African Journal of
Education and Practice
(AJEP)

SUSTAINABILITY OF UNIVERSAL FREE PRIMARY EDUCATION POLICY IN THE FACE OF DECLINING EDUCATION FINANCING IN LUSAKA, ZAMBIA

Chrine, C. Hapompwe and Dr. Tamala-Tonga Kambikambi, Ph.D.

IPRJB
INTERNATIONAL PEER REVIEWED JOURNAL AND BOOK PUBLISHING

African Journal of Education and Practice
ISSN 2519-0296 (online)
Vol.6, Issue 2.No.5. pp 62 - 78, 2020

IPRJB
INTERNATIONAL PEER REVIEWED JOURNAL AND BOOK PUBLISHING

www.iprjb.org

SUSTAINABILITY OF UNIVERSAL FREE PRIMARY EDUCATION POLICY IN THE FACE OF DECLINING EDUCATION FINANCING IN LUSAKA, ZAMBIA

[1*]Chrine, C. Hapompwe

Doctoral Researcher: Arts, Education & Social Sciences Cavendish University Zambia.

Author's E-mail – chrinehapompwe7@gmail.com

[2*]Dr. Tamala-Tonga Kambikambi, Ph.D.

Deputy Vice Chancellor: University of Zambia.

Corresponding Author's E-mail – kambikambit@gmail.com

Abstract

Purpose: This concept paper was objectified to assess the sustainability of the Universal Free Primary Education Policy (UFPE) implemented in 2002 by the government of the Republic of Zambia through the Ministry of General Education in the wake of declining education financing to the sector.

Methodology: The study utilized desk review and expert analysis as methodological paradigms.

Results: From the reviewed and analysed literature, there is scholarly convergence and consensus to the effect that the UFPE Policy was a worthwhile innovation by government as it exponentially increased public primary school net enrolment rates from as low as about 60% in 2000s to over 120% by 2014 underpinned by massive infrastructural development, consistent school supplies and teacher recruitments to match demand. However, the transpiration of 2015 and onwards bring the sustainability of the UFPE Policy into *conundrum* owing to consistent and steady declines in investment and operational financing to the sector by central government as shown in the variations between 2015's 20.2% and 2020's 12% of national budget to the education sector. Besides, the review established that the country's colossal debt stock (over $11 billion), low economic growth rate (2%) compared to population growth rate (3.8%) and some donors' withdrawal of their financial support to the sector budget along with funds mismanagement within the sector have been identified as major potential threats to the country's sustenance of the UFPE Policy to the effect that within the period under review, the total number of children out of school has soared to over 800,000 by 2019 from 195,000 in 2015 corroborating with the said period of budgetary retrogression of 12% in 2020 from 20.2% in 2015 but with the population growth rate of 3.8% in 2019 compared to the shrinking economic growth rate of 2% by close of 2019 from 4.6% in 2015. As a classic epitomic and microcosmic exemplification of the policy's envisioned glitches, the media in 2019 reported and showcased videos of women spending nights in Lusaka's public primary schools in a bid to access grade 1 places for their child/ward, a move which led to government suspending grade 1 enrolments in the district at the time upon confirmation of the phenomena by the Ministry of General Education.

Unique contribution to Policy & Theory: The results of this study are a wakeup call to educationists, politicians and the general citizenry to help in rethinking and retrospecting education policy. "*Leaving no one behind in providing quality education by 2030*" is a global education vision which Zambia has warmly embraced and domesticated and is consistent with the fundamental propositions of the human capital theory. Policy imperatives, therefore, demand that central government through the MoGE *walk the talk* in actualising this global blue print via prioritised and benchmarked financing to the sector for sustainability of equitable education quality as envisioned in the UFPE Policy (2002) and Educating our Future Policy (1996).

Key words: *Sustainability*, *UFPE* and *Education Financing.*

1.0 INTRODUCTION

Globally, education is deemed as a basic human right and basis upon which to build peace, harmony, national progress and sustainable development (UNESCO, 2018). This pristine global pedestal is equalled posited and heralded by the Southern Africa Development Community (SADC). Therefore, in keeping with the global and regional education blue prints, the government of the Republic of Zambia felt duty bound to enact the Universal Free Primary Education (UFPE) Policy envisioned to curb inaccessibility, unaffordability, inequity, and high school drop-out rates, which was meant to provide and guarantee the nation of reduced illiteracy levels in the population (Omoeva *et al*., 2018). The UFPE Policy was an act of government through the Ministry of General Education to abolish all manner of user fees as a way of eradicating accessibility barriers for children from grades 1 to 9. This meant that government had taken over total responsibility in making available all necessary and required resources for smooth running of these public schools in a manner which would not prejudice quality outputs. Particularly and emphatically, the abolition of tuition fees at this level implied that the central government had taken-over a life-time commitment and dedication to consistent and steady financing to the subsector for investments, operations and all activities of primary school life in order to strike a balance between the population growth and the number of schools / classrooms available to swallow all eligible children annually (Masaiti *et al.*, 2018).

Furthermore, government had entered into a sacred covenant to ensure subsistence and consistence of quality education by effectively managing equitable and optimal resource availability in terms of teaching staff, teaching learning materials, facilities and any other necessary infrastructure to circumvent and forestall any unforeseen service provision compromises within the subsector. Lusaka District, being the capital city of Zambia, has the highest number of schools compared to any single district in the country thereby permitting for marginal tolerance for extrapolation of results to other districts in similar circumstances and context as the phenomena under study have a universal implication. With this properly and contextually ascertained, this paper is purposed to assess the sustainability implications of the UFPE policy in the wake of the dwindling education financing to the sector from 2015 to 2020 in Lusaka District.

