

UPGRADING OF PRIMARY SCHOOLS

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The study adopted a multi-case study of 4 schools that have been upgraded from primary to secondary. These schools are in Matero and Emmasdale zones. The study was guided by two by two objectives, these identify opportunities for Upgrading Primary Schools into Secondary and the second objective was to establish challenges faced by these upgraded schools. The sample size was 20 teachers. Five teachers from each school were sampled and their data was collected using an interview guide. Data was analysed thematically and descriptively. The findings on the first objective revealed that some of the opportunities of upgrading primary schools into secondary schools were that it has helped to increase access to secondary education, it has shortened the walking distance of the pupils to and from school and home. On the second objective, it was established that there are many challenges that are faced by these upgraded primary schools into secondary schools. Some of the challenges were that there is inadequate classroom accommodation, inadequate space for expansion, there are no laboratories, teachers that have upgraded their qualifications and teaching to these are still getting their previous salary due to lack of PEMIC vacancies, most of the heads of departments have acted for many years without being confirmed and if the trend continues of upgrading primary schools into secondary schools without building other primary schools into secondary schools there will be a future problem. The study concluded that there are many challenges as compared to opportunities in these upgraded primary schools to secondary level and if the government continues upgrading primary schools into secondary schools without building other primary schools the country shall face a challenge where access to primary education will be very difficult. From the findings it was recommended that the Ministry of Education should build separate secondary schools instead of converting the existing primary schools.

Keywords: opportunities, challenges and upgrading.

1.1 Background

The Ministry of Education, Science, Vocational Training and Early Education has upgraded a total of 220 Primary schools into Secondary schools. Then Ministry spokesperson Hillary Chipango reported the upgraded schools were so far performing very well. Mr Chipango disclosed this during a telephone call interview with Zambia National Information Services (ZANIS). He noted that the programme has benefited mainly rural pupils who were finding it difficult to access distant secondary schools. He reported that the government has already achieved 70 percent in its upgrading programme (www.lusakatimes.com).

World Bank (2019) gave an example of a pupil who used to walk long distance to school. Mary Phiri a pupil at Palabana secondary school in Chongwe district of Lusaka province. She had to walk about 18 kilometres everyday from Palabana to get to the nearest school. Although she was a top pupil during her primary years, her academic performance suffered because she was tired most times from walking the long distance to and from school. But with the construction of a new secondary school Phiri now walks only 2 kilometres to get to class. "now my grades are above average, because I am not too tired to study when I get home", said Phiri..

Under the IDA – fund Zambia Education Enhancement Project (ZEEP), Palabana primary school is being expanded to a full-fledged day school secondary school. Four classrooms and one ablution block for girls have been completed. Construction of the remaining classrooms were expected to be completed by February 2020 under phase 2. The Chongwe District Education Board Secretary reported that, "once completed, Palabana primary school will be the only secondary school in that area. Four primary schools and two community primary schools in the same catchment area will also be able to send their pupils to the new school. It is one of the 82 schools in Zambia that are being expanded to include secondary schools under ZEEP, of that 10 are in Lusaka district (World Bank, 2019).

Secondary schools supported by ZEEP included the construction of five classrooms (8 -12), two ablution blocks (toilet and showers) for both boys and girls, one administrative block, one laboratory and home Economics block, furniture and

laboratory equipment, water system, sewage disposal system, four low – coat staff houses and power supply either through solar mini grid or mainstream electricity grid. World Bank (2019) further said the water and Sanitation facilities are especially critical to keeping the girl child in school.

In addition, 10 of the 82 schools will have weekly boarding facilities for girls including dormitories where female learners from distance areas will stay during the week under the guidance of the school management. This type of boarding facilities is especially popular as many students are not able to afford fees for full boarding. Access to quality secondary education is key to poverty reduction. Salute Kipunden World Bank Manager for Zambia said, “global evidence confirm that girls participation in secondary education has an impact on fertility rate, early marriages ,pregnancy and has substantial Intergenerational benefits, so we want to everything we can to ensure Zambian girls açcess education”.

www.lusakatimes (2020) reported that the Minister of General Education Mr David Mabumba said that 26 schools in Lusaka will be upgraded to secondary schools. The Minister said the upgrading of primary schools is meant to reduce the long distance pupils cover to access secondary school education. The Minister was speaking at the ground breaking of the construction of a classroom block and the ablution block at the recently upgraded Mahati Magandi primary school in Lusaka District in Mtendere Compound. The Minister said it is the Vision of the government to provide quality education through upgrading of Primary schools into secondary schools.

Access to Secondary Education Zambia has a serious shortage of secondary school places resulting from inadequate investment in infrastructure over the years. As a result, access to secondary education is more costly compared to primary schools due to limited school places. Despite the upgrading of 220 primary schools into junior secondary schools brought about by the policy change from the basic and high school education system to the primary and secondary school education system, there is still a serious shortage of secondary school places in Zambia.

