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AN EVALUATION OF PUBLIC SECONDARY SCHOOLS' EDUCATION FINANCING AND ITS IMPACT ON SERVICE QUALITY IN LUSAKA, ZAMBIA

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Abstract

Purpose: This paper was purposed to evaluate public secondary schools' education financing and its impact on service quality in the Lusaka district of the Republic of Zambia.

Methodology: It employed desk review and expert analysis as methodological paradigms.

Findings: From the literature gathered and analysed, it has been established that the MoGE sector's financing from central government from 2015 to 2019 has been steadily declining from 20.2% in 2015 to 15.1% in 2019, contrary to UNESCO's sacrosanct global benchmark of 20% minimum annual appropriation for the sector for its service quality needs in the said subsector. The study has also identified financial inadequacies and weak controls within the sector in that funds meant for school supplies /materials and infrastructure expansion and construction have severally been misapplied and misappropriated to the detriment of the Subsector. Besides, there is literature *prima facie* evidence, coupled with government's anecdotal pronouncements pointing to donors' withdrawal of financing to the sector and the country's known huge public debt stock as being causal factors to the dwindling financing trend.

Results: With all these occurrences and based on comparative literature evidence in the similar situations, it has been benchmarked that the service offerings within the subsector has been marred with unimaginable compromises in terms of quality, accessibility, affordability, accountability and relevance. To this effect, and as simply a randomized partial resultant indicator, disaggregated statistics have revealed that even the number of children out of school has soared from 195,000 in 2015 to about 800,000 in 2018 – a record which is unprecedented in the history of the education sector in Zambia.

Unique contribution: The paper strongly implores central government to take pragmatic policy measures aimed at curtailing the phenomena, including but not limited to, instilling seemingly lost confidence by the donors in financing the sector and diversifying the subsector's financing model.

Key words: *Financing, Impact and Quality*

1.0 INTRODUCTION

The provision of quality education is a constitutional mandate vested in central government's deliberate financing to the education sector for investment in its human capital, which is universally agreed to be a panacea for social economic upheavals. From before, during and after independence, though with numerous insurmountable barriers, Zambia has remained committed to this obligation of providing quality, accessible, relevant, affordable and equitable education to her general citizenry. However, this solemn responsibility does not only end at providing or ensuring the availability of physical infrastructure such as buildings, but is also predicated on quality service delivery to these institutions as quantitatively measured through quality learner achievements, equitable teacher-pupil ratios, amenable transitional rates, gender parity indices, reduced teacher attrition, continuous professional development, among others. Against this background, this paper is purposed to evaluate the public secondary schools' education financing and its impact on service quality in Lusaka district of Zambia, premised on a five-year-trend analysis (2015 to 2019), which has seemingly epitomized endemic social, economic and structural bottlenecks in efficient and effective delivery of service in the subsector thereby prejudicing the country's human capital development prospects as envisioned and enshrined in both the 7NDP and the Vision 2030 (Masaiti et al., 2018, UNESCO, 2018, ESSP, 2017-2022, World Bank, 2018, ZANEC, 2019).

1.1 Problem Statement

Whereas the central government has entrenched well-established and elaborate policies, conventions, systems, standards and structures on education service provision and financing, the 2015 to 2019 financing trend to the education sector [20.2%, 17.2%, 16.5%, 16.1%, and 15.1%](MoF National Budgets, 2015-2019) is indicative of a consistent decline from the regional/global benchmark of 20% annual appropriation to the sector for service quality delivery (Masaiti *et al*. 2018, ZANEC, 2019; Lusaka Times, 2018). To the effect of the fact that the financing trend for the sector has been steadily dwindling, there is a higher probability of commensurate compromise on quality service provision and delivery. Therefore, this paper raises a resounding question of the impact this trend might have created on the education Subsector in the Lusaka District of Zambia.

Study Objectives

Main Objective

To evaluate public secondary schools' education financing and its impact on service quality in Lusaka, Zambia.

Specific Objectives

i. To identify central government's financing limitations to the education sector.
ii. To establish causal factors to the dwindling financing trend to the education subsector by central government.
iii. To determine the implications of the dwindling education financing to public secondary schools' service quality.

