



Received: 10-06-2026
Accepted: 20-07-2026

International Journal of Advanced Multidisciplinary Research and Studies

ISSN: 2583-049X

Educational System in Zambia: A Case Study of Selected Schools in Kamfinsa Constituency, Kitwe District

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DOI: <https://doi.org/10.62225/2583049X.2026.6.4.6675>

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Abstract

This study investigated the Zambian education system using three public schools in Kamfinsa Constituency, Kitwe District: Esther Lungu Secondary School, Kamfinsa Secondary School, and Kafue Bridge Primary School. It examined educational access, the effectiveness of the Free Education Policy, school management systems, language of instruction, quality of education, and challenges affecting teaching and learning. A descriptive survey design with mixed methods was employed. Data were collected from 99 participants (38 staff and 61 learners) using questionnaires, interviews, observations, note-taking, voice recorders, and cameras. Quantitative data were analyzed using frequencies and percentages, while qualitative data underwent thematic analysis. Findings showed that the Free Education Policy

increased school enrolment and improved access. Digital school management systems enhanced administrative efficiency, while local language instruction improved learner participation and literacy. Schools generally had electricity and computer lessons, supporting educational quality. However, overcrowded classrooms, high teacher-pupil ratios, inadequate instructional materials, transport costs, and learner dropouts remained major challenges. Although literacy levels and pass rates were satisfactory, increased access did not consistently improve learning outcomes. The study recommends greater investment in infrastructure, teacher recruitment, instructional resources, and literacy programmes to sustain quality education.

Keywords: Free Education Policy, Educational Accessibility, Educational Quality, Local Language Instruction and School Management Systems

1. Introduction

Education plays an essential role in the overall development of the nation. It helps in the development of human capital, promotes economic growth, social advancement, and responsible citizenry (Kelly, 1999) ^[17]. The education system in Zambia moved from missionary institutions before independence in 1964 to a government-run system that has employed policies that guarantee equitable access to quality education. Different reforms in the education system such as Free Education, Universal Primary Education, improvement in the school curriculum, and increase in investment in school infrastructure as well as recruitment of teachers have increased enrollment in schools (Ministry of Education, 2021) ^[18]. However, weaknesses still exist, which include poor infrastructure, teacher shortages, big classrooms, poor learning outcomes, unequal access to education between urban and rural areas, and insufficient teaching and learning resources (UNESCO, 2022) ^[12]. Despite the increase in government spending on education, poverty as well as inequality still hinder educational achievement. The World Bank (2015) ^[20] estimated that more than 195,000 children in Zambia do not go to school, while transition to secondary school has decreased. These challenges prove that merely having a reform policy is not enough to improve education quality. Therefore, this study intends to find out the effectiveness of the education system in Kamfinsa Constituency, Kitwe District through examining Esther Lungu Secondary School, Kamfinsa Secondary School, and Kafue Bridge Primary School and identifying the main problems as well as coming up with practical recommendations for improving education delivery.

1.1 Statement of the Problem

Although Zambia has made notable progress in increasing school enrollment levels over the years through various educational reforms and policies, a number of serious challenges continue to affect both the quality and accessibility of education across

the country. Many schools still face inadequate classroom space, resulting in overcrowded learning environments that negatively impact effective teaching and learning. Teacher shortages remain a major concern, especially in public schools, where a limited number of teachers are required to handle large classes and multiple subjects. High dropout rates among learners are also common, often caused by poverty, early marriages, child labour, lack of school requirements, and long distances to school. In addition, poor examination performance in some schools reflects weaknesses in learning outcomes, insufficient teacher support, and lack of academic resources. Many institutions operate with limited teaching and learning materials such as textbooks, desks, laboratories, and computers, making it difficult for learners to receive quality education. Poverty continues to affect many households, preventing some children from attending school regularly or concentrating fully on their studies due to hunger and financial hardship. There is also unequal access to quality education between urban and rural areas, as well as between well-resourced and poorly resourced schools. Furthermore, weak stakeholder participation, including limited involvement of parents, communities, and other education partners, reduces support for school development and learner success. Data collected from selected schools in Kamfinsa Constituency shows differences in staffing levels, learner participation, and institutional capacity, indicating that some schools may be better equipped than others. Therefore, there is a need to examine whether these schools are adequately meeting the educational needs of learners. This study therefore seeks to investigate the challenges affecting the education system in Zambia using selected schools in Kamfinsa Constituency as a case study.

