitative data respectively.

Data analysis

Data analysis is referring to the process of evaluating data using analytical and logical reasoning to examine each component of the data provided. Data that were collected from oral interviews and questionnaires were checked for reliability, correctness and consistency before being coded and subjected to further analysis. The data from the closed ended questions in the questionnaires were entered into the Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS) computer program.

Descriptive statistical analysis and inferential data analysis were also done. In addition, the open-ended items were qualitatively analyzed and be used to provide narratives to the quantitative data.

Ethical Considerations

Research that involves human subjects or participants raises exceptional and multifaceted ethical, legal, social and political issues. Research ethics is specifically interested in the analysis of ethical issues that are raised when people are involved as participants in research. The objectives of research ethics aim at the following: to protect human participants; to ensure that research is conducted in a way that serves interests of individuals, groups and/or society as a whole; and to examine specific research activities and projects for their ethical soundness, considering issues such as the administration of risk, protection of confidentiality and the process of informed consent (Babbie, 1973). In this study, the rights and respect for privacy were upheld. The researcher ensured that basic ethical principles guiding the research were observed. Honesty, openness, informed consent, privacy, and confidentiality were upheld.

IV. CONCLUSION

The study has attempted to investigate the benefits of free education in Kefulwa Zone of Nchelenge district, Luapula Province, Zambia. It was discovered that free education has increased enrollment in schools; it was found that free education has reduced dropout rates and it has further improved literacy levels in schools

Further, access to free education has increased awareness and appreciation of learners' culture. Free education enhances full understanding of cultural concepts by learners. This is achieved through cultural diversity and inclusivity in learning



environments. And also free education contributes to the preservation of cultural Knowledge and traditions.

Furthermore, it was discovered that teachers play a role in promoting cultural understanding through free education policy. Free education also does not allow learners to spend more years schooling, and it was discovered that free education has positively affected academic attainment of learners.

Additionally, researcher found the economic benefits of free education and these were higher productivity on the side of the society, economic growth reduces inequality and lowers social costs. Free education contributes to poverty reduction levels in communities. This is achieved through the provision necessary and relevant skills development and economic mobility.

Lastly, the social impact of free education in communities is the reduction in crime rates in communities; other social impact of free education is that free education has improved civic participation. It was discovered that another social impact of free education is that it has led to greater community involvement. The study discovered that free education contributes national development goals.

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