2.0 LITERATURE AND THEORETICAL REVIEW

National Demographics

Zambia is experiencing a large demographic shift and is one of the world's youngest countries by median age. The World Bank (2018) projects that this trend is expected to continue as the large youth population enters the reproductive age, which will put even more pressure on the demand for jobs, education, healthcare and other social services. In terms of age structure, the population under the age of 15 years and below accounts for about 50 per cent, while those under the age of 35years account for 70 per cent of the Zambian population (Masaiti *et al*., 2018). In terms of figures, 8,158,011 are young people under the age of 15 years (4,094,205 males / 4,063,632 females), 8,876,572 persons between 15 and 64 years old (4,461,085 males / 4,415,487 females), 435,888 people above 64 years (186,934 males / 248,954 females) (World Bank, 2018) (CSO, 2017) (see figure 1 below). *In other words, the country overall has a young population, which makes the provision of educational services to this population to be of strategic importance to government* (EFA,2015).

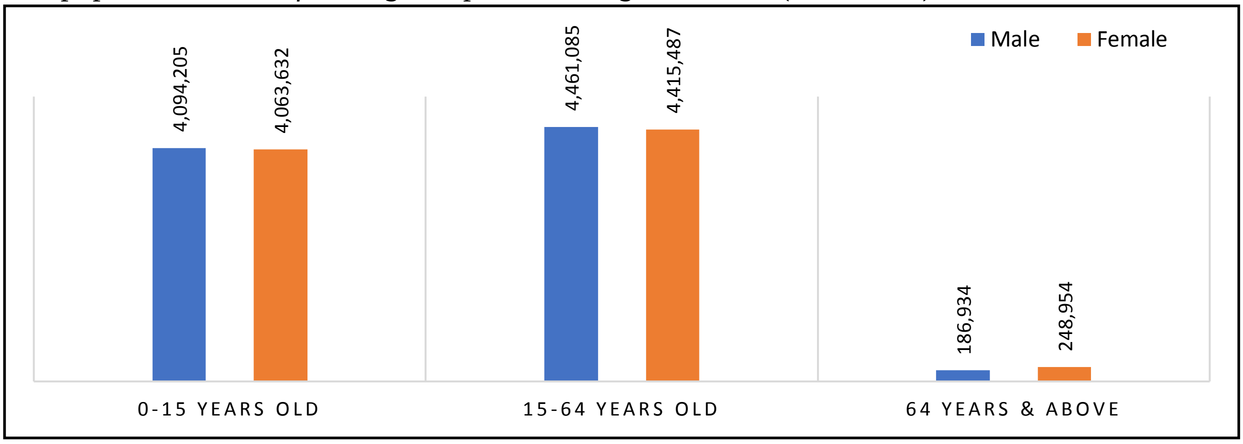

Figure 1.1: Zambia's Population

Source: Researcher (2018)

By the foregoing demographic transition account, there lie both opportunities and challenges to the education system in that balanced expansion of the sector with population growth become an optionless option in order to absorb the increasing school age group. Critically, the financial commitments and allocations to the sector requires periodic reviews in order to guarantee required quality, accessibility, relevance, efficiency and inclusivity (Masaiti, 2018) (emphasis added).

Lusaka District Schools Statistics

The 2016 census survey revealed that Lusaka province has a total number of 106 public secondary schools spread in both urban and rural areas. It is noteworthy that the average number of secondary schools in Lusaka district is more than the number of schools in the other districts within the province. As regards the number of secondary schools in Lusaka district, nothing much has changed from the 2010 census of population and housing, which shows that there were only 34 secondary schools in the district to contain the population of about 2,000,000 out of which 46.4% (558,900) are of the school going youths below 16 years of age (Census Survey, 2010 & 2015). Given the fact that the total population of Lusaka Province, according to Census Report (2015), is about 2, 000,000 and also that the total population of Lusaka district is slightly higher than that of the other districts, it could be argued that there is only very little infrastructural space for which the rest of the 46.4% of the youthful population is competing for. Therefore, this would suggest that education quality service provision is compromised in one way or the other. This also would entail that the majority of this population may drop out of school for many a reason, or may be in school just to register presence, yet not attain the liberating intended education. Besides, notwithstanding the fact that the district also has a number of private and grant-aided schools which even outstrip the public ones, these institutions have a different management style and operational philosophy, which is largely anchored on capitalistic and neo-liberal ideological traditions, and therefore, still does not guarantee accessibility to most of the socio-economically disadvantaged learners. Consequently, it is imperative to note that the responsibility of ensuring quality and equitable education provision per region is sacrosanctly vested in the government of the Republic of Zambia and that whatever the private sector is doing in this regard is a mere supplement to the government's effort.

