



Impact of Poverty on the Provision of Quality Education: A Case of Selected Secondary Schools in Lusaka District, Zambia

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ABSTRACT:

Education is often referred to as the great equalizer: It can open the door to jobs, resource, and skills that help a person not only survive, but thrive. This is why access to quality education is a globally-recognized solution to poverty. Quality education is defined as that type of education which focuses on the learner to prepare them for life, not just for assessments. Poverty in simple terms refers to the state of being extremely poor. Therefore, the purpose of this study was to examine the impact of poverty on the provision of quality education in selected secondary schools in Lusaka district of Zambia. Quality learning means learning that is purposeful, learning in which learners are provided with the ability to effectively learn, retain skills and knowledge gained. Education is an essential building block of our society because it provides knowledge, skills and an environment to help people grow and in turn, they will help society grow. Access to quality education enables children to develop and flourish. They acquire the keys to solve everyday problems and to prepare their future. The study employed both the qualitative and quantitative methods and a descriptive survey design that sampled 2 staff from DEBS office, head teachers, teachers, pupils and members of the community. Data was obtained from the respondents by means of interviews and questionnaires. Percentages, tables, graphs and pie-charts were used to analyze the qualitative and quantitative data. Data was then analyzed by the use of software MS access and MS Excel. The findings reviewed poverty can have a negative impact on the provision of quality education. And that Some potential effects include lack of resources, high teacher turnover, poor health and nutrition as well as inadequate home environment.

Keywords: *Access, Poverty, Provision, Quality Education, School, Society.*

1. INTRODUCTION

Poverty is defined as the state of being extremely poor. Quality education on the other hand, refers to the type of education which enables people to develop all their attributes and skills to achieve their potential as human beings and members of society. UNICEF (2004) provides a very comprehensive definition of quality education that includes healthy learners who are well-nourished, are ready to participate and learn, whose learning is supported by their families and communities; healthy, safe, and supportive environments; content that includes the foregoing elements and peace; inclusive child-centered processes that are facilitated by competent self-driven teachers; and actual outcomes that encompass life-supportive knowledge, skills and attitudes, and are linked to national goals for education (equity) and positive participation in society. Education helps to remedy many of the other issues that can keep people, families, and even whole communities vulnerable to the cycle of poverty. At its core, a quality education supports a child's developing social, emotional, cognitive, and communication skills. They also gain knowledge and skills, and often at a higher level than those who don't attend school. They can then use these skills to earn higher incomes and build successful lives. According to UNESCO (2010), if all students in low-income countries had just basic reading skills (nothing else), an estimated 171 million people could escape extreme poverty. If all adults completed secondary education, we could cut the global poverty rate by more than half. This is why the United Nations named quality education one of its Sustainable Development Goals to achieve by 2030.

Since the formal introduction of education, it has been identified by some beneficiaries that education is a liberating force, liberating people from the crunches of illiteracy, superstition, inferiority complex and other barbaric actions. But in spite of all these advantages bequeathed to us by education, it has been infested and confronted with so many problems which among them include poverty. Masaiti (2021) narrates that poverty has completely crippled the development of education in Zambia. Right from the time when education was formally established in the country with the imposition of some little amount of money on each student, many people who would have become the ambassadors and policy makers of this our country could not afford to pay such money then and it has absolutely jeopardized their future. The importance of education in developing countries cannot be overstated. Education can be the catalyst needed to pull families and communities out of the cycle of poverty. Knowledge gives children the power to dream of a better future and the confidence needed to pursue a full education, which in turn will help generations to come. Education also makes a significant difference for adults, particularly when it applies to day-to-day life, including nutrition, healthcare and gender equity. According to Dewey (2017), he noted that when adults learn, they become role models to their children, who also wish to learn. Therefore, education in all different forms is key to breaking the cycle of poverty. It has an uplifting effect on other aspects of society that may seem totally unrelated, such as girls' education lowering the number of prenatal deaths. The relationship between poverty and education is complex, but we know that education helps people make healthier and smarter decisions about their

children, their livelihoods and the way they live. Education also has a significant role in the fight for children's rights, both in teaching children what they can and should expect from adults, and in showing adults the benefits of respecting their children's rights. In Timor-Leste, children have stepped forward to advocate for their rights in school through the Children Against Violence project. Touring around the country, they raise awareness of corporal punishment through theatrical drama. In this and many other cases, education is a powerful tool that can make the world a better place.