According to World Bank Group (2015:2), “the current number of secondary schools can accommodate only about 30 percent of the current students in grades 1–5”. However, figures from the Educational Statistical Bulletin show a marked increase in both the number of secondary schools and enrolments. The data shows that there were 794 secondary schools in 2014 enrolling 327,980 pupils. In 2015, the number of secondary schools increased to 832 with a total enrolment of 802,341 representing an increase of 5% and 144% in the number of schools and enrolment respectively. The increase is mainly due to the inclusion of the Grades 8 and 9 enrolments’ under the secondary school subsector. Currently, 88% of the lower secondary schools were part of the basic school subsector in 2013 (World Bank Group 2015). The number of classrooms available at the secondary school level is lower than at the primary school level. In 2015, there were 9,904 classrooms at secondary school level compared to 9,473 classrooms in 2014 representing an annual increase of 431 classrooms. The increase in the number of classrooms is also attributed to the conversion of the 220 basic schools into junior secondary schools. Equally, the pupil classroom ratio has increased at Grades 8-9 and grades 10-12 from 52 in 2014 to 47 in 2015. Overall, there is average of 58 pupils per class at secondary school level. In addition, 93% of the schools are connected to portable water, 56% to electricity, while the pupil toilet ratio is at 73 for boys and 67 for girls (World Bank Group 2015). In addition, only 28% of the schools have library facilities, with only 22% having science laboratories. On the other hand the Deputy Head teacher of newly upgraded Mnutwa Day Secondary school in Eastern Province in Chipata town said that ;

“ turned a computer laboratory as a classroom and a dormitory for girls”. This came to light when a Zambia News and Information Services visited Mnutwa Chiefdom to check on the developmental programmes taking place in the area. The school Deputy Head reported that pupils who were coming from afar places and could not manage to walk to and from school every day, were accommodated in the Computer Laboratory which was also used as a classroom”, (www.Lusakatimes, 2018). The members of staff were also facing similar challenges because the school had just been upgraded and was using structures for primary school. Teachers were renting grass thatched houses in nearby villages as a result of the school not having enough accommodation for them. We have been given three classrooms out of the seven which the primary has and we cannot ask for more because what has primary school has done enough generosity.

1.2 STATEMENT OF THE PROBLEM

The government of the Republic of Zambia and other multilateral and Bilateral partners such as the World Bank, Japan’s International Corporation Agency (JAICA) are working hard in the provision of access to education at all levels of education. They have managed to increase access to universal education by providing free education at primary school and scrapping off the examination fees at grades 7 and 9. Access to secondary schools has remained a challenge to many learners due Inadequate secondary schools but they have managed to convert some primary schools into secondary schools. If this trend continues government will upgrade more primary schools into secondary schools without building other primary schools in the areas where these schools are upgraded from, and the population has kept on increasing. Therefore, the main aim of this study is to establish challenges and opportunities of upgrading primary

schools into secondary schools vises the increasing population.

On the other hand the Head teacher of newly upgraded Mnukwa Day Secondary school in Eastern Province in Chipata town reported lack of enough classrooms that has forced the school to turn

1.3 OBJECTIVES

The study was guided by the three following objectives-:

- Establish the challenges of upgrading primary schools into secondary schools,
- Identify opportunities for upgrading primary schools into secondary schools, and
- Recommend for possible solutions to the identified challenges.

1.4 SIGNIFICANCE OF THE STUDY

The findings of the study may help the Ministry of Education identify the challenges that are being created in some of the areas where primary schools are converted into secondary schools without building other primary schools. Furthermore, the findings could also equip policy makers on how they can make laws and lobby for more resources to build more secondary schools without using the existing infrastructure at primary level.

1.5 METHODOLOGY

The study adopted a multi case study of some primary schools in Lusaka that gave been upgraded from primary schools to secondary schools. These schools were former Matero primary school, Kasamba primary school in Matero, Chaisa school and Yotam Muleya schools in Emmasdale Zone. These schools were picked because they have been upgraded from primary to secondary and the researcher(s) thought they can get vital information from the teachers on the

Challenges and opportunities regarding upgrading primary schools to secondary schools. The targeted population for this study were the teachers at these schools. 20 teachers were picked randomly, 5 from each school. Teachers were picked for the study because they are the main key stakeholders and they can understand challenges and opportunities since they fully participate in the teaching of the pupils. Some of the teachers have been teaching at the same schools for a long time. Data for this study was collected using an interview guide that gave the researchers a deep probing on issues that needed clarification. Data was analysed thematically and descriptively using narration from respondents.

1.6 PRESENTATION OF FINDINGS AND DISCUSSIONS

The findings were presented and discussed in line with the objectives of the study.

1.6.1 Opportunities of Upgrading Primary Schools into Secondary Schools

The first objective of the study was to identify opportunities for upgrading primary schools. The findings on this objective revealed that there are many opportunities or advantages of upgrading primary schools into secondary schools. The respondent gave the following opportunities; shortening walking distances to secondary schools, improved access to secondary schools, and increase of teachers vacancies at secondary schools.