Problem Statement

Zambia's UFPE Policy was declared and instantaneously implemented in 2002 by the Ministry of Education envisioned to exponentially increase equity, affordability, quality, relevance and accessibility to education by all and promote socioeconomic well-being of all citizens, and to achieve a good quality of life for everyone (Phiri, 2015; GRZ, 2002 and Ministry of Education, 2003). Consistent with this vision and conviction, between 2006 and 2014, government's appropriations to MoGE annual budget increased which saw massive infrastructural development, increase in teacher recruitment, improved disbursement of grants to schools for operations coupled with the consistent supplies of teaching and learning materials (MoGE 2015a; 7NDP, 2017-2021; Seventh National Development Plan (SNDP), 2011-2016). However, there has been a consistent and steady decline in financing the sector from 2015's 20.2% to 2020's 12%, (Ministry of Finance National Budgets, 2015 to 2020; Masaiti *et al*., 2018), which poses a threat to the furtherance and aspiration of the country's sustenance to provide quality UFPE to all its eligible citizens as envisioned (Masaiti *et al*., 2018; World Bank, 2019) and the Primary Net Enrolment Ratio (NER) has been indicted as having declined in 2016 in certain provinces. There is little known about the sustainability implications of the UFPE Policy in the wake of the declining financing owing to limited scholarly literature available. As a matter of fact, early in 2019, MoGE called for education stakeholders' 'Indaba' in order to solicit for '*transformative ideas*' to aid the general education sector but subsequent anecdotal indictment showcased a flop of the 'Indaba' (Lusaka Times, April 2019). Therefore, the self-admission by MoGE to seek to solicit for 'ideas' from the public constitutes an indictment of knowledge / information gaps on how to sustain holistic quality performance of the sector. On the other hand, in January (2020) and March (2020), Hapompwe *et al.*, (2020) carried out desk review and empirical studies focusing on *factors accounting for low learner outcomes at grades 5 and 9 levels in Zambia*, and *evaluation of public secondary schools' education financing and its impact on service quality in Lusaka, Zambia*, respectively. All these two studies, though related by sectoral inclination, they were not focused conceptually and theoretically to *assess* the sustainability of the UFPE Policy, which still left gaps for the current study. Therefore, the study's question is, "what are the sustainability implications for the quality Universal Free Primary Education (UFPE) in the wake of declining financing to the sector and subsector alike in Lusaka District?

1.1.Study Objectives

1.1.1. Main Objective

To assess the sustainability of Zambia's UFPE Policy against the declining subsector financing in Lusaka District.

1.1.2. Specific Objectives

i. To assess the performance of the UFPE Policy over time.
ii. To determine central government's consistency in financing the education sector
iii. To identify threats to the sustainability of the UFPE Policy.

2.0 LITERATURE AND THEORETICAL REVIEW

1.2.National Population Upswing

Zambia is experiencing a large demographic shift and this trend is expected to continue as the large youth population enters reproductive age. In terms of age structure, the population under the age of 15years account 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). Therefore, the country overall has a young population which makes the provision of educational services to this population to be of strategic importance to government [Education for All (EFA), 2015].

1.3.*Lusaka District Schools Statistics*

In 2019 there were 90 public primary schools spread in urban areas of Lusaka District (DEBS Statistics, 2019) which were to contain 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) thereby making this infrastructure very competitive. It is noteworthy that the average number of primary schools in Lusaka district is more than the number of schools in the other districts within the province. 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 (Hapompwe *et al*., 2020c).

1.4.Country and Policy Context

Following a period of decline in education service delivery and performance due to growing *poverty* and *under investment* and in a decisive action to enhance the provision of basic education and curb all manner of equitable and accessibility barriers which incessantly existed since independence (1964), the government of the Republic of Zambia declared and instantaneously implemented the Universal Free Primary Education Policy (UFPE) in 2002 covering grades 1-9. The UFPE was envisioned to exponentially increase access to education to all, promote the socioeconomic well-being of all citizens, and to achieve a good quality of life for every citizen (Phiri, 2015).

Consistent with this conviction and vision, the trend of public education expenditure between 2006 and 2013 shows steady growth of education expenditure in both nominal and real terms. Government's expenditure on education grew from ZMW 1.5 billion in 2006 to ZMW 5.2 billion in 2013 in nominal terms. The budgetary allocations for 2014 and 2015 increased even higher to ZMW 8.6 billion and 9.4 billion. Using the constant price of 2013, the public education expenditure also grew from ZMW 3.0 billion to 5.2 billion between 2006 and 2013. The ratio of government expenditure in education to GDP stayed strong, by ranging between 3.7 percent and 4.4 percent during the period of 2006 through 2013, and it was projected to be higher in 2014 and 2015, exceeding 5 percent of GDP. This was relatively on higher side in the region and comparable with other emerging economies (World Bank, 2015) to ensure massive infrastructural development, teacher recruitment and teaching material supplies availability as also several co-operating partners committed and actualized their financial support and technical services to the cause.

