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# A Study of the Effectiveness of Selected Reforms towards Reduction of Inequalities in the Provision of Education: The Case of Matabeleland North Province, Zimbabwe



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## ABSTRACT

This study was conducted in order to determine the extent to which post-independence educational reforms had achieved equity and equality in the education system. I focused on access to secondary school education in the Manjolo circuit of Binga District. The researcher was keen to establish the impact of major educational reforms on the socio-economical stratification of Zimbabwean communities. The researcher encountered several constraints during the conduct of this study, especially relating to secondary data. Not much could be done to control the quality of data. The only mitigating factors were the fact the data are used for planning and policy making purposes. It was also not possible to undertake a rigorous analysis of the casual factors, even after the descriptive presentation of progress made towards attainment of equality in educational opportunity. Findings of the study managed to adequately address the research questions. This paper argues that equality educational opportunity should be evaluated in terms of equality of access, of inputs, instructional processing outputs, and outcomes. It further points out that the most flagrant symptom of inefficiency is the extent of wastage (in the form of dropouts and repeaters). Educational reforms should address issues of equity and equality. It is then, and only then that Zimbabweans can begin to talk about quality education. Education for all. The gap between the two extremes of poverty and wealth needs to be narrowed.

## INTRODUCTION

Before 1980, there were political and social forms of discrimination, which did not spare the education system. Inequalities were based on racial differences. The Phelps- Stokes commission report (1962:106) states, “While in carefully guarded, the purpose of the system of education is not to improve the native as a man, but to maintain him as a cheap source of labour supply”. Hence, education was used as an oppressive tool against black Zimbabwean citizens.

To redress these inequalities, the new Government implemented several reforms including the abolition of primary school tuition fees. One of the Millennium Development Goals was to achieve free education for all. Removal of racial discrimination. Enforcement of automatic promotion of learners from Grade 1 to Grade 7 and onward into Form 1 (i.e. secondary school level); promotion of social transformation through educational development, the introduction of a single teaching service and bringing all teachers under the public service commission, Zvobgo (1986). This paper would be too long if it went into pre-independence disparities in the education system. The concern is actually on how far educational reforms have addressed the problems and dilemmas that originated from the colonial era.

Under the 1979 education Act, all schools, with the exception of private community schools, were ordered to open their doors to children of all races. Soon after, community schools were required to enrol 60% black children. Free education was shortlisted as the 1987 Education Act was amended to allow payment of school fees at primary school level. This Universal primary education could no longer be guaranteed.

Education was legally defined as a fundamental right of all Zimbabweans children. However, according to the World Bank (1988), there was evidence that the rich groups were over – represented. This paper saw the need to increase resources to the education sector and ensure equitable access to quality education. The Education Act of 1987 encouraged decentralization in the management of schools. So Private school- authorities would have the initiative to equip their schools and this would introduce competition in educational standards. Richer communities were thus allowed to buy schools and compete with each other and/ or with Government schools, all at the expense of poor members of the community.

## STATEMENT OF THE PROBLEM

The provision of education in Zimbabwe is inefficient and socio-economic inequalities prevail, despite the reforms in educational policies.

### Sub-questions

1. To what extent have Post-colonial educational reforms provided equal access and progression in the schools of Matabeleland North?
2. How are the patterns of retention and wastage in primary and secondary schools by district, location, and gender in the Province?
3. In what way(s) do the district proportions of the provincial school's enrolments relate / correspond to their share of the population?
4. How far have the inherited inequalities in educational opportunity between rural and urban, male and female learners been reduced?
5. What measures can be taken to correct the challenges that continue to plague the role and function of education, especially if among the socio- economically distressed communities?

### Significance of the Study

The findings are geared towards informing decision-making processes of Education Policy Makers and planners. This paper serves to consolidate the significance of the four inseparable criteria for defining equality in the education access to facilities services, survival, outputs and outcomes. Economic development of Zimbabwe will be propelled by a more effective and efficient education system.

## RESEARCH DESIGN AND METHODOLOGY

The design of the study was a time series whereby equality of education opportunity was considered longitudinally. Measures of inequality were computed in over several school terms in order to observe the progress over time. Selected indicators of the distribution of the quality of education in terms of access and internal efficiency were computed. These included enrolment progression and survival ratios by grade/ class level, gender, and location. Documents like periodical reports and records were the main sources of quantitative dimensions of this study. The descriptive survey was found to be appropriate in that its purpose is to count. Oppenheim (1992:12) explains, 'when it cannot count everyone, it counts a representative sample and the makes inferences about the population as a whole.