1.6.1.1 Shortening Walking Distances To Secondary Schools

One of the advantages or opportunities that respondents gave was that before some of the schools in Matero and Emmasdale zones were upgraded from primary to secondary and there were only a few secondary schools. For example in Matero zone they had only Matero Boys Secondary school for the Catholic church and Matero Girls Secondary schools. Pupils used to cover long distance to Kabulonga, Olympia, libala and Kamwala secondary schools. Matero Boys had proven difficult to access and most of the pupils used to distant schools that proved costly and tiresome on the part of parents and the pupils in terms of transport cost. This is in tandem with World Bank (2019) who gave an example of Mary Phiri in Chongwe district of Lusaka province who used to cover 18 kilometres to the nearest secondary school.

Furthermore, the above statement is in line with what then Minister of General Education Mr Mabumba said 26 primary schools will be upgraded to secondary schools in Lusaka to reduce the long distance pupils cover to access secondary school education (www.lusakatime.com).

1.6.1.2 Improved Access to Secondary Education

Another opportunity that came out strongly was that increased access to secondary education. By upgrading some of the primary schools into secondary schools in the zones and the country at large has increased access to secondary education. Some parents were unable to pay boarding fees and provide transport money for their children and this resulted in most of them dropping from secondary schools. There are more primary schools than secondary schools.

1.6.1.3 Increased Teacher's Vacancies at Secondary Schools

The respondents reported that this move have generated an increase in teachers vacancies at secondary schools. The number of secondary schools teachers required to teach in these secondary schools has increased. By so doing teachers that have done secondary degrees and diplomas are sent to teach to these newly upgraded schools. It has also given a chance to some of the primary school teachers who have been studying or upgrading their qualifications to be transferred to some of these schools to teach.

1.6.2 Challenges of Upgrading Primary Schools into Secondary Schools

The second objective of the study was to establish challenges of upgrading primary schools into secondary schools. The findings showed that there are many challenges. Some of the challenges that came out from respondents were that inadequate infrastructure, reduced numbers of primary schools against the growing population, lack of PEMIC vacancies and movement of teachers from primary schools to secondary schools.

1.6.2.1 Inadequate infrastructure

The respondents reported that there is inadequate classroom accommodation in most of the upgraded primary schools. In most cases the government is not building other infrastructure and where they are adding some classrooms the

process is quite slow. This is compromising the quality of secondary education being offered in schools. There is also lack of laboratory and Home Economies facilities in most of these upgraded schools. This is making the work of teachers very difficult.

1.6.2.2 Government is not building new Primary Schools in these areas.

It was reviewed that most of these primary schools were built a long time and the population in some of these areas is on increase. When the government upgrades the existing primary schools without building a new one it is creating pressure on the nearest primary school in that particular area. This will create a situation where many pupils at the primary school level have challenges in accessing universal education if the government will keep on upgrading primary schools into secondary schools without building other primary schools into secondary schools.

1.6.2.3 Inadequate Space for Expansion

It was also established that most of the primary schools do not have enough space for Expansion to accommodate a full-fledged secondary school. The space was initially designed for primary schools and most of these primary schools have no such space for both out-door and in-store activities.

1.6.2.4 Lack of office Space for Heads of Departments

These primary schools have no enough office Space for different head of departments and staff. Most teachers are finding difficult to have departmental meetings due to lack of office Space.

1.6.2.5 Difficulties with Salary Upgrades

Most of the salary vacancies are either frozen or are full. Most of the teachers who have upgraded their qualifications and teaching at secondary schools are still getting their previous salary due to lack of PEMIC vacancies that can allow them move from one salary scale to another. This factor is contributing to the deprivation of these teachers that have invested in education with the aim of being upgraded in salary or promoted in position. Most of the heads of departments have acted for many years without being confirmed and upgraded in salary.

1.7 CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

The findings of the study revealed that there are few opportunities as compared to challenges of upgrading primary schools into secondary schools. The study concluded that if the government continues at the rate of upgrading primary schools into secondary schools without building other primary schools in these areas the government is creating a future problem at the primary level of Education. The population in these areas is on an increase and the children at age one in the future will have challenges accessing primary education. Most of these primary schools were built before and immediately after independence and the population has been growing steadily in the nation.

1.7.1 RECOMMENDATIONS

The study would like to recommend the following suggestions or solutions to the challenges that were identified from the findings of the study. The study recommended the following:

- The government should build separation secondary schools than disturbing the existing primary schools because most of the primary schools do not have enough space for full fledged secondary school.
- The government through PEMIC should upgrade salaries for all the teachers that have upgraded their qualifications from certificate to diploma or degree levels.
- The government through the Ministry of Education should build laboratory and other infrastructure that supports a secondary to provide quality education at secondary level.
- Identify spacious places to build either boarding or day secondary schools.

- The Ministry of Education through the Teaching Service Commission to confirm teachers in appointment to motivate them.

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