There is a consensus that education brings a range of returns (monetary and nonmonetary) that benefit both the person investing in the education and the community in which they live (MoE, 1996). Since independence education was recognized as a secondary human right and a powerful tool for human resource and national development. Policy documents have reiterated the importance of Education in eliminating poverty, diseases and ignorance. Negative teacher-student relationships and structural inadequacies affect the students' ability to learn and develop positive relationships with their local environment and superiors. A school is an institution for giving children instruction. Schools in all communities deserve the bare essentials when it comes to education, highly qualified teachers, current textbooks, and safe and adequate facilities. Schools have the ability to be the pride and joy of a community. When ran in a successful manner, schools contribute to the success of the community. Masaiti (2018) states that "Poverty, chaotic home environments, discrepancies in exposure to technology, and lack of funding for schools all negatively impact the effort to educate children." Bwalya (2019) defines quality education by focusing on inputs and outputs process. According to him, inputs in education include teaching and learning materials as well as teachers and students. In addition, he further states that quality education can be measured "quantitatively or through characteristics such as the qualification of teachers, textbook relevance and students' intellectual and nutritional status.

1.2. Statement of the Problem

Most children living in poverty attend public schools in economically disadvantaged neighborhoods. This means that the schools are underfunded even though education has been regarded as an aspect of national development and launching of free education up to secondary level, but still children continue to drop out of school. While secondary education in Zambia has been considered important, there are many challenges to its provision including lack of teaching and learning materials, understaffed, and demotivated teachers as well as overcrowded classrooms (MoE, 1996). These impediments have led to producing students with no quality secondary education to help them go up the academic ladder or participate effectively in their local communities. The high dropout and repetition rates and poor school attendance, especially in the lower grades, suggest low quality of provision of secondary education in secondary schools. According to the Universal Declaration of Human Rights (UDHR, 1948), everyone has the right to pursue an education which includes children. Children living in poverty and attending public schools not only have to deal with stressors from school but those dominating their personal lives as well. Whether or not everyone is receiving a quality education is debatable, (Common Wealth, 2021). There is evidence of disparity in performance between low income schools and high income urban schools and the reason behind the occurrences is poverty.

1.3. The Purpose of the Study

The purpose of this study was to examine the impact of poverty on the provision of quality education at the selected secondary schools in Lusaka district, Zambia.

1.4 Research Objectives

The objectives of the study were to:

- i. Examine the impact of poverty on the provision of quality education in selected secondary schools in Lusaka district.
- ii. Analyze the strategies employed in ensuring delivering of quality education in selected secondary in Lusaka district.

1.5. Theoretical Framework

This study was guided by the Systems Theory of Management. According to Mintzberg (2009), the systems theory of management asserts that any organization is a single, unified system of interrelated parts or subsystems. Each part of the overall system is dependent on the others and cannot function optimally without them. This theory is important for understanding any education system for it contrasts with numerous fragmentary reforms aimed at improving aspects or parts of the education system which may not normally succeed. This theory derives its notion from science, where it is believed that a set of parts of a system interact to achieve specified objectives (Best and Katin, 2014). Similarly, in an education system, various levels of the education system (national, tertiary, school, and pre-school) and their associated classrooms, together with their relevant stakeholders, should work together to achieve systemic educational goals. This involves developing relevant monitoring and evaluation instruments for use in monitoring and evaluating education to find out whether quality is being realized, which should be a joint effort of all education stakeholders. In our proposed conceptual framework for quality of education, School Self Evaluation (SSE) is a central component at all the levels, where the national level should design and develop (SSE) framework. After its evaluation to ascertain its quality, this SSE framework should be given to schools, where it should be used to do the actual SSE in the school as well as in classrooms.