The circumstance prior to the foregoing undertaking was such that although the country had experienced growth in the primary school subsector between 1972 and 1990, the gross enrolment rate was only about 59% (World Bank and UNICEF, 2009). Furthermore, "the system favoured a small minority who were believed to be academically sound to the detriment of the majority, hence promoting the spirit of selfish competition at the expense of co-operation (GRZ, 1976:1-14). To address this issue, the Education Reform Document

African Journal of Education and Practice
ISSN 2519-0296 (online)
Vol.6, Issue 2.No.5. pp 62 - 78, 2020

resolved to expand provision at primary level by, among others, conversion of buildings owned by absentee landlords, private homes, churches and community facilities into schools (Masaiti *et al*., 2018). All these aggressive undertakings were inspired by the realization that education was 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.

Consequently, randomized performance records indicate that between 2005 and 2015, a total of 14,235 classrooms were constructed at primary education level (7NDP, 2017-2021), the number of teachers increased from 50,123 in 2002 to 77,362 in 2009 (SNDP, 2011-2016) and pupil enrolments also increased from 2.5 million pupils in 2005 to 3.3 million in 2009 (Mambwe, 2010; Masaiti *et al*., 2018). On the other hand, over one third of the girls who became pregnant returned to school between 2002 and 2009. Over 200,000 students in basic schools were reached with improved water and sanitation (MoGE 2015a). Between 2014 and 2015, enrolments increased with the number of primary school children reaching up to 3,691,486 in 2014, coupled with improved water and sanitary infrastructure along with library facilities (MoGE 2016b). According to MoGE (2015a), the primary school Gross Enrolment Rate was at 120.8% by 2015. In buttressing the growth in the subsector, the World Bank 2016/2018 Reports placed Zambia's current net enrolment rates at 99%.

1.5. Performance of the UFPE

Studies by Mambwe (2010) indicate that the introduction of UFPE in Zambia in 2002 significantly improved access to primary education especially after declining enrolments in the 1990s. In trying to actualize effective implementation of the policy, from 2006 to 2010, funding to the education sector steadily increased from 2.9% to 3.5% of GDP and saw an improvement in school infrastructure. Teacher training programs also increased where the teacher supply matched the expansion of school enrollments (from 50,123 in 2002 to 77,362 in 2009). Student enrolment had increased from 2.5 million students in 2005 to 3.3 million in 2009 (SNDP, 2011-2016). Unfortunately, there is literature indictment to the effect that although there has been this generally good performance by the UFPE Policy, the picture began to change from 2015 (with 3,215,723 enrolment) onwards compared to (2014 enrolment figure of 3,691,486) showing a general decline in Primary Net Enrolment Ratio (NER) of 13% (Masaiti *et al.*, 2018:38).

1.6.Education Financing and Impact Prior to 2015

In actualizing its governmental commitment to the sector, Zambia's historical trend in financial allocations to the education sector from 2005 through to 2015 shows an impressive steady growth in both real and nominal terms (3.7 percent and 4.6 percent of GDP respectively, between 2005 and 2013) (World Bank Group, 2015; FNDP, 2006-2010; SNDP, 2011-2016).

1.7. Economic Recession, Debt Stock and Education Financing

Economists Todaro and Smith (2015) stress that it is difficult to pinpoint when the economy begins to decline due to lack of macro-economic perspective though one can analyse trends and various variables to draw conclusions on the state of the economy and its effect on education service provision. Historically, the Second Republic (1973 to 1991) was marred with economic meltdown owing to low copper prices at London Metal Exchange. This heavily negatively impacted as it declined government expenditures on social services, and increased external borrowing. It became extremely difficult to manage the education system during this period (Masaiti *et al.*, 2018).

Zambia was one of the countries which was granted debt relief by the international community just over a decade ago. In Zambia's past, debt has been a milestone which has held the country back: it held back growth by crowding out private sector activity; it stunned development by reducing the amount of money available for investment in health and education; and it made it harder for small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs) to access finance to grow (CTPD, 2018). On the other hand, the World Bank argues that *"an unsustainable debt burden would impact on poverty reduction in Zambia. It would reduce not only public investment and income growth, but would also reduce fiscal space for social spending as the cost of servicing the debt increases. Less money would be available to finance the government's national development plans. In the 1990s and early 2000s, high debt service costs directly reduced government budgetary allocations on health, education, and agriculture; and many social safety nets were eroded" (World Bank, 2017).*

Scholars' argument in the foregoing paragraphs squarely resonate with the notion that economic meltdown or recession and huge foreign debt stock to a country are inimical and menace to any meaningful investments and social spending by the indebted country as most of the resources would be channeled to principal and interest loan payments while aggregate local demand for products dwindles due to low productivity and lack of production. In this regard, therefore, it is necessary to state that the sustainability of equitably free primary education to all becomes not only a pipe-line dream but also a nightmare if a country found itself drowned into such economic doldrums and quagmires.

