



# Benefits and Challenges of the Rural Upgraded Secondary Schools in the Provision of Quality Education in Luano District of Central Province, Zambia

Jonas Simbeye<sup>1</sup>, Nephat Kasebusha<sup>2</sup>

<sup>1</sup>Chalimbana University, Zambia

<sup>2</sup>Kapiri Girls National Technical Secondary School

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## Abstract

*The aim of the study was to determine the benefits and challenges of the rural upgraded secondary schools in Luano district. The study was conducted in Luano district of Central Province of Zambia. The study theorized the study by using Spencer's Structural Functionalist Theory. The study used qualitative and quantitative research methods to collect, integrate and analyze data. The study utilized a descriptive research design. The study's target population were all head teachers, heads of departments, and subject teachers in the selected upgraded secondary schools. The research instruments used in the study were questionnaires and an interview guide. Qualitative data were analyzed using the thematic method. Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SSP) was used to generate descriptive statistics in frequency table and bar graph. The study shows that the upgraded secondary schools in Luano district face significant challenges, which include the sharing of classrooms with the primary section, lack of enough furniture, lack of libraries in, schools poses a substantial challenge in the upgraded secondary schools, lack of laboratories in the upgraded secondary schools is a challenge to upgraded secondary schools lack enough specialized trained teachers in other subjects hinders effective functioning of the schools, lack of enough financial resources poses challenges among the upgraded secondary lack of enough teaching and learning resources as challenges faced by the upgraded secondary schools. The government should establish more classrooms to cater to the increasing enrolment. The government should construct laboratories in upgraded rural secondary schools; the government should build libraries in upgraded rural secondary schools, and the government should increase funding for upgraded rural secondary schools; the government should deploy more secondary school teachers in the upgraded rural secondary schools, the government should procure furniture for the upgraded rural secondary schools through the Ministry of Education.*

## I. BACKGROUND TO THE STUDY

At independence, Zambia had one of the most poorly developed education systems of Britain's former colonies, with just 109 university graduates and 0.5 percent of the population estimated to have completed primary education.

Among these, African women were almost absent. The country has since invested heavily in education at all levels. Compulsory education begins at seven years. Secondary education is divided into two cycles, the first lasting two years and the second lasting three years (MOGE, 2013). When Zambia gained independence up to the time of the

MMD, Zambia was operating on two education systems that are primary and secondary. However, this system was later abandoned by the MMD government, which introduced the basic and high school system. When the Patriotic Government came into power in 2011, the Minister of Education, announced on 20<sup>th</sup> October 2011 that the government abolished the basic schools' system and re-introduced the grade 1 to 7 primary and grade 8 to 12 secondary school system.

Nawa (2010) discussed that, with limited infrastructure and resources in the education sector, it would be impossible for Zambia to achieve the Education For All (EFA) target come the year 2015 if no commitment is made toward building new schools and rehabilitating the existing ones (Times of Zambia, 5th February, 2010). Quality secondary education is indispensable for individual and national development in every country. Secondary education bridges primary education, the labour market, and tertiary education. Therefore, decision-makers face an immediate choice as a bridge: whether secondary education is the weakest link of the education system or its cornerstone (Benavot, 2004). Investment in education has been the hallmark of all nations of the World. According to the World Bank (2005), the benefits of secondary education in various ways contribute to individual earnings and are associated with improved health, equity, and social conditions.

Expansion and success of education rely on infrastructure, which affects education access, and contributes to a quality learning environment and student achievement (Crampton, 2003). The provision of education has been emphasized in world conferences on education. The most notable one is the World Education Forum in Jomtien Thailand in 1990, which advocated for Education For All (EFA). Also, the Dakar Framework for Action in Senegal in 2000 reiterated this commitment and the millennium summit of September 2000. If education is the cornerstone of both personal and national development, it therefore calls for a conducive place where this education is to be provided. There is a general belief that the condition of school infrastructure and the learning environment has an important impact on teachers' effectiveness and students' academic performance (Gibberd, 2007). The facilities needed to facilitate effective teaching and learning in an educational institution include classrooms, offices, libraries, laboratories, conveniences, other buildings, furniture items, and sporting equipment.