Quality Education and Government Blue Prints

It is generally accepted that education resides as a basic human right for the entire human race and the foundation on which to build peace and drive sustainable development (UNESCO, 2018) for the benefit of all. Its underpinnings are considerably a formidable bedrock upon which any nation's socio economic development consists as it helps to change and/or positively transform people's mindset, values, skills, attitudes, beliefs, norms (Zambia's 7NDP, 2017-2021) and make them a critically enlightened mass to provide the nation's much needed human capital which is a pre-requisite for fighting poverty, inequalities, joblessness, inequities and any other negative social vices. Therefore, in this study it is thought that the actualization of such a dream is heavily predicated by the amount of interest and attention rendered to the education subsector by the central government of the nation in question. Resonating and aligned to this profound conception, in Zambia, the vision of the Ministry of General Education (MoGE) is to provide, "*Quality, Lifelong Education for all which is Accessible, Inclusive and Relevant to an Individual, National and Global Value Systems*" (MoGE, 2019). Buttressing and consistent with this blueprint, Masaiti *et al.* (2018) historically recount and/or underscore the Ministry of General Education's (MoGE's) participation in the 1990 World Conference on 'Education for All' in Jomtien, Thailand, which led to MoGE's crafting and recommended adoption of its education model or aim as follows:

> *"The fundamental aim of a school system of education is (or should be) to promote the integral, harmonious development of the physical, effective, moral and spiritual endowments of all students so that they can develop into complete persons for their personal fulfillment and for the common good of the society of which they are members and in whose responsibilities they will share as adults."*

The quality of education is high if the school is well-resourced with ***inputs*** such as highly qualified teachers, teaching and learning materials, infrastructure, relevant curriculum and students (World Bank Group, 2015 and UNESCO, 2011). On ***output*** level, assessment frameworks focus on measuring demonstrable competencies which benchmark performance and are perceived to provide insights on the quality of education provision. Consequently, the common *outputs* when measuring quality according to the economist's view, is the learner achievements based on the 3 Rs namely: reading, writing and arithmetic, pass rates, survival rates, gender parity indices, among others.

As part of its strategy to guarantee and sustain the quality of education as envisioned in its blueprints, the government of the republic of Zambia, has made it mandatory for all public schools to be centrally financed and funded through annual national budgets. One stream of funding aims at improving and increasing the educational institutions' capacity to absorb the ever increasing population of learners, which covers infrastructural investments i.e. increasing schools, classroom space, teaching - learning facilities, equipment, among others. The second aspect of financing covers staff emoluments and recruitment of new staff in order to balance teacher-pupil ratios, replace retired or dead staff and to expand the system in order to squarely deal with a demographic upswing (7NDP 2017-2021 & ZANEC, 2018).

Education Financing and Impact Prior to 2015

The Zambian government has since independence (1964) recognized education as a cornerstone of socio economic development and this realization has been a motivating factor for ***impressive rule-based (central government) budgetary allocations to the sector*** (World Bank Report, 2017). This means that financing or budgetary allocations to the sector are made to meet operational and investment expenditures without which the system would most likely fail to sustain quality, accessibility, relevance and equity benchmarks in education service provision.

In authenticating its governmental commitment to the sector, Zambia's historical trend in financial allocations to the education sector since 2005 through to 2015 has been well documented and shows an impressive steady growth in both real and nominal terms. For instance, between 2005 and 2013, the proportion of public expenditure on education in the total government expenditure was between 15.3 percent and 22.6 percent, which is translated to between 3.7 percent and 4.6 percent of GDP respectively. The ratio of government expenditure in education to GDP stayed strong and was projected to be higher in 2014 and 2015, exceeding 5 percent of GDP as the determination and momentum from central administration was decisively firm. This was relatively on the higher side in the region and comparable with other emerging economies. In real and nominal terms, government expenditure on education grew from ZMW1.5 billion in 2006 to ZMW5.2 billion in 2013. Furthermore, the budgetary allocations for 2014 and 2015 increased even higher to ZMW8.6 billion and ZMW9.4 billion respectively. Using the constant price of 2013, the public education expenditure also grew from ZMW3.0 billion to ZMW5.2 billion between 2006 and 2013 (World Bank Group, 2015, FNDP, 2006-2010; SNDP, 2011-2016).

By regional comparison and almost corresponding with the same timeframe (2006 to 2014), World Bank report (2016) reveals that within the region and sub-region in some countries, expenditure on education was generally near to above the global target of 20% benchmark. For instance, the report indicates that in 2010, the public spending on education was at 17.21% of the government expenditure in Kenya, 19.20% in South Africa, 24.4% in Ghana, 18.33% in Tanzania, 25.1% in Burundi, 15.04% in Uganda and 18.2% in Rwanda. This shows a gruesome and impressive picture of countries' pre-occupation to financing the sector, which averaged 19.6%, while in 2010, Zambia's expenditure on education was progressing upwards at 20% (MoF, 2010).