1.6. Significance of the Study

This study is significant for several reasons. First, it provided an understanding of the relationships that exists between education inputs and achievement levels. Secondly, the study gave a clear picture of the minimum levels of resources required by the study of school settings in order to bring about significant gains in achievement levels. Thirdly, through in depth interviews, the research uncovered features of schooling that matter in improving achievements. Additionally, the study research provided thick descriptions of how the teaching and learning environment is managed in relation to the improvement of quality of education. The study helped in the understanding of the usage of school inputs, which are linked, to quality improvements with respect to achievement. The other benefit was on the ministry of education to allocate the funds in terms of bursary especially to the students from poor, social and economic background.

2. LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1. Concept of Quality Education

Recently, debates in education have focused on quality of education, defined here as fit for purpose, which relates to the entire characteristics of education (inputs, processes, and outputs). It has been realized that achieving universal secondary education on its own may not be fully accomplished without the provision of quality of education (UNESCO, 2010). According to Steyn (2017) affirms that the need for quality of education is the single most important thing and quality makes the difference between success and failure. Although there is a consensus that there is a need to provide good quality of education to all students worldwide (UNESCO & UNICEF, 2004), there is little agreement as to what constitutes quality of education. This is because quality education may be understood differently by different education stakeholders. Masaiti (2018) indicates that quality of education is better understood in terms of output. Although student achievement in tests and public examinations may signify good quality of education to many, a holistic understanding of education quality should be in terms of inputs, processes, outputs as well as outcomes of education which include student knowledge (academic and cultural heritage), social preparation (societal trends and needs), and also personal development (personal and educational needs and interests) (Sibani, 2014). Substantial research has been done on quality of education with considerable evidence on poor quality of education in most education systems. Nevertheless, there is dearth of research on how quality of education may be improved. However, existing literature and research are consistent that constant monitoring and evaluation of education quality did by the schools through School Self-Evaluation (SSE), a process whereby school communities find out about their conditions, processes, and outputs, are effective for improvement purposes (Fleischmann and Haas, 2016).

2.2. Effects of Poverty on Quality Education

Having articulated the indicators of Quality Education in schools, it is worthy to note that all aspects of quality cannot be achieved because of the effects of poverty in financing education in Zambia which include among others:

- limited provision of school facilities
- lack of equipment and materials
- Poor nutrition and feeding habits in schools
- Poor health among some pupils
- Poor working relations in schools
- Increase school dropout

The list of the effects is long depending on the nature and type of school and the environment in which the school is situated. For instance, schools in the arid and semiarid areas are more vulnerable compared to schools in high and medium economic potential areas. Equally, schools attracting students from among the urban poor are more susceptible to poverty compared to school children of the well to do in society. In other situations, the girls may be married off to counter the perennial poverty in their home as the parents hope to be paid some dowry. This is in line with Cheng and Tam (2016) who asserts that day schools are most affected especially schools in the low income areas. Other schools, attract very few students such that they cannot enjoy economies of scale in financing educational activities and programs. Where the average poor struggle to educate their children putting almost all the family income in financing of the education of their children, the poorest of the poor do not access this service. Contrary, the non-poor appear to be benefiting from the cost sharing arrangement in financing secondary education hence the escalation of the gap between the rich and the poor in society.

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

2.1. Study Design

The study adopted a mixed methods approach which is a combination of quantitative and qualitative data. Exploratory and descriptive designs were as well considered appropriate as they also allowed for more flexible strategies of data collection in order to answer the research questions. The study incorporated both qualitative and quantitative aspects of research. It was aimed at collecting information from respondents on the impact of poverty on

the provision of quality education in selected secondary schools in Lusaka district of Zambia. It highlighted the importance of quality education and the challenges which makes it difficult for secondary schools to deliver quality education to pupils. Structured open-ended interviews were conducted and questionnaires were used to respondents.

2.2. Research Site

The research was conducted in Lusaka district in Zambia at some selected secondary schools from which respondents were also sampled.