### Population and Sampling

All primary schools, all secondary schools, and the two State Universities in Matabeleland North Province made up the population from which the 400 participants were randomly sampled. For school types, purposive sampling was used, to ensure all school types and all responsible authorities were represented. Lecturers from the Faculty of Arts and Education & Faculty of Social Sciences were involved so as to find their views on the topic under study.

Category	Responsible authority	No. Of schools	Teachers / lectures	Students	parents
Rural primary day school	Rural district council	10	20	40	20
Rural secondary school	Rural district council	10	20	40	20
Rural boarding secondary school	Church organization	5	10	20	20
Urban primary day school	Govt, local authorising and church	5	10	20	10
Urban secondary day school	Govt, mine, local authorities	10	20	40	20
State university	Govt of Zimbabwe	2	8	10	10
Totals		42	88	170	100

### REVIEW OF RELATED LITERATURE

#### Equality and Equity

According to the Shorter Oxford Dictionary, equity is “the condition of being equal in quantity, amount, value, intensity. It is the condition of being equal in dignity, privileges, and power”.

Equity is the quality of being equal or fair, that is, impartiality. In distinguishing between the two terms, Prysor Jones (1980:93) posit that equality is shown by descriptive and measurable features of some asset, the pattern of distribution of something such as income or education...”Bronfenbremer (1973) takes equity to mean social justice and fairness. He sees

equity as referring to a subjective and ethical judgement. Mall (1971) says equality is essentially a “reforming idea”. Davis (1980) argues that there are four concepts of equality of opportunity that is equality in terms of access, treatment, results, and outcomes.

In the field of education, access cannot be said to be equal as the families’ income is the major determinant of which school the child can attend. “Treatment” refers to instructional processes and these are affected by resources (human, material and financial) available per school type. This study analysed differences in school profiles, teacher qualifications, and teacher: pupil ratios, curricular options, and pass rates in public examinations. Disparities arise when equals are treated unequally and or when unequal are treated equally. The research was keen to establish the implications and effects of educational reforms on the educational opportunities of all learners from different socio- economic strata.

On unequal treatment, Tawney (1938:27) observes that, “the more anxiously a society endeavours to secure equality of consideration for all its members, the greater will be the differentiation of treatment”, Arnor (1985: 130) agrees with Tawney and says that “there is need for extra remedial help, not a different base but additional compensatory education”. This is positive discrimination. The researcher was eager to find out how the Zimbabwean education system practiced positive discrimination.

### **Equality of Opportunity**

People should have broadly similar opportunities to develop and cultivate whatever gifts they have been endowed with, and these opportunities should not depend on economic or social circumstances of their families, Jenkins (1961). Joseph, K and Sumpton (1979) argue that equality of results is itself if the enemy of equality of opportunity. Like Coleman (1969), they confirm that “equality of opportunity is equality of results. They say that the state can use its powers to favour some citizens against others. The research kept wondering how far equality of opportunity could be possible at all without equality in socio-economic conditions. Jenkins cited in Bronfenbremer (1973) sees that equalising opportunity is impossible without greatly reducing the absolute level of inequality in socio-economic and cultural positions. This makes a lot of sense because equality of opportunity does not begin in schools, but is a continuation of what originates from home (family) hence equal treatment can be made possible if equality of opportunity happens to family socio-economic status first. The question thus, was the extent to which socio-economic circumstances can be equalised.

Jenkins (1961:109) saw that “Equality in relation to education is a very lively issue. Nowhere can inequalities, be more readily detected and nowhere are people more conscious of them.” The United Nations universal declaration of human rights of December 1948 proclaimed the right of person to be educated. However, Boundan 1974 notes the structures of social and economic stratification and not the school systems are mainly responsible for inequalities of both educational and socio opportunity. Nwagwu (1976) points put that the best use of whatever resources are available will depend very much on the quality of the work force the country possesses. Benza, Bwerazuva and Houston (1982) observe that Zimbabwe accepted the United Nations Mandate and was determined to implement major programmes of expansion in educational opportunity and provision. The researcher then focused on hitches encountered during implementation of the UN mandate.

Socio-economic stratification is considered a major cause of inequalities in access to education. Hawes (1979:12) says, “If education opportunities are suddenly opened for all, it invariably involves a spreading of financial, material and human resources more thinly than previously. Coombs (1992) suggests that mechanisms have to be put in place to meet the growing demand for education at all levels and at the same time ensure that the quality of education is not diluted. On grounds of equality, education should not be held back from anyone. Becky (1969) agrees with Lewis (1966) in supporting broad based provision of primary schooling. Theequity and economic pay off that accrues from the efficient identification of the best brains in the country”. David Court and Kinyanjui (1980:33) say, “Beyond the provision of a basic minimum for all citizens, equality is served by an equitable distribution of facilities for further education. The researcher went out to check how ways were paved for further education in those dilapidated, poorly resourced schools”.