1.2 Specific Objectives

1. To determine the adequacy of teaching staff in selected schools.
2. To assess pupil access and participation in education.
3. To identify challenges affecting quality education delivery.

1.3 Research Questions

1. Are selected schools adequately staffed with teachers?
2. What challenges affect learners in these schools?
3. How effective is the education system in delivering quality education?
4. What are the views of teachers and pupils on school conditions?
5. What measures can improve educational outcomes?

1.4 Significance of the Study

This study is significant because it provides local evidence on the state of education in selected schools in Kamfinsa Constituency, complementing national education statistics. It identifies key challenges affecting education delivery, including teacher shortages, inadequate infrastructure, limited teaching materials, and learner participation. The findings will support the Ministry of Education, local authorities, school administrators, and policymakers in making informed decisions on resource allocation, teacher recruitment, infrastructure development, and learner support programmes. The study also gives teachers and learners an opportunity to share their experiences and recommendations, ensuring that their perspectives inform

education planning. Furthermore, it identifies service delivery gaps requiring urgent intervention and contributes to existing literature by providing constituency-level evidence for future research. Ultimately, the study offers practical recommendations to improve education quality, promote equitable access to learning, strengthen community participation, and contribute to sustainable social and economic development in Zambia.

2. Materials and Methods

2.1 Study Area and Boundaries of the Wards

The study was conducted in Kamfinsa Constituency, located in Kitwe District of the Copperbelt Province of Zambia. Kamfinsa Constituency was composed of several wards, including Kafue Ward, where some of the selected schools were situated. The constituency was largely urban and peri-urban in nature, with a growing population and increasing demand for public services such as education, health, sanitation, and employment opportunities. The area included residential compounds such as Chipata Compound, Mandevu Compound, Chasanga, and surrounding settlements.

Table 1: Distribution of Identified Institutions

Institution	Ward	Constituency	District
Esther Lungu Secondary	Kafue Ward	Kamfinsa	Kitwe
Kamfinsa Secondary	Kamfinsa	Kamfinsa	Kitwe
Kafue Bridge Primary	Kafue Ward	Kamfinsa	Kitwe

The study focused on three selected schools within the constituency, namely Esther Lungu Secondary School, Kamfinsa Secondary School, and Kafue Bridge Primary School. These schools were selected because they represented both primary and secondary education institutions and served learners from different communities within the constituency. Mapping of the schools and wards was important because it helped the researcher understand the geographical spread of institutions, accessibility, catchment areas, and population pressure on available education facilities. It also assisted in linking educational conditions to specific wards for planning purposes under the CBMS framework.

2.2 Distribution of Identified Institutions



The identified institutions for this study were Esther Lungu Secondary School, Kamfinsa Secondary School, and Kafue Bridge Primary School. These institutions provided formal education services to learners from Kamfinsa Constituency and nearby communities. The schools were purposively selected because they represented different levels of the

education system and had varying enrolment patterns, staffing levels, and infrastructure conditions.

The target population for the study consisted of teachers, school administrators, and pupils. Teachers were an important group because they were directly involved in classroom instruction, curriculum delivery, learner assessment, and school management. Pupils were equally important because they were the direct beneficiaries of the education system and could provide first-hand information on learning experiences, challenges, and service quality. Including both teachers and pupils ensured that the study captured balanced perspectives from both providers and recipients of educational services. The target population was therefore appropriate for examining the strengths and weaknesses of the education system in the constituency.

2.3 Capacity and Spread or Distribution of the Institutions

The selected schools had different capacities in terms of learner enrollment, staffing, classroom infrastructure, and catchment coverage. For example, the available data indicated that Esther Lungu Secondary School had approximately 600 pupils, suggesting that schools in the constituency accommodated substantial numbers of learners. The wide catchment areas of these schools demonstrated the importance of the institutions within the constituency. However, broad coverage also placed pressure on available resources such as classrooms, desks, teachers, sanitation facilities, and learning materials. Assessing the capacity and spread of institutions was therefore necessary because it revealed whether schools were adequately resourced to meet learner demand. This information was useful for planning school expansion, staff deployment, and the equitable distribution of educational resources.