The quality of infrastructure and learning environment strongly influences the academic standard, an index of quality assurance in the school. For instance, Earthman (2002), reporting on California, revealed that comfortable classroom temperature and smaller classes enhance teachers' effectiveness and provide opportunities for

students to receive more individual attention, ask more questions, participate more fully in discussions, reduce discipline problems and perform better than students in schools with substandard buildings by several percentage points. Many governments and organizations recognize that many factors contribute to undermining the standard of quality of education. These include rapid expansion of the system, especially in developing countries including Zambia; a decline in funding for the sector, reduced learning time; over-crowded classrooms, poor physical infrastructure, lack of textbooks and other learning materials, lack of qualified teachers, pupil-teacher ratios, inflexible curricula, and flawed teaching methodologies (EFA Global monitoring report, 2012).

The Government of Zambia, in particular, recognizes that the school system's primary purpose is to provide quality education. In trying to implement the goals outlined in the Education For All conference held in 1990, the government has embarked on a program to increase enrolments and access. The government planned to upgrade basic schools into secondary schools so that access to grade eight (8) and ten (10) and the possibility of pupils completing school could be enhanced. The government has always maintained that there have been inadequate schools, and it has been determined to build more schools as a way of reducing the number of school dropouts (Educating the Nation, 2005). The government committed itself to providing adequate infrastructure and equipment to all public learning institutions. In support of this, the Education Act of 1996 states that "to run a responsible democratic education system, there is need to pay particular attention to capacity building through training and re-training, provision of infrastructure and equipment, logistics and adequate funding." Njapau (2011), in her study, has shown that there are not enough libraries and classrooms for pupils to learn the English language in public schools effectively. Also, a study by Chanda (2013) revealed that adequate equipment and facilities for science subjects make learners perform experiments independently even without teacher participation. However, these two studies only looked at particular subjects. Hence, this study sought to find out and describe the infrastructure and the learning environments in which learners in public schools teach all the subjects, not just the ones Njapau and Chanda looked at. The possible effects of the varying infrastructure and environment on education provision.

While upgrading many basic schools into secondary school may have increased participation or accessibility into grade ten (10) and lessened pupils stopping school at grade nine, no study seems to have been done to highlight the state of the school infrastructure and learning environment. This is what this study intended to bring to light.

## II. THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

The study employed Spencer's 1876 structural functionalism theory. According to this theory human society is like an organism and is made up of structures called social institutions. Dewan (2012: 57) indicated that institutions that make up society are well structured so that they perform different functions on behalf of society. These structures are interrelated and interdependent. According to this theory, as a result of being interrelated and inter dependent, one organ can affect the others and ultimately the whole. The whole can affect one or all the social function. The study theorised the operation of the upgraded secondary schools. The schools are viewed as a productive systems in which the inputs affects the outputs. These factors interact with each other in order to produce the desired outcomes. Thus when the appropriate inputs are missing in upgraded secondary schools affect the outputs of the teaching and learning process.

### Statement of the problem

According to Fisher (2000), the availability of proper infrastructure and good environment contributes

significantly to the learning and teaching process. This lead to effective teaching and learning, lack of proper infrastructure compromise the quality of education delivery, which in turn affect the output. The problem therefore, is that it is not known whether there are benefits and challenges facing upgraded secondary schools in Luano district, hence the need the study was conducted.

## III. RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

The study employed qualitative and quantitative research methods to collect, integrate and analyze data. The study utilized a descriptive research design. The study's target population were all head teachers, deputy head teachers, heads of departments, and learners in the selected secondary schools. The research instruments used in the study were questionnaires and interview guides. Data were collected through questionnaire and interview methods. Qualitative data were analysed using a thematic method to generate themes. SPSS software version 25 was used to generate descriptive statistics.