1.8.Gaps in the Literature

'Leaving no one behind in the provision of quality education' especially at elementary levels has been the clarion herald of UNESCO to all countries under its charter globally and Zambia inclusive. There is, however, a notable anecdotal trend of declension and departure from this global benchmark in Zambia's education system and seemingly no well-focused study has been conducted to bring out the facts surrounding the phenomena. In January (2020) and March (2020), Hapompwe *et al.,* (2020) carried out desk review and empirical studies focusing on *factors accounting for low learner outcomes at grades 5 and 9 levels in Zambia*, and *evaluation of public secondary schools' education financing and its impact on service quality in Lusaka, Zambia*, respectively. All these two studies, though related by sectoral inclination, they were not focused conceptually and theoretically to *assess* the sustainability of the UFPE Policy, which then still left gaps for the current study. The studies by Masaiti *et al.*, (2013), Masaiti *et al*., (2016) and Mulamfu (1998) also from the Zambian context focused on *cost sharing among students in public higher learning institutions, shifting from bursary to loan scheme*, and *financing public higher learning institutions* respectively - all somehow related but with different focus and contexts to the current study's conceptual and contextual focus. Early in 2019, MoGE called for education stakeholders' meeting in order to solicit for 'transformative ideas' to aid the general education sector but subsequent anecdotal indictment showcased a flop of the indaba (Lusaka Times, April 2019). The self-admission by MoGE to seek for 'ideas' from the public constitutes an indictment in knowledge / information gaps in

African Journal of Education and Practice
ISSN 2519-0296 (online)
Vol.6, Issue 2.No.5. pp 62 - 78, 2020
www.iprjb.org

the sector thereby necessitating the spawn of such studies to bridge the same. On the other hand, the study by Ntawiha (2016) concentrated on the *implications of inputs for outputs for public secondary schools* from the Rwandan context and focused more on pedagogical and classroom-based factors at secondary school levels of education thereby leaving the assessment aspect of the UFPE Policy at primary school level, which is the primary focus of this study.

1.9. Theoretical and Conceptual Framework

1.9.1. 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. The Human Capital theory was propounded by Schultz in 1961 and developed extensively by Becker in 1964 (Adan *et al*., 2013). 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 (1997:24) 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". 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.

Consequently, there is 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). 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, which is the clarion call of this paper against the odds of financing declines to the sector.

Anchored on the pragmatic pedestal of the foregoing theory which lays profound emphasis on the need for human capital investment by government to steer the course of national development, the declining education financing to the sector, which essentially poses a threat to human capital investment, must cause a stir and public concern not only to the politicians but the donors and the general citizenry of the country as the future of the nation seems to be bleak with the phenomena at hand. Without consistent investment in the sector but with the upswing service demand through population explosion, quality education service sustainability becomes a far-fetched dream, hence the need to religiously adhere to the bright / practical prescriptions of this model for the country's socio economic salvage.

1.9.2. 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) observe that it is a key part of the design. Miles *et al.*, (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 paper has been guided by a conceptual framework depicting the probabilistic or potential threat variables / factors (independent variables) to the sustainability of the quality UFPE Policy to Zambia's education sector such as population explosion, financial mismanagement, public debt and donor aid shortfalls as independent variables (IV) while the UFPE Sustainability will depict the dependent variable (DV). **Figure 1** below shows the paper's Conceptual Framework.

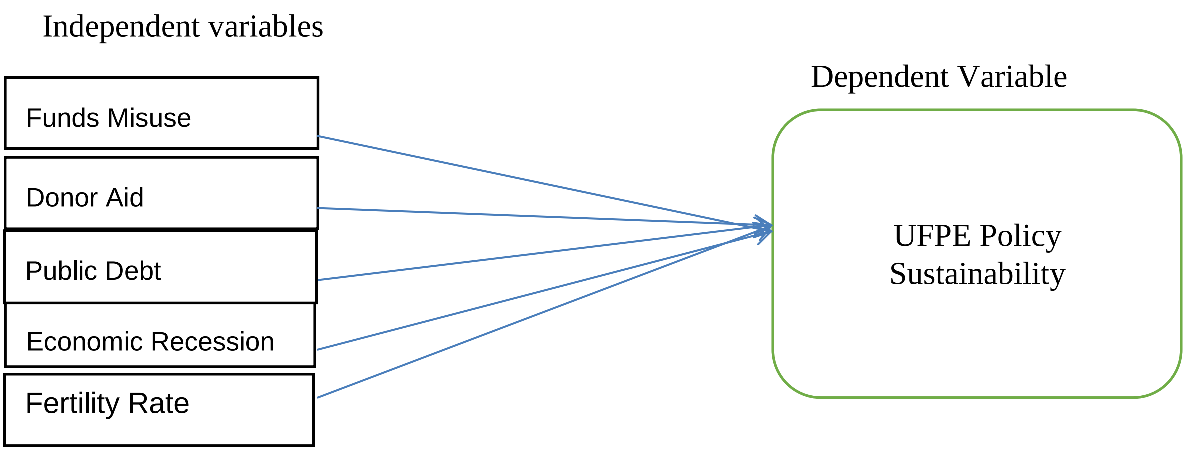

Figure 1: Study's Conceptual Framework

Source: Author's Own Construction (2019)

2.0.METHODOLOGY

This was a forerunner paper (concept) to the subsequent empirical study and as such, it utilized analytical desk review of contemporary secondary data as methodological designs to ascertain data sets envisioned in set objectives while expert synthetic analysis was the basis of analytical frame for determination of review outcomes.

3.0.RESULTS

3.1. Performance of the UFPE Policy Overtime

Literature evidence has demonstrated that the UFPE Policy has to a greater degree performed fairly well from its inception (2002) to about 2014. According to MoGE (2015a), the primary school Gross Enrolment Rate had hit 120.8%, with overall enrolments reaching 3,691,486 by 2014, representing 93% of the children of school going age. However, there was reduction in 2015 when 3,215,723 were enrolled representing a 13% variation from 2014. In fact, media and anecdotal government reports indicate government's admission of the challenges in meeting education demand during the period under review. Furthermore, from 2015 to 2019, the number of children out of school aggregately has exponentially increased from 195,000 (ESB, 2016) in 2015 to over 800,000 (Zambia National Education Coalition, 2018 and Lusaka Times, 3rd May, 2019) in 2019, a 76% increase.