2.4 Population Distribution

Kamfinsa Constituency was characterized by a mixed population comprising children, youth, adults, and elderly residents. Like many urban constituencies in Zambia, the area had both low-income and middle-income households. Population growth in urban settlements often increased the demand for public schools, especially among school-age children. Many families depended on government schools because they were more affordable than private institutions. The learner population in the constituency was diverse and included boys, girls, orphans, vulnerable children, and learners with special educational needs. Some learners came from households affected by unemployment and poverty, which influenced attendance, retention, and academic performance. Understanding population distribution and demographic characteristics was important because it helped explain patterns of school enrollment, dropout, overcrowding, and demand for educational support services. It also enabled the study to relate educational outcomes to the social and economic conditions of the community.

2.5 Research Design

The study employed a descriptive survey research design using both quantitative and qualitative approaches. A descriptive survey design was considered suitable because it enabled the researcher to collect information from respondents regarding their opinions, experiences, perceptions, and observable conditions without manipulating the study environment. The design was

commonly used in educational research where the objective was to describe the status of institutions, systems, or communities.

The quantitative component involved the collection of numerical data such as the number of respondents, staffing levels, enrollment figures, and responses to structured questionnaire items. This allowed statistical presentation through frequencies, percentages, and tables. The qualitative component involved interviews, open-ended responses, and observations that provided deeper explanations of issues affecting schools. The use of a mixed-method approach was justified because it combined the strengths of both methods. Quantitative data provided measurable trends, while qualitative data provided a detailed understanding of the reasons behind those trends.

2.6 Sampling Procedure

Sampling referred to the process of selecting a representative portion of the target population for participation in the study. Since it was difficult to involve every teacher and learner in the selected schools, the study used probability sampling, specifically simple random sampling, to select respondents. Random sampling gave each eligible participant an equal chance of being selected, thereby reducing bias and increasing fairness in the selection process.

The sample consisted of teachers and pupils from the selected schools. Based on available data, the targeted sample included approximately 40 teachers and 60 pupils, making a total of 100 respondents. The achieved sample comprised 99 respondents, consisting of 38 staff members and 61 pupils. This sample size was considered adequate because it captured views from both major stakeholder groups while remaining manageable in terms of time and resources. Sampling from multiple schools also increased the representativeness of the findings.

2.7 Data Collection Methods

The study used multiple methods of data collection in order to obtain reliable and comprehensive information. The main methods included questionnaires, interviews, and observation.

2.7.1 Questionnaires

Table 2: Questionnaire Distribution

School	Pupils	Staff	Total
Esther Lungu Secondary	36	11	47
Kamfinsa Secondary	21	7	28
Kafue Bridge Primary	4	20	24
Total	61	38	99

Structured questionnaires were administered to teachers and pupils. Separate questionnaires were designed for each category of respondents to reflect their different roles and experiences. Questionnaires were appropriate because they allowed the collection of data from many respondents within a short period of time. They also provided standardized responses that could be easily coded and analyzed. Teachers were asked questions on staffing levels, workload, teaching materials, infrastructure, and learner performance. Pupils were asked about classroom conditions, learning experiences, access to materials, and challenges affecting their studies.

2.8 Distribution of Questionnaires

Questionnaires were distributed proportionately across the three selected schools to ensure balanced representation. Based on the available data, Esther Lungu Secondary School had 47 respondents, Kamfinsa Secondary School had 28 respondents, and Kafue Bridge Primary School had 24 respondents. The distribution of questionnaires according to institutional size and accessibility helped ensure that no school was underrepresented.

The researcher personally delivered the questionnaires after obtaining permission from the school authorities. Respondents were given clear instructions on how to complete the questionnaires. For pupils who experienced difficulties understanding certain questions, guidance was provided using simple language without influencing their responses. Collecting questionnaires from multiple schools allowed for the comparison of educational conditions across institutions.

2.9 Research Instruments

The study made use of several research instruments, including printed questionnaires, interview guides, notebooks, mobile phone voice recorders, and cameras where necessary. Questionnaires were used to gather standardized responses, while interview guides ensured consistency during discussions. Voice recorders were used, with participants' consent, to capture accurate responses during interviews. Cameras were also used to document infrastructure conditions such as classrooms and sanitation facilities where permission was granted.