The statistical analyses of budgetary allocations to the sector in the immediate past foregoing two paragraphs, which was also consistent with the timings of the FNDP (2006-2010) and the SNDP (2011-2016), is indicative of the fact that the nation (Zambia) was on the firm trajectory and focus on matters of education investment and the sector was apparently benchmarked as a matter of priority and primary concentration in terms of financing. During this period, the nation witnessed massive expansion of the basic education subsector infrastructure as also prioritized in the MoGE Sector Plan implementing the FNDP (2006-2010). Nevertheless, what transpired from 2015 to 2019 becomes the pre-occupation of this study owing to its perceived dichotomous and sharp contrast to the envisioned input and output of the 2006 to 2014 investment focus in education. If adjudicated from the 2019 National budget (as statistically typified in the subsequent paragraph), the allocation to the sector has gone downwards to 15.1% (as at 2019), which is arguably the lowest in 20 years, whose supposed implications and ramifications the research paper hopes to uncover.

Gaps in Literature

From the recent past and contemporary literature reviewed, there is no study which has been systematically carried out in Zambia and Lusaka District in particular which evaluated the central government's financing inadequacies, causations and ramifications. To this end, this paper will bridge the knowledge gap and benefit educationists and central government through its findings for a possible reversal of the phenomena.

Theoretical Framework

A theory is a systematic body of knowledge or interrelated propositions systematically and logically presented to explain certain phenomena and help society interpret occurrences rationally. In other words, theories in such a study anchor or provide a solid foundation and focus which is a fundamental basis for academic scholarship. In an economic development sense, a theory is valueless unless its tenets are applicable, translates into meaningful results and improves people's quality of life in society. As its theoretical underpinning, this paper adopts the human capital theory as its anchor in explicating pertinent issues jig-saw-fitted to the necessity of investment in human capital through education financing.

The Human Capital theory was propounded by Schultz in 1961 and developed extensively by Becker in 1964.The theory is an economic rationalist approach which focuses on returns to investment in education. Education and training (human capital) increase worker productivity and hence the value of educated workers (Adan *et al*, 2013). Woodhall (1997) opines that "the concept of human capital refers to the fact that human beings invest in themselves, by means of education, training or other activities which raise their future incomes by increasing their lifetime earnings" (p.24). It is this aspect of the theory's tenet that informs the current study in as far as education financing and the resultant effect thereof is concerned. It is clearly worth-noting from this theoretical perspective that investing in the education of citizens is a critical requirement for the realization of socio economic benefits as well as personal upward social mobility.

There is, therefore, need to be alive to the fact that economists use the term *'investments'* to refer to the expenditure on assets which will produce income in the future, and contrast, investment expenditure with consumption, which produces immediate satisfaction or benefits but does not create future income (Mankiw, 2010). Assets which will generate income in the future are called capital. For a long time now, economic analysts limited their definition of investment and capital to physical capital such as machines, equipment or building which would generate income in the future by creating the productive capacity (Woodhall, 1997). However, Adam Smith a classical economist was the first to argue that education helped to increase the productive capacity of workers in the same way of purchase of a new machine, or other forms of physical capital (Ibid, 1997). Henceforth, an analogy was drawn between investment in physical capital and investment in human capital with a correlation being established.

Thus, governments which invest time, energy, and money into education do so with the expectation of securing a better outcome and enhanced lifetime earnings of the nation and per capita incomes of its people. At the individual level, increasing education (human capital) increases worker productivity and thus garners better employment and income for the themselves. At the social or aggregate level, general increments in the stock of human capital are supposed to increase overall productivity, wealth creation, prosperity, and social cohesion (OECD, 1998, 2001 cited in Edgerton *et al*., 2012:266). The most efficient path to national development lies in the improvement of its production and productivity. This theory stresses the need to train human resources for efficiency and sustainable development by deliberate investment in the education sector.

2.1 Conceptual Framework

The conceptual framework of a study is the system of concepts, assumptions, expectations, beliefs, and theories that support and informs research. Robson (2011) indicates that it is a key part of the design. Miles and Huberman (1994) defined a conceptual framework as a visual or written product, one that explains, either graphically or in narrative form, the main things to be studied and the key factors which may be concepts or variables and the presumed relationships among them.