The foregoing statistical figures and analysis, epitomize the fact that the UFPE policy declared in 2002 by government through the MoGE performed relatively well as noted from enrollment figures up to 2014 when 120.8% net enrollment ratio was achieved – a record which was more of a climax during the subsistence of the policy. This record was as a result of government's commitment and determination to score on its education blue prints which saw consistent investments in class room / school infrastructure expansion, consistent teacher recruitment and school supplies to match demand through benchmarked annual budgetary financing of 20% (or more) as per the UNESCO standard. The glitches seem to have begun in 2015 and beyond, correlating with the genesis of the education financing declining phenomena.

3.2.Financing Trend (2015-2020) and Controls

Budgetary tracking records and reviewed Ministry of Finance National Budgets for the periods spanning from 2015 to 2020 have clearly shown that the national budgetary appropriations to the education sector from 2015 to 2020 (20.2% in 2015; 17.2% in 2016; 16.5% in 2017; 16.1% in 2018, 15.1% in 2019 and 12% in 2020) have been on a dwindling trend (Ministry of Finance National Budgets, 2015-2020]. A close expert analyses of the financing trend to the MoGE sector based on the 20% minimum standard for the periods 2015 to 2019, indicate that in real terms the MoGE lost in underfinancing colossal sums of money amounting to over **ZMW 10.5 billion (US $ 659,280,050)** which sum was almost equal to the entire sector's budget for the year 2017. The information clearly demonstrates that from 2016 onwards, there was no time that government funded the sector to the benchmark except to decrease consistently from **ZMW 1.528.00 billion (US $ 95,500,000)** in 2016 to over **ZMW 4 billion** (**US $255,340,875**) in 2019. Additionally, in the 2015 to 2017, Auditor General's Reports lie 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.

African Journal of Education and Practice
ISSN 2519-0296 (online)
Vol.6, Issue 2.No.5. pp 62 - 78, 2020

Table 1: Education Budget & Disbursement (2015-2017)

Table 1 below demonstrates further that in addition to the under financing acknowledged here, the same amounts budgeted does not reach the MoGE.

Year	Allocations ZMW	Disbursed ZMW	Under disbursement ZMW	% Under disbursement
2015	8,527,887,660	7,061,931,985	1,465,955,675	17.2
2016	2,582,718,744	2,183,920,068	398,798,676	15
2017	1,533,382,856	783,809,839	749,573,018	49
Total	**12,643,989,260**	**10,029,661,892**	**2,614,327,369**	**25.55**

Source: Hapompwe *et al.,* (2020b)

Table 1 above shows that out of the total allocation of **K8,527,887,660** only **K7,061,931,985** was disbursed to the sector in 2015 while **K2, 183,920,068** was disbursed in 2016 out of the total budgetary allocation of **K2,582, 718,744**. In 2017, **K1,533,382,856** was allocated but only **K783,809,839** was released thereby giving the overall *under disbursement* of **K 749,573,017.00**. The situation here implies 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. This observation was made by Masaiti et al., (2018) who lamented under disbursement to the sector and in some cases to schools by MoGE and its higher subsectors.

4.3 Threats to the sustainability of the UFPE Policy

3.2.1. 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. The reviewed secondary data 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 (Reuters, 20th September, 2018; Auditor General's Reports, 2015-2018). Moreover, the Auditor General's Reports in the same period under review indicted the ministry as being consistently on the wrong side with application financial regulations and management (Auditor General's Reports, 2015-2018). In the same vein, media reports cited the MoGE HQ in 2018 as having misappropriated over $10 million meant for computer restocking in secondary schools (*Lusaka Times, and ZANEC Press Statements*, 19th *September*, 2018).

3.2.2. Donor Aid

Zambia has had donors contributing finances annually to MoGE sector budget to cushion its financing of school activities, materials and construction of school infrastructure, among others. This was in recognition of the country's being a developing country (needy) and the fact that philanthropism is part of the mission blue prints of the donors (UNESCO, 2016). However, *prima facie* evidence, indicate that most of these donors (Canada, Denmark, Netherlands) have completely closed their assistance and left the country while others like Ireland and others have equally pulled out of the pool fund and no longer support the MoGE sector budget annually. A key note interaction with one of the donor officials who was part of the pool fund initiative categorically indicated lack of transparency, accountability and prudence in financial management as being among the key reasons for donors' withdrawal of support to the sector. While presenting the 2018 National Budget, the then Minister of Finance, Hon Felix Mutati confirmed non- disbursement of grants from co-operating partners (Budget Speech, 2018, Hon. Felix Mutati, p.g. 5-7).

Additionally, in their in-depth investigation of the phenomena, Hapompwe *et al*., (2020b), quoted one of the donors' representatives as stressing that:

> *"The country was not in want of further policies, treaties, conventions and laws to guide the education sector in providing quality service but that the practice, attitude and applications of existing standards, controls, policies etc. were fundamentally absurd and did not inspire confidence in donors' sustainable contributions to the sustainable growth, expansion and development of the sector. The system is leaking and most donors will put no more funds in the education system for now until the controls are enhanced."*

The financial inadequacies within MoGE phenomenon has left the donors' confidence levels reduced to the extent that some of them have withdrawn their annual budgetary support to the sector to the detriment of the subsector. In most of the past cases, the donors funded up to the tune of about 36% of the national budget (Masaiti *et al*., (2018), most of which was allocated to social services in education and its subsectors particularly. With the reality 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 has, partly, consequenced the reduction and diversion of most of its domestically generated revenues to liquidating the same (Hapompwe *et al*., 2020a).