The use of multiple instruments was justified because it improved the completeness and reliability of the data collected. Each instrument served a different purpose and complemented the others.

2.10 Ethical Issues for Consideration

Ethical considerations were essential in this educational research because the study involved human participants, including minors. The researcher first sought permission from the relevant school authorities before conducting the study. Participation was voluntary, and respondents were informed about the purpose of the research before agreeing to participate.

Confidentiality and privacy were maintained by ensuring that the names of respondents were not disclosed in the final report unless permission had been granted. No respondent was forced to answer questions that they felt uncomfortable with. Special care was taken when interacting with pupils to ensure their protection from emotional or psychological discomfort. The researcher also avoided any form of discrimination, coercion, or harm. Observing ethical standards enhanced the trustworthiness and credibility of the study.

2.11 Data Processing Tools and Analysis

After data collection, responses were edited, coded, and entered into data processing tools such as Microsoft Excel, Microsoft Word, and SPSS where applicable. Quantitative data were analyzed using frequencies, percentages, tables, and charts. This made it easier to identify patterns in staffing, learner responses, and school conditions.

Qualitative data obtained from interviews and open-ended responses were analyzed thematically by grouping similar ideas into categories such as infrastructure challenges,

teacher shortages, learner welfare, and recommendations. Combining numerical and narrative analysis allowed for a comprehensive interpretation of the findings. The use of these tools was justified because they were practical, accessible, and suitable for educational research.

2.12 Publication and Dissemination of Research Results

The final results of the study were compiled into a research report and shared with relevant stakeholders such as school management, local authorities, constituency leadership, and academic institutions. Findings were also presented through meetings, printed reports, and digital platforms where appropriate. Dissemination was important because research findings were intended to inform action rather than remain unused.

Through the CBMS approach, the results were used to support constituency planning, resource allocation, school improvement strategies, and future monitoring exercises. Sharing the findings with stakeholders promoted accountability and encouraged the implementation of recommendations.

3. Results and Discussion

3.1 Management of School Records

Table 3

Variable	Response Category	Frequency (n)	Percentage (%)
Availability of Record System	Yes	36	94.74
	No	2	5.26
	Total	38	100.00
Method Used to Manage School Records	Digital/Computer-based System	27	71.05
	Register Books/Log Books	6	15.79
	Manual/Filing System	5	13.16
	Total	38	100.00
Effectiveness of Record System	Effective	27	71.05
	Very Effective	4	10.53
	Quite Good	6	15.79
	Poor	1	2.63
	Total	38	100.00

From the findings above, out of 38 respondents 36 (94.74%) admitted that they have a school record management system while 2 (5.26%) reported that their schools do not have a school record management system. Majority of respondents, 27(71.05%), were using computer-based/digital record management system, 6 (15.79%) were using register/log book management system while 5 (13.16%) respondents admitted that their schools use filing based record management system. From their view about effectiveness 27(71.05%) revealed that their school record management system is effective while 4 (10.53%) were very effective, 6(15.79%) admitted that it is quite good while 1(2.63%) respondent was having poor record management system.

3.2 Evaluation of the Free Education Policy

Table: 4

Variable	Category	Frequency (n)	Percentage (%)
Enrollment Rate (%)	100%	38	100.00
Teacher-Pupil Ratio	1:150	38	100.00
Total Respondents		38	100.00

The field observations conducted during data collection corroborated the questionnaire findings by revealing significant pressure on classroom infrastructure in some of the selected schools. In particular, overcrowded classrooms were observed at Esther Lungu Secondary School, reflecting the growing learner population and the increasing demand for public education following the implementation of the Free Education Policy. Fig 1 illustrates one of the overcrowded Grade 10 classrooms observed during the study.



Source: Field photography by the researcher (2026).

Fig 1: Overcrowded Grade 10 classroom at Esther Lungu Secondary School illustrating illustrating high learner enrolment and pressure on classroom infrastructure observed during fieldwork

The findings indicate that all the 38 respondents (100%) responded that there was 100% pupil attendance rate at the school. This means that all pupils in the area had enrollment. Further all 38 respondents (100%) responded that they had a teacher: pupil ratio of 1: 150. This implies that all these schools have the same pattern in their staffing structure that teachers are faced with many students. The 100% pupil attendance means good access to education. The teacher: pupil ratio of 1: 150 implies teachers may be overworked hence have poor delivery.