This study has been guided by a conceptual framework depicting the probabilistic causal factors (exogenous variables) to the downward funding trend to Zambia's education sector, such as financial mismanagement, colossal public debt and donor aid shortfalls as independent variables (IV) while the public secondary school financing will depict the dependent variable (DV). **Figure 1.1** below shows the paper's Conceptual Framework.

Independent Variables

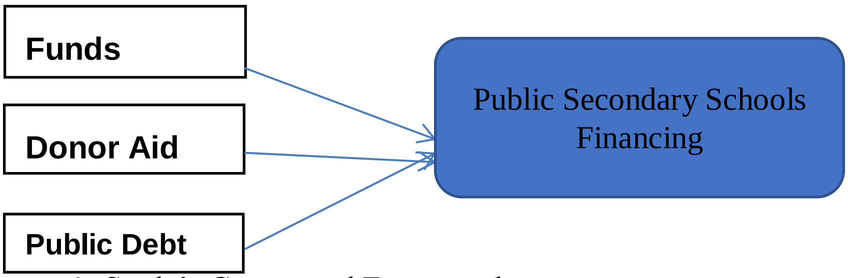

Figure 1: Study's Conceptual Framework

Source: Researcher (2019)

3.0 METHODOLOGY

In order to meet academic scholarship dictates, this paper utilizes an analytical desk review as methodological paradigm to ascertain data sets envisioned in set objectives while expert analysis was the anchor of analytical frame for determination of review outcomes.

4.0 RESULTS

4.1 Financing Trend (2015-2019) and Financial Inadequacies

With extensive review of secondary data and the analyses done, there is well-backed evidence that in nominal and real figures, the national budgetary appropriations to the education sector from 2015 to 2019 have been on a declining trend. Particularly, the sector's financing has been declining steadily as follows: 20.2% in 2015; 17.2% in 2016; 16.5% in

2017; 16.1% in 2018 and 15.1% in 2019 (Ministry of Finance National Budgets, 2015-2019]. Effectively, this trend signals a reduction in funding to the education sector from central government, contrary to the Cairo Protocol Convention (UNESCO) as re-affirmed by the Incheon Declaration of 2015, which requires a minimum education financing of 20% as annual funding to the sector (ZANEC, 2019) to carter for its needs. Additionally, in the 2016 Auditor General's Report lies indications to the effect that the percentage allocations highlighted above during this period under study do not actually translate into actual disbursements to the sector. Implying that in real terms, the dwindling allocations in financing the sector are far lower if adjudicated from the actual amounts, or figures which reach the sector from central government during implementation of the budgets annually.

It should be mentioned that the Zambian general education system encompasses three levels, namely: *the early childhood, primary and secondary schools*. From these levels, it is government policy to ensure that the early childhood and primary school levels are offered absolutely for free (universal free primary education – UFPE) from any form of tuition or user fees from any stakeholders, but that the central government would fund all operations of the school system in their entirety as a means of guaranteeing quality of service, accessibility, inclusivity and affordability in the absence of fee payments from learners.

On the other hand, the secondary school level was until recently allowed to charge minimal tuition / user fees of up to maximum of $46 per term to meet paltry operational expenses such as purchase of stationery and teaching-learning materials, but with strict directives to the school management from higher authorities not to deprive service to any pupil who fails to pay these meagre fees at any point during the subsistence of the term (MoGE, 2019). With this policy directive, it goes without saying that ***even at this level***, parents/guardians have an option not to pay the said tuition fees (as the policy restrain school managements from taking any punitive action against the non-paying pupils) thereby leaving the school system without any guaranteed internal financial resource generation except waiting from central government's purportedly erratic and inconsistent termly grants for such operational expenses.

In addition to the seemingly already existing financing inadequacies at school level to these public schools, the central government has as of 4th April, 2019 issued a policy directive to further reduce tuition / user fees in all public schools at secondary school level from about $46 to $11 and $15 for rural and urban schools respectively (MoGE, 2019) without giving any blue print undertakings to cushion the financing variance which may be created by such financial reductions as pronounced. Further, this directive is also said to have been issued by the MoGE Central Administration without any prior comprehensive consultation and research (with key stakeholders) regarding its potential consequences on quality in the education service provision at school level, which phenomenon might further compound the already perceived financial inadequacies in the sector and leaves a lot of questions pertaining to matters of quality of services being offered.