3.2.3. Zambia's Public Debt

Government through the then Minister of Finance admitted the escalation of debt to levels becoming unmanageable. She stressed that, "increased debt service payments were having an adverse impact on the budget and there was a need to reduce debts to sustainable levels. A cabinet meeting held on Monday took note of the high levels of debt service costs over the next three years compared with last year. Zambia's external debt had increased to $10.178 billion at the end of the first quarter of this year (2019) from $10.05 billion at the end of 2018. The country's 2018 fiscal deficit stood at 7.5% of gross domestic product (GDP), higher than an earlier government projection of around 7%" (*Lusaka Times, 29th May 2019).* This scenario definitely, incapacitates government's effective allocations of funds to the education sector. Corroboratively, Adeyemi (2011) examined the financing of education in Nigeria during the time of the country's huge debt stock. He highlighted the sources of

African Journal of Education and Practice
ISSN 2519-0296 (online)
Vol.6, Issue 2.No.5. pp 62 - 78, 2020
www.iprjb.org

financing of education in developed and developing countries while the Nigerian *external debt stock* and the *level of debt servicing were given*. The study showed the total revenue accruing to the Federal Government and the amount of money allocated to the education sector at various periods indicating deficits in the funding of the education system. The findings further revealed that the funding of education had not been up to 17% in any given financial year despite the UNESCO minimum standard of 20% of national budget.

3.2.4. Zambia's Economic Recession

A recession is an economic situation in which a country experiences negative growth in gross domestic product (GDP) in two consecutive quarters of the year (Afima, 2017). Historically, by 2011, the country's economy was growing at an average of 6.5% per annum. The debt stood at 21% of GDP and debt service was 11% of GDP and budget deficit averaged 2.6% of GDP per annum with stable exchange rate and single digit inflation. The average income per head was above US$1,600, which prompted the World Bank to reclassify Zambia to a lower middle-income country (Lusaka Times, 13th May, 2019). However, beyond 2011, there has been a resounding reversal of almost all the economic gains that the country had recorded in the previous years. Factually, by 2017, debt stock had increased to a whopping **57%** of GDP from a modest **21%** of GDP in 2011. Debt service as a share of domestic revenues had increased to **29%** in 2017 from **11%** in 2011 (and currently stands at **42%** in 2019). Economic growth declined from the 6.5% per annum on average during 2000-2011 to a meager of **3.5%** per annum during 2015-2018. Exchange rate has soared from ZMW4.80 per US$1.00 in 2011 to ZMW14.65 per US$1.00 in November 2019, meaning that the Kwacha lost **174%** of its value over the period. International reserves have drastically declined to about one month of import cover in 2019 from over four month's cover in 2011. The ratio of domestic budget deficit has equally soared from 2.6% in 2011 to 42% in 2019 (ibid). The scenario here signals the fact production and productivity is greatly hampered thereby triggering fiscal challenges.

3.2.5. Population Explosion and Education Provision

Zambia's population is growing at the rate of 3.3% (from **3,449,000** in 1964 to **16,212,000** by 2015) with proportionately high numbers being of school going age with **41%** being children below the age of 15 years. This is contrary to the fixed sector's class room space and infrastructural expansion occasioned by declining public financing (Masaiti *et al*.,2018).

4.0 DISCUSSION OF RESULTS

The foregoing sections have provided a firm and profound motif to the subject matter question of sustenance of the the UFPE policy against the odds of declining subsector financing. The discourse has ably provided intriguing academic and in some cases empirical evidence to the effect that the policy was well thought out by government in 2002 and that to a great extent, its performance through a decade and half has been good. This section, therefore, is poised to provide some further insights on the main implicative themes of the study.

Literature has demonstrated beyond all reasonable doubt that in the period between 2002 and 2009, 14,235 class rooms for public primary schools were constructed while the enrollments soared from 2,500,000 in 2005 to 3,300,000 in 2009. Furthermore, between 2010 and 2014, the enrollment hit the highest at 3,691,486 at primary school level. The number of teachers also increased from 50,123 in 2002 to 77,362 in 2009 (SNDP, 2011-2016) (MoGE, 2015a; MoGE 2016; Masaiti et al., 2018). On face value, these statistical figures show extremely great performance of the the subsector as they entail that service accessibility, equity and quality was being met. It should, however, be noted that there were a number of factors which necessitated the achievement of this relatively bright account. Primary among these factors was the fact that the central government marshalled and mobilized huge resources which were invested in the subsector consistently. Statistical account shows that during the period of the policy up to 2015, government progressively increased annual appropriations to the sector for investment, operations and activities to the tune of 2.6% of GDP in 2006 to 3.5% of GDP in 2009 while between 2005 to 2014, the figures increased from 3.7% of GDP to 4.6% of GDP. Ostensibly, government increased allocations to the sector from 15.3% to 22.6% (World Bank Group, 2015; FNDP, 2006-2010; SNDP, 2011-2016).