## IV. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

### Benefits of upgraded secondary schools on learners

Table 1: Benefits of upgraded secondary schools on learners

Responses	Frequency	Percentage %
<i>Brought secondary education to learners in rural areas</i>	15	42.9
<i>Reduced distance to and from school</i>	8	22.9
<i>Motivated learners in rural schools</i>	5	14.2
<i>Reduced school dropouts</i>	4	11.4
<i>Reduced absenteeism among learners</i>	3	8.6
<b>Total</b>	<b>35</b>	<b>100</b>

Source: Fieldwork, 2022

N = 35

Table 1 shows that fifteen (15) out of thirty-five (35) representing 42.9 % of the respondents reported that upgrading of basic schools reduced the distance to and from schools for learners, eight (8) out of thirty-five (35) representing 22.9 % of the respondents indicated that upgrading of basic schools motivated learners in their localities, another three (3) out of thirty-five (35) representing 8.6 % of the respondents said that upgrading of basic schools to secondary schools brought secondary education closer to learners, four (4) out of thirty-five (35) representing 11.4 % reported that the upgrading of basic to secondary schools contributed to the reduction of school

dropouts among learners and five (5) out of thirty-five (35) added that upgrading of basic schools led to a reduction of absenteeism among learners.

The other respondents interviewed indicated that:

*"The upgrading of primary schools to secondary schools has taken secondary education closer to the learners in their communities. For this reason, it helped reduce school dropouts among learners." (HOD 1: School A)*

*"Upgrading primary to secondary schools shortens the distance to and*

*from schools. The learners used to travel long distances to go and access secondary education. Today schools are within their reach." (HOD 3: School E)*

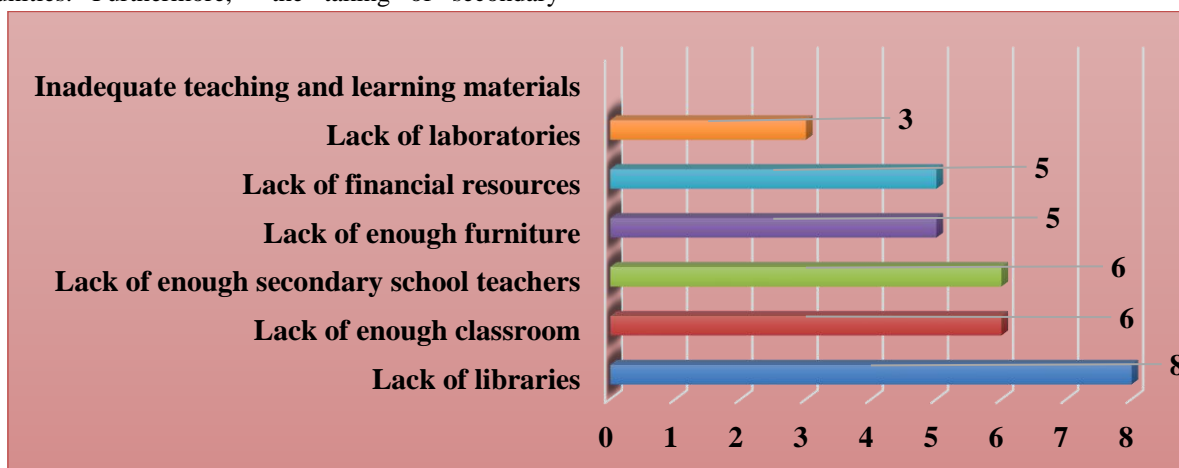
*"It has motivated our learners. More especially, those that left schools have started going to school because the facilities are within their communities. To some extent, it even helped to reduce absenteeism among learners in schools." (HOD 5: School E).*

The study revealed the benefits of upgrading primary to secondary schools and the challenges faced. It has reduced distance to and from school, motivated learners, brought secondary education closer to learners, reduced school dropouts, and reduced absenteeism among learners. The upgrading of primary schools to secondary schools in rural areas. Most of the learners used to go to urban areas to acquire education. It is important to indicate that upgrading of some primary schppls to secondary schools in rural areas has taken secondary education closer to the learners in their communities. Furthermore, the taking of secondary

education to rural areas has helped reduce school dropouts among learners.

Upgrading primary to secondary schools shortens the distance to and from schools. The learners used to travel long distances to go and access secondary education. Today schools are within their reach. This has also helped to reduce on the child marriages and teenage pregnancies among learners in rural areas of Luano district. Most of the learners more especially girls have been motivated to access education within their reach. Those lerners who dropped school due to long distances hae resumed and started going to school because the facilities are within their communities. The upgrading of primary schools to secondary schools in rural areas helped in the reduction of absenteeism among learners in schools. A reduction of absenteeism among learners goes with a motivation, therefore seeing secondary schools within their reach motivated rural children not to absent themselves for classes in schools.