In a related development, earlier in the year (January, 2019), the MoGE called for an Education Conference with a number of educational stakeholders in Lusaka, Zambia. According to the then MoGE Minister, the conference, was among others, objectified to solicit for ideas on how the sector could be transformed to respond to the 21st century educational needs to the sector (Lusaka Times, 4th January, 2019). Although the MoGE had undertaken to publish the resolutions from this interaction within a few weeks from the date of the conference, as at the date of this publication (about a year later) there was without any publication nor notification to stakeholders regarding policy direction emanating from the said convocation. It should be emphasized that the realization of the MoGE to call for such a conference meant an understanding that there were some sectoral challenges to be resolved. However, the MoGE's inaction or delay in publication of such resolutions, which could arguably be said to be a panacea to the existing challenges, demonstrates another dimension of lack of focused and objective commitment to the internationally agreed upon benchmarks for the quality education provision.

4.2 Financial Loopholes

In Zambia, public funding for education traditionally flows from the MoGE to schools through a four-tiered administrative hierarchy involving the MoGE HQ, Provincial Education Offices (PEOs), the District Board Offices (DEBs), and finally to schools in a top-down hierarchy, of course from Ministry of Finance. The reviewed secondary data from the Media (Reuters, Lusaka 20th September, 2018) and the Auditor General's Reports, (2015-2018), have demonstratively highlighted that this bureaucratic financial disbursement and/or management channel constitute the basis for high risks of misappropriations, misapplication or simply non-disbursement by such recipient higher offices to recipient spending subsector entities. In September 2018, about 80 MoGE officials were suspended for misappropriation of over $10 million meant for school supplies while the 2015 to 2018 Auditor General's Reports indicate funds misapplications and misappropriations in the sector to the tune of **ZMW 256,253,712** and **ZMW 8,715,532** respectively, meant for curriculum development, books, computers, desks, infrastructure expansion, bursary etc.

Consistent with the foregoing, the American Government through its Ambassador in Zambia, His Excellency Daniel Foote, on 2nd December, 2019 made public the observed loopholes in the public sector in which donor funds were allegedly abused by public officers at the expense of the much needed social services in sectors like education and stated as follows:

> *"In recent history, numerous donor partners have carried out investigations with the cooperation of the Zambian government and concluded that many millions of dollars have been misappropriated in the Ministries of Community Development and Social Welfare, Education, and Health. In most cases, the Zambian government assumed responsibility and quietly made restitution to the donating organizations from public funds" (*Zambia Reports, 2nd December, 2019*).*

4.3 Donor Aid

Zambia is still a less developed country and part of its national budget revenue cushion comes from bilateral and multilateral aids. As per the recommendation by UNESCO to developed member countries (UNESCO, 2016) to assist less developed countries, Zambia has had all-weather financing co-operating partners / donors in the education sector and key among them being: Britain, Sweden, Ireland and Finland. Nevertheless, media reports and anecdotal assertions indicate that most, if not all of these donors have withheld (over $34 Million) annual funding to social services and education sector (Lusaka Reuters, 20th September, 2018), the scenario which, if affirmatively confirmed, would leave the sector with an abyss in as far as meeting quality education benchmarks is concerned unless other appropriate financing modes were found.

4.4 Zambia's Public Debt

In terms of fiscal space, Multilateral Institutions like the International Monetary Fund and the World Bank have repeatedly speculated that the rate at which the country was accumulating external debt relative to its GDP was highly risky, the position and conjecture which the central government has not admitted to. By June 2019, Zambia's official foreign debt stock stood at slightly above $10 billion dollars (MoF Publication, 2019) which was about 70% of the country's GDP. Other international Credit rating agencies like Moody downgraded Zambia from Caa1 (positive) to Caa2 (negative) stressing the increasing external debt, vulnerability and liquidity pressures, which by impairing the government's ability to service over the medium term, raised the probability of default over the near term (Lusaka Times, 24th May 2019). Whereas the 2019 National budget projected a 3.5 percent GDP growth rate (MoF National Budget, 2019), the IMF mid-year assessment projected a lower growth rate of about 2.3 percent closing the year 2019 (IMF Mid-Year Economic Assessment Report, 2019).

In what may be described as a correlation to the foregoing, the central government through its Secretary to the Cabinet issued a condensed and a vague memo to all civil servants in leadership / management portfolios, warning them to ensure effective and efficient implementation of government's expenditure austerity measures in dealing with "external factors'' affecting the growth of the economy. The Circular stated that, "Cabinet earlier this year made a decision to implement austerity measures to address the fiscal challenges … and respond to other external factors impacting negatively on the performance of the economy" (Cabinet Office Circular No. 12 of 2019 dated 10th September, 2019).

Whereas the 1980s declining financing for the education sector was occasioned by drastic declines in copper prices on the international market, the current trend has no such official attribution as copper prices have maintained a relatively lucrative and stable pricing (The Economist, 2018) during the period under review.