Unfortunately, after 2015, the question of sustainability of the UFPE Policy comes into question. The MoGE (2016b) and Masaiti *et al*., (2018) give an account of reduction in the enrollment of the subsector in that the variation (13%) between 2014 (3,691,486) and 2015 (3,215,723) was too huge and not representative of the demand ceiling. Additionally, it is also noteworthy that the declining enrollments are coinciding with the declining financing to the sector (from 20.2% in 2015 to 12% in 2020). There is evidence adduced from government records to the effect that the number of children out of school have been exponentially increasing (195,000 in 2015 to 250,000 in 2016 and 762,000 in 2017 while 2018 recorded over 800,000) (Education Statistical Bulletin, 2016 & 2017; ZANEC, 2019) and the Minister of General Education in Lusaka had to close registration of grade 1 pupils for 2020 intake owing to parents sleeping in schools to scramble for limited available space.

The scramble for space demonstrates inadequate capacity by the subsector to absorb all eligible learners at the pace of population explosion. There is enough literature evidence suggesting that government has ceased all capital investments of school infrastructure as a result of austerity measures imposed due to a ballooning foreign debt stock which is currently around $11 billion for which the country has no capacity to liquidate. A critical analysis of the 2019 and 2020 national budgets show that over 87% of the budgets is spent on debt repayment and personnel emoluments, leaving only a paltry 13% for investment. This scenario has been compounded by the withdrawal of donors from supporting MoGE sector budget due to lack of transparency and accountability in the management of financial resources.

On the other hand, the Auditor General's report in the period 2015 to 2018 indict the ministry as being mostly on the wrong side in financial management (Auditor General's Reports, 2015-2018). Factually, media reports cite the MoGE HQ in 2018 of misappropriation of donor fund in excess of $10 million meant for school supplies (ZANEC, 2018). These elements threaten to eclipse the sustainable provision of equitable education to all at primary school level. Factually, while analysing the 2016, 2017 and 2018 grades 9 and 12 district national results, the Lusaka district office lamented that:

"An analysis of our Grades 7, 9 and 12 pupils' pass rates over the last two/three years (2016, 2017 & 2018) show a mixed performance of both poor and improved results obtained in

terms of quality. However, one thing that remains constant across the 2 levels is that a much smaller percentage of learners obtain quality results (Division 1 and 1 – 4 for grade 9 and 12 Learners. And this could be attributive to teacher's work culture / attitude, pedagogical challenges, truancy, absenteeism, poor motivation, no optimal use of resources."

Furthermore, the district office further stressed that owing to erratic funding in recent years, there scaled down inspections and visits to schools as the district did not even have a utility vehicle currently to ensure effective supervision and management of the schools under its jurisdiction. Congestion in schools, lack of enough teachers, insufficient teaching learning materials, inadequate physical facilities and schools were pointed out as the district's major challenges coupled with reduced and erratic government grants. It was concluded that if donor confidence would not be restored by various government interventions such as proper accountability and transparency in the use of sector funds, effective and efficient management of the economy, moderation in the levels of debt acquisition, among others, the sector in general and the subsector in particular was headed for a tragedy as the trajectory currently operational was not inspiring (Hapompwe *et al*., (2020b).

5.0 CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATION

Conclusions

From the literature results garnered and analysed, there is scholarly convergence and consensus to the effect that the UFPE Policy was a well thought out agenda by government through the MoGE and performed fairly and progressively well against its set targets up to 2014. However, the literature account has demonstrated glitches and bleak future of the policy from 2015 onwards, largely due to government's declining financing to the sector, which has constantly trended from 20.2% in 2015 to 12% in 2020. Moreover, the country's colossal debt stock (over $11 billion), low GDP (2%) compared to population growth rate (3.8%) and some donors' withdrawal of their financial support to the sectoral budget coupled with funds mismanagement within the sector have been identified as major threats to the country's sustenance of the UFPE Policy to the effect that within the period under review, the total number of children out of school nationally has soared to over 800,000 in 2019 from 195,000 in 2015 correlating with the budgetary declining period of 12% in 2020 from 20.2% in 2015 but with the population growth rate of 2.8% in 2015 and 3.8% in 2019.

Recommendation

The clarion call is the urgent reversal of the declining financing phenomena and restoration of the UFPE past investment glory by government in order to guarantee human capital development for national development. Prioritization of expenditure to the sector coupled with optimal resource utilization cannot be over-emphasized in the wake of the growing demand for education service occasioned by population upswing. Policy imperatives, therefore, should be to take cognisance of weak financial systems and controls for amenable reforms which would equally rekindle the donors' seemingly lost confidence in financing the sector.

REFERENCES

Adeyemi, T.O. (2011). *Financing of Education in Nigeria: An Analytical Review*. Department of Education Foundation and Management. Ado-Ekit: University of Ado-Ekit, Nigeria.

Auditor General's Report. (2018). Lusaka-Zambia.

Auditor General's Report. (2017). Lusaka-Zambia.

Auditor General's Report. (2016). Lusaka-Zambia.

Auditor General's Report. (2015). Lusaka-Zambia.

Becker, G. (1964). *Human Capital: A Theoretical and Empirical Analysis with Special Reference to Education.* New York: Columbia University Press.

Central Statistical office. (2017). *Census of Housing and Infrastructure.* Lusaka: CSO.

Central Statistical office. (2010). *Census of Housing and Infrastructure.* Lusaka: CSO.