3.3 Effectiveness of the Free Education Policy

Table 5

Variable	Response Category	Frequency (n)	Percentage (%)
Free Education Effectiveness	Fair	9	23.68
	Good	29	76.32
Free Education Rating	40%–60%	12	31.58
	60%–80%	12	31.58
	80%–100%	14	36.84
Total Respondents		38	100.00

The findings indicate that respondents generally viewed the Free Education Policy positively. A majority of respondents (76.3%) rated the policy's effectiveness as good, while 23.7% considered it fair. Regarding the overall rating of the policy, the largest proportion of respondents (36.8%) rated it between 80% and 100%, suggesting a high level of satisfaction. Furthermore, equal proportions of respondents (31.6% each) rated the policy between 40%–60% and 60%–80%.

3.4 Evaluation of ENDP Goals Strategies (ENDP Indicators)

Table 6

ENDP Indicator	Excellent n (%)	Good n (%)	Fair n (%)	Poor n (%)
CPD Programs	13 (34.21)	16 (42.11)	4 (10.53)	5 (13.16)
Further Study Support	9 (23.68)	21 (55.26)	6 (15.79)	2 (5.26)
Evaluation Fairness	6 (15.79)	28 (73.68)	0 (0.00)	4 (10.53)
Digital Literacy Training	19 (50.00)	14 (36.84)	1 (2.63)	4 (10.53)
Teacher Recognition	11 (28.95)	22 (57.89)	0 (0.00)	5 (13.16)
Rural Teacher Deployment	16 (42.11)	19 (50.00)	0 (0.00)	3 (7.89)
Rural Teacher Incentives	19 (50.00)	16 (42.11)	0 (0.00)	3 (7.89)
Learning Materials Provision	11 (28.95)	23 (60.53)	0 (0.00)	4 (10.53)
Teacher Wellbeing Support	15 (39.47)	21 (55.26)	0 (0.00)	2 (5.26)
Accreditation Effectiveness	17 (44.74)	19 (50.00)	0 (0.00)	2 (5.26)

Results showed that almost all ENDP education strategies implementation indicators were generally assessed positively by respondents. Almost all indicators scored either "good" or "excellent", indicating good reception by the general public. Fair evaluation recorded the highest good rating with 73.7%, and teacher incentives (for rural teachers) and digital literacy training have highest excellent ratings with 50.0%. Provision of teaching-learning materials (60.5%), teacher recognition (57.9%), provision for further study (55.3%) and teacher welfare improvement (55.3%) also predominantly got good scores. Hardly any indicator received "poor" ratings from respondents indicating the success of the ENDP education strategies implementation towards improving teacher support systems and the quality of education services provision.

3.5 Use of Local Languages in Schools

Table 7

Variable	Category	Frequency (n)	Percentage (%)
Local Language Used	Bemba	38	100.00
	English	20	52.63
Instruction Language	English/Bemba	18	47.37
	Pupils learn faster	17	44.74
Reasons for Using Local Language	Easy to understand subject matter better	12	31.58
	Enhances understanding	9	23.68
Challenges of Using Local Language	Terminology gap/technical words	20	52.63
	Limited teaching and learning materials	14	36.84
	Transition to English later	4	10.53
Total Respondents		38	100.00

The results indicate that, 100% of all respondents reported Bemba as the local language used in their schools. The language of instruction for more than half (52.6%) of the respondents was English while the other slightly less than

half (47.4%) used both English and Bemba. The major reason for the use of local languages was faster assimilation among learners (44.7%), followed by better subject matter understanding (31.6%). On the contrary respondents had a variety of problems which included lack of appropriate words (52.6%), limited teaching and learning resources (36.8%).

3.6 Level of Literacy

Table 8

Variable	Category	Frequency (n)	Percentage (%)
Pupil Literacy Level	Excellent	9	23.68
	Good	21	55.26
	Fair	6	15.79
	Poor	2	5.26
	Total	38	100.00
Literacy Estimate (%)	40%	11	28.95
	50%	6	15.79
	60%	9	23.68
	80%	12	31.58
	Total	38	100.00

Total Respondents (overall) = 38 (100%). The table reflects respondents' estimation of pupils literacy level and literacy rate. Good estimated by majority pupils' literacy level (55.26%) and 80% by respondents for literacy rate (31.58%).