2.3. Population, Sample and Sampling Procedure

The population for the study comprised of staff from DEBS office, head teachers, teachers and pupils at the sampled schools. The target population was 1000. The sample size involved a total of 100 respondents which included; four (4) staff members from DEBS office, four (4) head teachers, one from each selected school. Sixteen (16) teachers, four from each selected school. Seventy-six (76) learners, Nineteen (19) from each selected school. Eight (8) members from the community. The study employed both purposive and simple random sampling on different participants from the selected secondary schools. Simple random sampling was used on the staff members from DEBS office, learners and teachers whereas purposive sampling was used on the head teachers.

2.4. Data Analysis

In this research, data was analyzed qualitatively as the semi structured interviews schedules were used as data collection instruments. Thematic approach was used, where data analysis started with the categorization of themes from the semi structured interviews schedules. The data gathered was analyzed according to the themes of the study, the order of the research objectives. Data generated from the questionnaires was analyzed manually and also, a combination of software MS Access, SPSS and MS Excel was used to analyze data.

2.4. Ethical Considerations

The researchers avoided pressuring respondents to take part in the research. Alternatively, permission consents, assents were obtained from respondents involved in the research and the research topic was strategically selected to ensure that there was no harm whatsoever to the research respondents. In this research, the researchers were fully conscious of the need to abide by the ethical rule of respecting the privacy of individuals taking part in the research. In the same way, all the respondents of the research were to remain unidentified to the public as all their valuable views, opinions and perceptions were only known by the researchers for use only in the research and participant's identities will forever remain hidden. Additionally, the researchers got permission from Lusaka DEBS office as well as the head teachers on behalf of the independent schools.

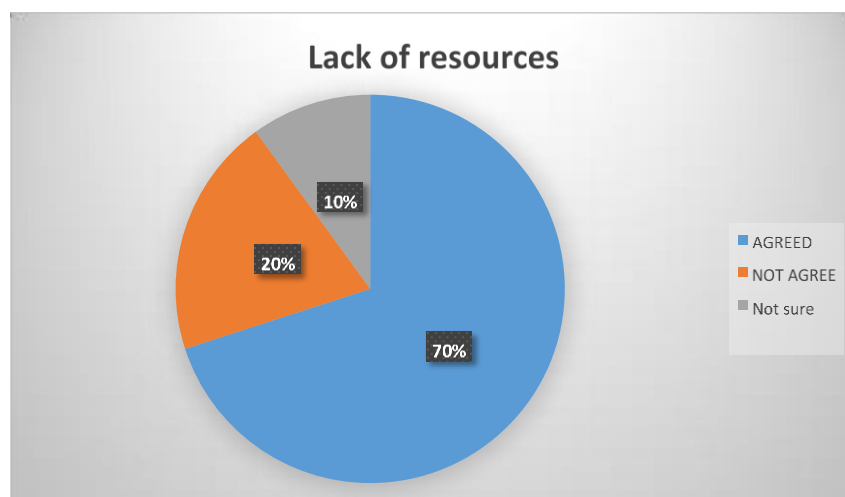
3. FINDINGS

The following findings and discussions were presented according to set research objectives:

3.1. Impact of Poverty on the provision of Quality Education

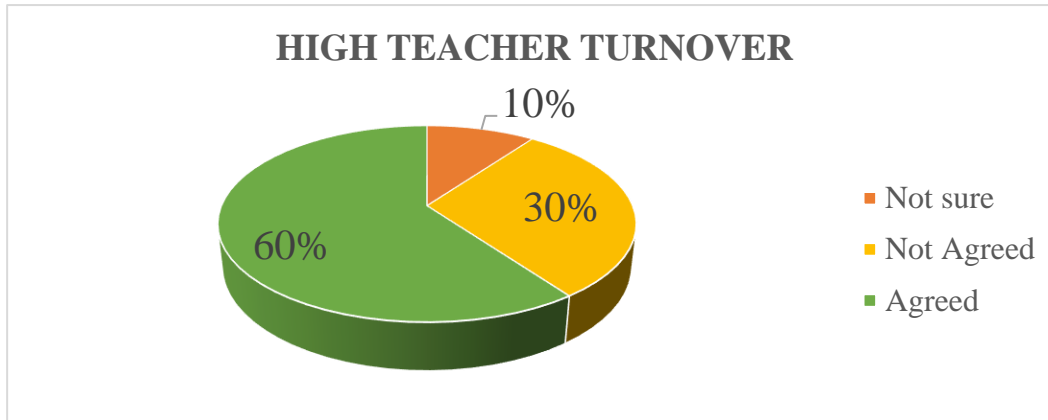
Poverty can have a significant impact on the provision of quality education. Some potential effects include:

Chart 1: Lack of Resources



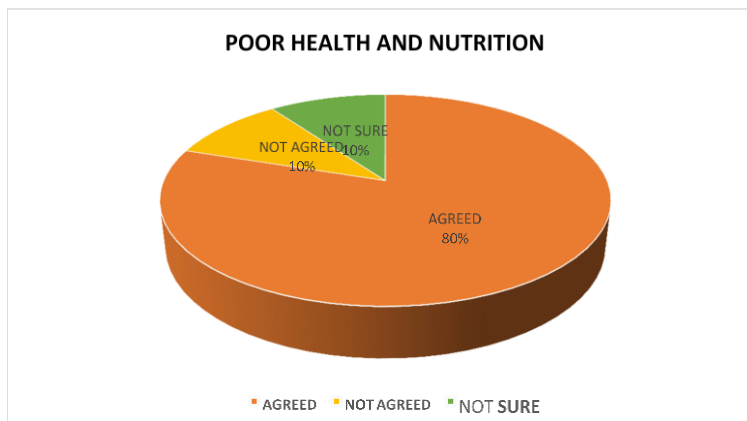
From the figure above, 10% of the respondents were not sure, 20% did not agree and 70% agreed to the issue that was raised that poverty has a significant impact on the provision of quality education.

Chart 2: High Teacher Turnover



From the figure shown, 10% of the respondents were not sure, 30% did not agree and 60% agreed that schools in low income areas often experience high rates of teacher turnover due to low salaries and poor working conditions that makes them demotivated and tend to lose morale in terms of their output.

Chart 3: Poor Health and Nutrition



From the figure above 10% of the respondents were not sure, 10% did not agree and 80% agreed that poverty can lead to poor health that can hinder the progress of the learners academically.

3.2. Strategies Employed in Delivering Quality Education

There are various strategies that the study came across with from the respondents that can help to deliver quality education in secondary schools. Some of these include:

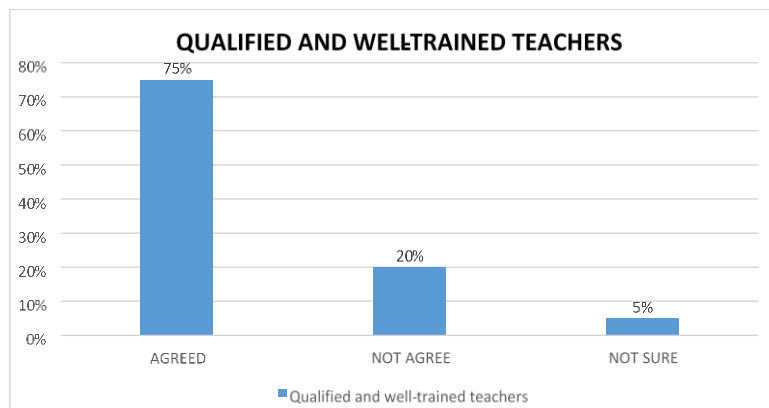
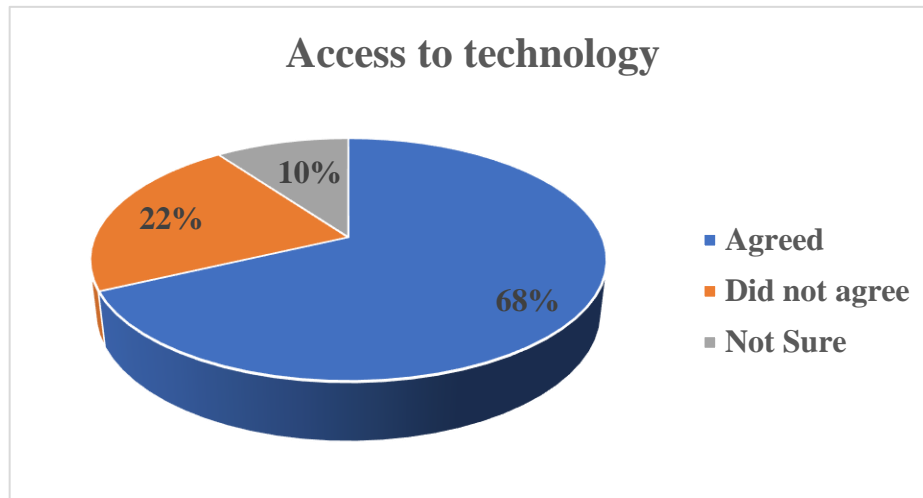