4.5 Discussion

The foregoing discourse under results has ably brought to the fore glaringly interesting indictments and *prima facie* evidence with great potential to stifle meaningful investment in the education sector if the picture portrayed is the reality on the ground.

It is a conventional fact, in academic discourse and practice that investing in education is the right path for any country's guaranteed national socio economic development. The conspicuous financing declines for the period under review and the seemingly convergence on the internal financial inadequacies and quagmires besetting the education sector in general, but the subsector in particular, should be a primary concern of not only the MoGE officials along with politicians but also all line stakeholders and the nation as a whole. The financing of the sector is evidently encumbered by multiple challenges both internally and externally. Externally, literature evidence from the trend analysis has categorically demonstrated steady decline for five years consecutively in terms of budgetary appropriations to the sector from central government, contrary to the Incheon Declaration in 2015 to the effect that countries must live within the prescribed 20% funding threshold. This trend, therefore, could be simply a tip of an ice-berg epitomizing glaring challenge within the sector in regard to service quality. On the internal frontline, there is sufficient corroboration in literature evidence that the sector's bureaucratic structure has been causal to manifold aspects of financial mismanagement such as misappropriation, misapplication and even failure to collect revenue from service beneficiaries. The Auditor General's report in the same period under review indict the ministry as being always on the wrong side with financial management (Auditor General's Reports, 2015-2018). Factually, media reports cite the MoGE HQ in 2018 when they misappropriated over $10 million meant for computer restocking in secondary schools (Lusaka Times, and ZANEC Press Statement, 19th September, 2018). These elements are precursor and pointers to the probable consequences and compromises on provision of service quality within the sector and might have far telling repercussions on the nation as a whole.

On the other hand, psychological and linguistic scholars opine to the fact that there cannot be 'smoke without fire' (Sheridan *et al*. 2010). In the light and context of the discourse at hand as reviewed and indicted in literature, the education sector's troubled financial situation emanates from plethora factors. Crucial among these factors is the fact that Zambia is still a less developed country and gets a large proportion of its budget funding from donors in what is called bilateral or multilateral aid. In most of the past cases, the donors funded up to the tune of about 30% of the national budget, most of which was allocated to social services in education and its subsectors particularly. With the indictment of donor aid shortfalls to the sector, it goes without saying that the sector's education quality service provision prospects and aspirations are at crossroads. This scenario is further compounded by the fact that the country is grappling with a huge external debt stock (of over $10 billion dollars) which seems to have consequenced the reduction and diversion of most of its domestically generated revenues to liquidating the same. In an analytical review conducted by Adeyemi (2011) in Nigeria, where he specifically focused on education financing in the face of the country's huge external debt stock, the researcher established a positive correlation between the declining education financing trend and external debt servicing periodicity. He contended that during the period, Nigeria's Ministry of Education budget never rose to above 17%, contrary to the UNESCO blue print of 20%.

In view of the foregoing, if there is inadequate financing for the sector, a commensurate corresponding impact should be anticipated. This is premised and also anchored on Shultz's (1961) and Becker's (1964) human capital theory and wisdom that if there is no financial investment in the education sector to raise human capital, there cannot be matching benefits of productivity, quality of life, efficiency, knowledge, cohesion in society, economic growth and development, quality job opportunities, poverty and inequality reductions. In other words, education is the foundation for sustainable human and socioeconomic development, which begins at the lowest levels of human development. With investment in physical, human, material and financial resources in the sector, tremendous improvement and quality outcomes should show such as reduced pupil-teacher ratios, reduced human resource attrition, better transitional and pass rates across levels, higher literacy levels, enrolment levels, recruitment of and quality of teaching staff, increased class room space, economic productivity, efficiency and effectiveness of the education system as a whole. This, however, is a far-fetched and a pipeline dream in the absence of consistent financing for the sector and this seems to be the reality on the ground going by the study's indications and signals. For instance, it is already on record that currently over 800,000 children of school-going-age are out of school and this number has been growing from 2015 when it was 195, 000 (which was proportionate to 1.3% of the 15,473,905 national population) grew to 250,000 (1.6% proportion of the 15,933,883 national population) in 2016, then to 762,600 (4.6% proportion

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of the 16,405,229 of the national population) in 2017 and 800,000 (which was 5% proportion of the national population) in 2018 (ESB,2015, 2016, 2017; ZANEC, 2018, Lusaka Times, 2019, Central Statistical Office 2018 July Report). Besides, while the transition rates have been staggered at 45% to grades 10 with the pupil to classroom ratio of 75:1 instead of 40:1 (Education Sector Strategic Plan (2017-2022). Figure 1.2 below shows the variations in national population growth relative to the number of children out of school from 2015 to 2018. These numbers, though being national figures and disaggregated, they include children in Lusaka district and should concern all stakeholders as underdevelopment due to illiteracy levels, poor decisions/choices, inequalities, poverty, fertility rates etc stand to swell.