Table 9: Improvements

	Freq.	Percent
More school materials	9	23.68
building more classrooms	21	55.26
reduce pupils teachers ratio	8	21.05
Total	38	100.00

Results of proposed changes in education show that the highest priority to be implemented in order to improve education is the construction of physical infrastructure. Over half of the participants (55.3%) pointed out the need for additional classrooms due to existing room shortages and overpopulation in classrooms. Next to this, 23.7% felt there was a lack of instructional materials. While 21.1% recommended lowering pupil-teacher ratio.

Table 10: Main Profession of Head of Household

	Frequency (n=60)	Percent (%)
Business	36	60.0
Carpenter	6	10.0
Private Sector Employee	18	30.0
Total	60	100.0

Business was found to be the occupation of the head of most household, and it is 60.0% of total respondents. Followed by those working in the private sector (30.0%), then the rest were carpenter (10.0%). It is shown that business is the major sources of income in most households. It shows that perhaps there is a significant extent of self-employment and entrepreneurial activities exist among members in the society, while not many of them engage in skilled work like carpenter.

Table: 11

Indicator	Excellent (%)	Good (%)	Poor (%)
Impact of past pupils from the school in society	50.0	40.0	10.0
Quality of education being offered to pupils	40.0	60.0	0

The results clearly demonstrate that respondents have favorable perceptions both in terms of the contribution of old students in the society and the quality of education at the school. Fifty per cent (50.0%) of respondents considered the contribution of old students in the society to be excellent; 40.0% rated it as good while 10.0% said it was poor. The response on quality of education at school was even better; 60.0% rated it as good and 40.0% considered it as excellent. It implies that the respondents feel that the school is providing a good quality of education and making learners that are relevant in the society.

3.7 Discussion of the Findings

According to the findings, Zambia's Free Education Policy has increased access to education in selected public schools in Kamfinsa Constituency. Both teachers and pupils said that enrolment increased after the policy was introduced, suggesting that the abolition of user fees has removed financial obstacles to education. This observation supports Sinyangwe and Banda (2022) ^[10], who concluded that the Free Education Policy dramatically improved enrolment in Zambian public schools. This observation also corroborates UNESCO (2022) ^[12] and UNICEF (2023) ^[15] reports, which conclude that doing away with fees has the potential to enhance attendance and educational equality in developing nations.

Nevertheless, expanded enrolment has strained educational resources, putting more demands on existing supplies. The 1:150 teachers to pupils' ratio is clearly over crowded and doesn't allow teachers to adequately provide assistance to individual learners. This is consistent with the observation of the World Bank (2021) ^[16] that growth of enrollment without expansion of teachers and infrastructure leads to poor educational quality. The work of Hanushek (2013) ^[3] too indicates that the size of classrooms is also another determinant of learner achievement in the class and of overall classroom quality. Other findings of the study were that many schools keep and use efficient records, with more than two thirds having their records stored on a digital platform and a great majority consider this systems effective for assisting the schools in management and planning.

This supports the findings of Asogwa (2012) ^[1], which indicates that proper records keeping enhance transparency and planning of activities within organisations, and Ngulube (2015) ^[7], which observes that digitising records enhance efficiency and easy accessibility to information in organizations. As for literacy levels and learners' examination performance, most respondents cited them as moderately to fairly satisfactory although it can be stated that not necessarily access to school results in good learning outcome. For example, UNESCO (2023) ^[13] is of the view that learning outcome not only rely on the increased numbers of learners enrolled but depends more on adequate

teaching materials, quality teachers and appropriate learning environment.

In the words of Snow *et al.* (1998) ^[11] literacy lays foundation for academic performance of learners in all other subjects. Conversely, other findings from the study indicated positive perception towards implementation of policies that form part of 8NDP, that include recognition of teachers, provision of technology to promote digital literacy among learners and staff, delivery of materials for teaching and learning, as well as teachers training and development opportunities. The OECD (2021) ^[8] reports on these factors, arguing that recognition, training and digital competencies are some of the vital factors determining the quality of education delivery, while UNESCO (2023) ^[13] supports invest in teacher professionalisation and digital transformation. Even though access was generally fair, for the case of distances, some respondents felt that it hindered the regularity of learner's school attendance although distance was not clearly related to academic performance.