Education Statistical Bulletin. (2016). Lusaka: MoGE HQ.

Education Statistical Bulletin. (2015). Lusaka: MoGE HQ.

Edgerton, J. D., Roberts, L. W., Von Below, S. (2012). Education and Quality of Life, in Land, K. C., Sirgy, M. J., Michalos, A. C. (editors), *Handbook of Social Indicators and Quality of Life Research, Springer.*

Hapompwe, C. C., Karim, A. M. & Kambikambi, T. T. (2020b). An Evaluation of Public Secondary Schools' Education Financing and Its Impact on Service Quality in Lusaka, Zambia. *African Journal of Education and Practice*, 5 (2),19 – 32.

Hapompwe, C. C., Karim, A. M., Kambikambi, T. T. & Milimo, V. (2020a). Assessment of Factors Accounting for Low Learner Outcomes in Core Subjects Among 5th and 9th Graders in Zambia's Public Schools. *African Journal of Education and Practice*, 6 (1), 1 – 18.

Hapompwe, C. C., Karim, A. M. & Kambikambi, T. T. (2020c). An Evaluation of Public Secondary Schools' Education Financing and Its Impact on Service Quality in Lusaka, Zambia. *African Journal of Education and Practice*, 6 (2), 13 – 32.

Lusaka Times Newspaper; *Education Sector Has Not Received any Funding for 2018 as at 17th July*, 2018. Lusaka: Zambia.

Mankiw, G.N. (2010). *Macroeconomics*: 7th Ed: New York, Worthy Publishers.

Masaiti, G. (ed.) (2018). *Education in Zambia at Fifty Years of Independence and Beyond.* Lusaka: UNZA Press.

Masaiti, G., Mwelwa, K., and Mwale, N. (2016). *Shifting from Government Bursaries to a Loan Scheme in Higher Education: Exploring the Zambian Experience in Student Financial Aid*. Ministry of Higher Education (MOHE), Lusaka: University of Zambia.

Ministry of General Education (MoGE) (2015). *2015 Annual Progress Report on Performance, January-December*. Lusaka: Zambia Publishing House.

Ministry of General Education (MoGE). (2015). *"Education for All 2015 National Review Report: Zambia". Revised version* – original published in 2014. Available online: http://unesdoc.unesco.org/images/0023/002315/231573e.pdf

MoGE. (2016b). *Education Statistical Bulletin 2015*. Ministry of General Education: Lusaka.

MoGE. (2015a). *Education Statistical Bulletin*. Ministry of General Education: Lusaka.

MoGE. (2015b). *Standards and Evaluation Guidelines*. Ministry of General Education: Lusaka.

Mulamfu, J. *(1998). Empirical Evaluation of Financing University Education in Zambia. An MBA Thesis.* Kitwe: Copperbelt University.

Ntawiha, P. (2016). *Educational Inputs and their Implications for Output in Public Secondary Schools in Nyarugenge and Nyamasheke Districts, Rwanda: Ph.D. Thesis*

Omoeva, Carina & Moussa Wael. (2018). The Long-Term Effects of Universal Primary Education: Evidence from Ethiopia, Malawi, and Uganda EPDC. *Research Paper No. 18-02.* Washington, D.C.

Organization for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) (1998). *Human Capital Investment: An international comparison*. Paris: Centre for Educational Research and Innovation and OECD.

Phiri, G.G. (2015). *The Impact of Free Primary Education in Zambia: A Case of Chipata District* – Eastern Province. Masters Dissertation.

Republic of Zambia Cabinet Office Circular No. 12 of 2019*: The General Efficiency and Cost Effectiveness of Public Service. Lusaka.*

Schultz, T. W. (ed.). (1961). Investment in Human Beings. *Journal of Political Economy, 70 (5),1-9.*

Todaro, M.P and Stephen Smith, (2015). *Economic Development (12th Ed.)*. New York: Pearson.

UNESCO. (2018). *Annual Report (11th Ed.*) Lusaka: UNESCO.

UNESCO. (2016). *Education 2030 Agenda: Incheon Declaration. UNESCO Publishing.*

Woodhall, M. (2007). *Funding higher education: The contribution of economic thinking to debate and policy development*. Washington: World Bank.

World Bank Group. (2018). *The World Bank Group in Zambia – Report No. 128467-ZA.* Lusaka: World Bank.

World Bank Group. (2017). *The World Bank Group in Zambia*. Lusaka: World Bank.

World Bank. (2016). *Strengthening Evidence-based Policymaking with Education statistics and Analysis Report*; Re535635. Ukraine.

World Bank. (2019). *Financing Education in Africa*. Washington DC: World Bank.

World Bank Group. (2015). *Education Global Practice: Zambia Education Public Expenditure Review at a Glance.* International Bank for Reconstruction and Development: Washington DC.

World Bank. (2012). *Zambia Poverty Assessment: stagnant poverty and inequality in a natural resource-based economy*. Washington, DC: World Bank.

Zambia's 7th National Development Plan (7NDP) (2017-2021).

Zambia's 6 th National Development Plan (6NDP) (2011-2016).

Zambia's 5th National Development Plan (5NDP) (2006-2010).

Zambia National Education Coalition *(ZANEC) 2019 Press Statement.*

Zambia National Education Coalition *(ZANEC) 2018 Pre-Budget Press Statement.*

Zambia's Vision 2030 *: Education for All 2015 National Review Report: Zambia.(efa2015reviews@unesco.org).*