#### Challenges Faced by Upgraded Rural Secondary Schools



Source: Fieldwork, 2022

N = 35

Fig.1: Challenges faced by upgraded rural secondary schools

Figure shows six (6) out of thirty five (35) representing 17.1 % of the respondents reported the sharing of classrooms with the primary section, five (5) out thirty five (35) representing 14.3 % of the respondents indicated lack of enough furniture, another eight (8) out of thirty five (35) representing 22.9 % of the respondents said lack of libraries in schools poses a significant challenges in the upgraded secondary schools, three (3) out of thirty five (35) representing 8.6 % reported that the lack of laboratories in the upgraded secondary schools is a challenge to upgraded secondary schools, six (6) out of thirty five (35) representing 17.1 % added that lack of enough specialized

trained teachers in other subjects hinders effective functioning of the schools, four (4) out of thirty five (35) representing 11.4 % of the respondents lamented lack of enough financial resources poses a challenges among the upgraded secondary schools and three (3) out of thirty five (35) representing 8.6 % of the respondents indicated lack of enough teaching and learning resources as a challenges faced by the upgraded secondary schools.

The interviewed respondents also reported that:

*"Lack of enough funding to get the required resources is a challenge that*

*has hampered the provision of quality education." (HOD 5: School D)*

*"Inadequate teaching and learning materials. These materials are critical in the provision of quality education because they facilitate the learning and teaching process." (HOD 4: School C)*

*"Absenteeism is another challenge that hinders the provision of quality education. Teachers' and learners' absenteeism entails that the syllabus remains uncompleted, negatively impacting pupils' performance." (HOD 1: School E)*

Another respondent revealed that

*"Lack of enough infrastructure is also a challenge affecting the provision of quality basic education in upgraded secondary schools. The fact that schools are overcrowded particularly has contributed to poor quality education. This is because teachers find it difficult to teach overcrowded classrooms." (HOD 2: School D)*

*"Lack of specialized rooms had made the attainment of quality education difficult. The rooms included laboratories, libraries, special classes, and computer labs. Furthermore, teaching subjects that require the said rooms had become very difficult, leading to the poor delivery of the subject matter." (HOD 3: School E)*

Fisher (2006) established that academic achievement improves with improved building conditions, lighting levels, air quality and temperatures. Thus school buildings have impacts on the mental development of learners. The schools that are properly built are attractive to look at, motivates the children to stay in school and learn well. Learners cannot expect level of learners' academic performance where school building are poorly located and substandard. Well planned structures, clean, quiet, safe, comfortable and health environments are important components of successful teaching and learning in schools, this lead to imparting of quality education to learners.

The lack of infrastructure is a critical factor in education because it negatively affect teaching and learning process within the classroom and the provision of quality education to learners. This was in line with Wain (2011) who found that in developing countries low quality of learning among

students can aptly be attributed to poor or physical facilities of the schools. Some physical facilities are fundamental factors for better learning environment, achievements and outcome of the students. School infrastructure provide and maintain cleanness, safety and it also enables for a learning environment to be conducive and creative to learners. This encourages them to perceive high achievements and outcomes. The study supported Leeper (2008) that school infrastructure and availability of physical facilities including drinking water, technology, compound wall, toilets, furniture and libraries have a significant positive role on the performance of the students and their achievement.

As Rhodes (2003) suggested that school facilities should include the administrative office, staffrooms and offices, classrooms, laboratories, workshops equipment, stores, libraries, hostels staff houses and school grounds, there is a relationship between the availability of school facilities and pupils' performance. The upgraded secondary schools have inadequate provision of school physical facilities such as classrooms, libraries and resource centers to mainstream public primary schools would lead to ineffective teaching and low performance levels of learners.

The school building are of vital significance to the teaching and learning process. The physical conditions have direct positive and negative effects on teacher confidence, intelligence of personal security, feelings of efficiency in the classroom and on the learning environment. Tanner (2009) concludes that in falling down schools buildings, leaking roofs, over sun lights and broken toilets are the offensive background for teaching and learning environment.