Figure 1: Educational Qualifications

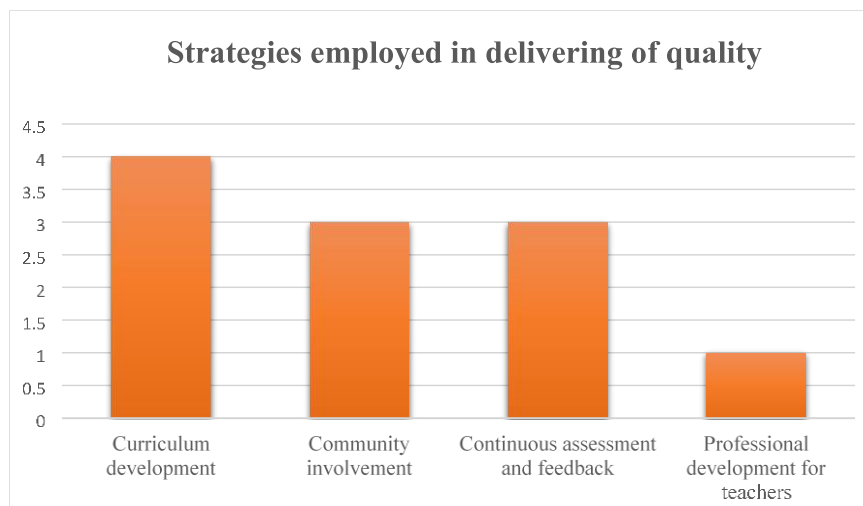
From the figure above, 75% of the respondents agreed, 25% did not agree and 5% were not sure if the teachers were qualified and well trained to deliver quality education to the learners.

Chart 4: Access to Technology



From the above figure 10% of the respondents were not sure, 22% did not agree and 68% agreed that access to technology can enhance learning experience for both teachers and learners as they will be acquainted with latest and useful information.

Figure 2: Other Strategies



From the figure above, it illustrates the strategies employed in delivering of quality education and this includes the following to be involved that; curriculum development, community involvement, continuous assessment and feedback, professional development for teachers through their meetings.

4. CONCLUSION

Poverty affects students' attendance and participation in school, as some may have to drop out to work and support their families. The study also revealed that poverty contributes to the inadequate training and professional development of teachers, resulting in low morale and job satisfaction. Policy interventions aimed at reducing poverty, increasing funding for education, and improving teacher training and support are needed to address this issue. The findings correspond with the observation of the provision of quality education, as observed that the problem of low quality education is serious and needs attention as learners leaving school at various levels do not have the requisite knowledge and skills for life. This implies that although the goals of Zambia education policy in secondary education is to improve the quality of education process; increasing and improving access and equity for all children there is no proof that quality is provided for all children, with the coming of free education given the fact that many classes are overcrowded.

RECOMMENDATIONS

The following are actions that should be taken on the basis of the findings of this study:

- The Government should allocate more resources to the education sector, particularly in areas where poverty is prevalent.
- The NGO's should facilitate the school feeding programs and offering scholarship to vulnerable learners to ensure effective learning and minimize drop outs and absenteeism.
- The school administration should strengthen community engagements to address the needs of students from low-income backgrounds.
- The schools should supplement the Governments efforts by building classrooms, laboratory, teacher's houses and a library to make sure that good quality education is provided to students

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