For this issue the findings seem to suggest that distances primarily inhibit school attendance rather than examination outcomes. According to Lewin (2007) ^[6] and Hunt (2008) ^[5] distances have often been found to reduce regularity of attendance, punctuality and persistence to learning in developing countries. The study established also wide acceptance among stakeholders of the use of local languages along with English to deliver instructions in class although this was found to be hampered by the lack of teaching materials and technical vocabulary. This supports Cummins (2000) ^[2], which claims that learners find it easier to internalise concepts if they are introduced to them in their mother tongue and Heugh (2011) ^[4] on his research found positive results in literacy performance as a result of using multilingual approach in education. At length, the study observed low levels of school dropout rate although early marriage, unintended pregnancy, loss of motivation of the learner and abuse of drugs continued to be factors that cause many children out of school.

UNICEF (2021) reports that unintended pregnancies and early marriage are significant causes of out-of-school children in girls, while Sabates *et al.* (2010) ^[9] argue that low motivation significantly affects school drop-out. In general, the findings indicate that whilst Zambia's Free Education policy enhanced significantly education access, for quality education it is important that substantial financial resources are dedicated toward schools infrastructural development, acquisition of teaching materials and books, and the development of staff as well as ensuring learners' welfare.

4. Conclusion

Based on the results and analysis, the study is able to conclude that the Free Education Policy has played a significant role in improving the accessibility, participation and opportunities available to learners in Kitwe District, specifically in Kamfinsa Constituency and Kafue Ward. It was established that public schools remain the main source of education in the study area and have experienced higher enrolment after the implementation of the Free Education Policy. Financial barriers to attending school have been removed and the policy has encouraged high enrolment and is viewed positively by both teachers and pupils. Learners found it easy to attend schools located in their

neighborhoods and at a reasonable walking distance hence they attend school regularly.

The study also found that schools had been proactive in trying to improve their administration using record management systems. This has been implemented to a high degree with digital systems being favored as a way to help the effective management of planning, monitoring and decision making in the schools. Also, various strategies applied to improve the delivery of educational service by national development policies have positively impacted on teachers' welfare, professional skills and digital literacy and the school.

The study also found that mother tongue language plays an important part in enabling understanding, participation and literacy. Even though English is the medium of instruction in the schools, teachers and pupils acknowledged the benefits of the use of mother tongue in the school. There are still a lack of instructional materials and limited technical vocabulary for the local language, thus limiting the effective implementation of the policy.

However, the study realized that there are some shortcomings; over populated classes, inadequate teaching and learning materials, transport cost and, at times, learners leaving school still hinder the efficiency in the delivery of the education. Though pass rates and literacy levels have been satisfactory, more learners have gained access to the school, but learning levels may not have kept pace with the expansion in enrollment due to issues such as infrastructure and school facilities which need improved investment such as buildings and provision of resources, as well as increase of teachers to cope with the learners in each class.

5. Recommendations

1. Government: Increase the provision of educational infrastructure and staffing. The Government of Zambia through its Ministry of Education should increase provision of educational infrastructure by constructing more classrooms and extending existing ones in the schools to absorb the large numbers of children in the schools following the adoption of Free Education policy and recruit more well trained teachers in the schools in order to reduce the large teacher pupil ratios observed during the study. Addressing these shortcomings will promote effective teaching, communication between teacher and learner and thus improvement in education and quality of learning.
2. Policy Makers: Increase provision of teaching materials and mother tongue instruction support. Policy makers should give greater attention to provide enough teaching and learning materials, including textbooks, digital learning, teaching aids in mother tongue language. There is a need for creation of appropriate and standard local language terminologies and more localized educational contents. Increased provision of resources will positively affect literacy, comprehension and achievement of the overall goals of quality and inclusive education.
3. Stakeholders: Strengthen community support and learner retention in schools. Parents, community leaders, cooperating partners and other education stakeholders should work together to combat factors associated with learner absenteeism and school dropouts, such as transportation costs, teenage

marriages, pregnancy and drug abuse. Stakeholders should take part in supporting school based guidance and counseling, learner's welfare programs and community awareness programs on the benefits of education. This collaboration will enhance learner's attendance, retention and completion rates thereby increasing the positive impacts of the Free Education Policy.

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