Infrastructure has an effective investment on education. Thus learners surrounded by a safe, modern and environmentally controlled environment experience a positive effect on their learning. Thus school library plays a significant part to learning. It plays the role of cheering improvement, interest and difficult flowing. Libraries or buildings in which all leaning materials such as books, tape newspapers are available for the public in order to study, learn, and borrow it affect the provision of quality education. The findings of the study agreed with the findings of Clark (2009) which revealed that school library basically is the academic library which supports the entire school program and also help in teaching and learning process. The availability of adequate and conducive library facilities encourages the makes of the teaching and learning process in an effective and easy manner.

Sound prepared library help enhance high quality education and high learning standards. The reading of library materials have positive relation with students' vocabulary, grammar comprehension, writing and spelling skills. These abilities

need well managed library where they improve their skills and academic performance. The lack of basic facilities such as laboratories has compromised the teaching of science subjects. He further wrote that topics that are meant to be taught practically are taught theoretically as part of adaptive mechanisms by teachers due to inadequate infrastructure. This was in line with the findings of Mayama (2012) that the lack of physical facilities ends up affecting student's performance negatively reducing their competitiveness for opportunities whose placement is pegged on performance.

Lack of teaching and learning is a challenge that was raised by the respondents. It can be said that for quality education to be realized these materials must be available. Teaching and learning materials include text books, chalks, manila papers and other materials relevant to aid teaching. It is for this reason that the provision of quality education has become difficult in the newly upgraded secondary schools. This is because pupils cannot improve on their reading skills due to lack of text books.

The existing infrastructure in schools is not enough to accommodate every pupil. As a result, the hours of instructions were reduced in order to accommodate other pupils. This basically has hindered the provision of quality education because very few things are taught and the pupils suffer because they do not even have time to consult their teachers. This disadvantages the slow learners from acquiring the desired education. Lack laboratories and laboratory equipments and chemicals. For this reason, teaching of practical subjects has become difficult in the newly upgraded rural secondary schools. For teaching and learning to be effectively take place, laboratories have to be well and fully equipped. Laboratories are very important because topics that require practice can easily be taught and learners understand very well. Due to lack of laboratories, teaching practical lessons has become difficult and this has contributed to many failures in practical subjects.

The quality and adequacy of classroom blocks and equipment have a direct effect on the quality of education. According to Nafukho (2011) the condition of school buildings is an important aspect in the learning process. The teachers are able to leave their teaching aids in classrooms which have lockable doors and windows for as long as they wish. The findings of this study agreed with the findings of Cash (2013) that the achievement of learners are associated with schools that are air conditioned, enjoyed less external noisy environments, have less gravity and where classroom furniture and student lockers are in good repair. Recent findings have found that there is a relationship between building quality and academic outcomes of learners. Appropriate classroom is vital to effective performance of both learners and teachers.

## V. CONCLUSION

This study revealed the benefits of upgrading rural primary to secondary schools and the challenges faced. It has reduced distance to and from school, motivated learners, brought secondary education closer to learners, reduced school dropouts, and reduced absenteeism among learners. However, there are various challenges faced by the upgraded secondary schools, which include sharing of classrooms with the primary section due to lack of enough classrooms, lack of enough furniture, lack of libraries in schools, lack of laboratories in the upgraded secondary schools, lack of enough specialized trained teachers in other subjects, lack of enough financial resources and lack of enough teaching and learning resources. These challenges may compromise the standard of secondary education in rural areas. Despite the efforts made by the Ministry of Education in provision of quality education to basic schools through upgrading them to secondary school status, it is evident and clear that basic schools that were upgraded into secondary school status in Luano district still do not qualify to provide quality education.

## VI. RECOMMENDATIONS

Given the findings and conclusion of this study, it is recommended that:

- The government should establish more classrooms to cater to the increasing enrolment.
- The government should construct laboratories in upgraded rural secondary schools.
- The government should build libraries in upgraded rural secondary schools.
- The government should procure furniture for the upgraded rural secondary schools through the Ministry of Education.
- The government should procure and distribute more teaching and learning materials in the upgraded rural secondary schools.

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