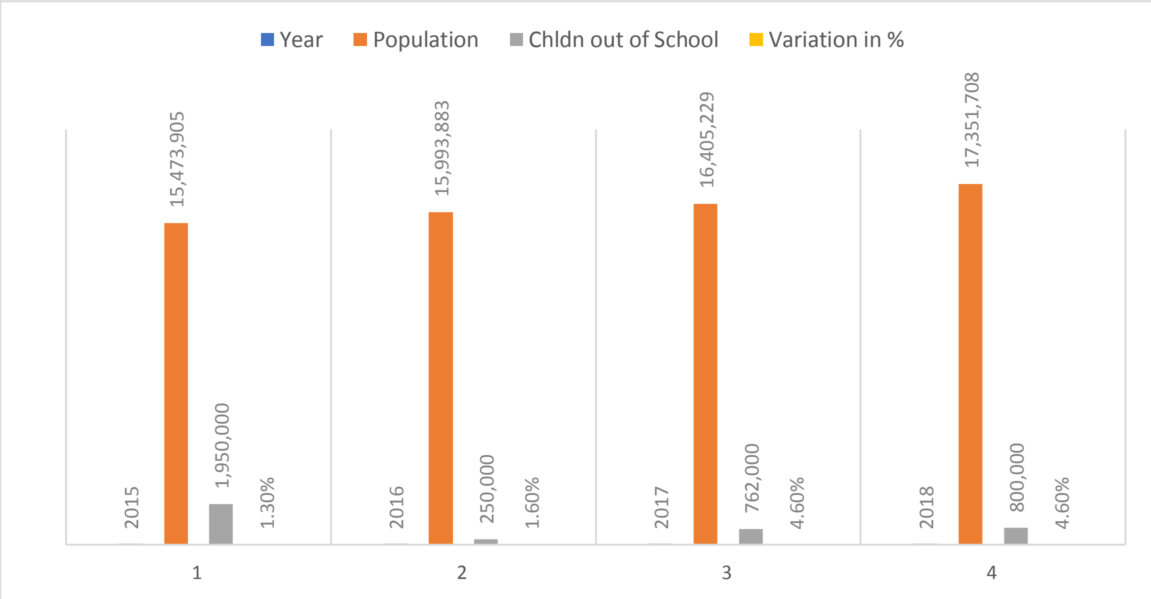

Figure 2: Population Variation to Children out of School

Source: Researcher (2019)

5.0 CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATION

Conclusions

From the reviewed and evaluated literature, there is sufficient evidence from government sources, media, academics and the MoGE line stakeholders agreeing to the fact that the declining financing phenomena in the sector are uncontestably real and contrary to the global benchmark of 20% minimum appropriation to the sector for its service quality needs. Literature has also demonstrated that the sector is beset with financial quagmires such as misappropriation and misapplication of funds meant for school supplies / materials and infrastructure expansion with sampled cited cases from both the media and the Auditor General's Reports. In terms of causation, the declining financing trend has been hypothesized to be consequenced by donors' funding shortfalls to the sector as well as the debt mountain with which the country is currently encumbered. Furthermore, evidence indicates that the government issued a Cab Memo as at 19th September 2019 announcing "austerity measures" though without any delineation and elucidation of the cause nor specific sectors/services to be affected by the same. As a result of all these events, the sector in general and the secondary school subsector in particular is feared to be marred with numerous compromises in its quest to render quality, accessible, inclusive, affordable and equitable education services as partly epitomized that within the trend period under review, children out of school figures have soared from 195,000 in 2015 to 800,000 in 2018 while the transition rates has been staggered at 65% to grade 8 and 45% to grade 10 with the pupil to classroom ratio of 75:1 instead of the normal 40:1. This record is unprecedented in the history of the education sector in Zambia and speaks volumes about the dire implications of the declining financing trend (from 20.2% in 2015 to 15.1% in 2019) to the sector, which phenomena need expeditious remedial measures by central government.

Recommendations

The paper strongly implores central government to take pragmatic policy measures aimed at curtailing the phenomena, including but not limited to, instilling seemingly lost confidence by the donors in financing the sector and diversifying the subsector's financing model.

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