In Zimbabwe, a massive expansion in the education system has resulted in “problems related to the control of the expansion process, allocation of resources, shortage of manpower, accommodation, equipment and materials”, SDA 1990:8. Such problems were found to have negative effects on the quality of education. Both equity and equality could not be practiced.

The education Act of 1897 allowed the established and management of schools by a mosaic of institutions the government of Zimbabwe, local Authorities (like urban municipal councils and rural district council); private enterprises, foundations, boards of trustees and households. Financial responsibility for the management and running of schools was delegated to theses authorities as part of cost sharing. In practice, the local authorities and parent bodies **School**

**Development Associations (SDA) and School Development Committee (SDC)** were formed in order to make parents /guardians play active roles in their children’s education. In a way, the Government of Zimbabwe (G.O.Z) politely pushed the cost, establishing, and maintaining their schools to the parent / guardians of learners.

### **Poverty and School Dropouts**

Azar (1993:37) says, “In poor countries extending access to education and training is often difficult when the cultural minority costs are high...” Simons, quoted in Todaro (1992:301) assets that the poor are the first to drop out of school because they need to work (and earn some income) the first to be pushed out because they fall asleep in class as a result of malnourishment.

## **FINDINGS AND DISCUSSIONS**

### **Enrollment Figures per District**

<b>Name of District</b>	<b>Period (1985-1990)</b>	<b>Period 2000- 2006</b>
Binga	6 280	<b>7 145</b>
Bubi	6 708	<b>7 234</b>
Bulawayo	6 847	<b>10142</b>
Hwange	6 550	<b>8 956</b>
Lupane	8 247	<b>9 062</b>
Nkayi	7 889	<b>8 293</b>

### **Variables**

The following variables were used:

DISCODE – to stand for District Codes

District 1- Binga

District 2- Bubi

District 3- Bulawayo

District 4- Hwange

District 5- Lupane

District6- Nkayi

District7- Tsholotsho

P.B – Percentage Enrolment for Boys

P.G – Percentage Enrolment for Girls

SLB –Selectivity Index for Boys

SLG – Selectivity Index for Girls

SRB- Survival Ratio for Boys

SRG – Survival Ratio for Girls

These codes are followed by the Grade or Forms (i.e. level of education) and then the year.

Generally, it was found that more boys than girls attend primary school, the difference being almost insignificant in the lower grades and more pronounced as from grade 5 to grade 7. The mean, standard deviation minimum and maximum figures of enrolment show that access to educational improved significantly. Unfortunately, this trend does not in any way mean that Matabelel and North province has achieved universal primary education. Many children are still illiterate and others attain only two or three years of primary school education.

### **Inequalities of Access**

#### **Total enrolment by grade and gender (1985 – 1990)**

<b>GRADES</b>	<b>B86</b>	<b>G86</b>	<b>B87</b>	<b>G87</b>	<b>B89</b>	<b>G89</b>
1	16 677	16 958	19 171	19 008	22 491	22 454
3	17 386	17 275	16 188	16 551	16 712	16 716
5	18 024	18 085	16 980	16 880	15 695	15 713
7	15 995	14 614	17 612	17 623	16 331	16 363

There were no significant differences between boys and girls. Gender disparities had been reduced in the urban districts. There were differences in survival rates, and these differences seemed to negatively and persistently affect certain groups of people, mostly the rural, the poor and the female. In examining trends in the secondary schools, the participation of girls

showed a steeper pyramidal distribution. The retention of boys seemed to be slightly higher than that of girls.

### Percentage Enrolments

Percentage enrolments and the selective index were computed to measure access. Overtime inequalities were discovered and details are shown in the tables and figures that follow.

**Table 3: Percentage enrolment by distribution and gender Grades 1-2.**

Discord	PB 1-85	PG 1-85	PB2-85	PG2-85
1	4.00	3.87	3.26	3.39
2	4.41	4.15	4.07	3.76
3	0.96	0.99	0.98	1.10
4	5.46	5.06	4.85	4.58
5	4.13	3.67	3.88	3.62
6	3.09	2.86	2.93	2.74
7	3.42	3.27	3.43	3.23
Mean 4.000	3.64	3.41	3.34	3.19
Standard Deviation 2.60	1.40	1.27	1.22	1.11

The percentage for boys was almost invariably higher than that for girls, with the exception of Bulawayo. Hwange had the highest throughout, perhaps because of the high population was drawn by Hwange Colliery and Victoria Falls urban settlements. Districts 3, 6 and 7 persistently fell below the mean except for Grade 2 boys wherein district 1 fell below the mean.

**Table 4: Percentage enrolment by district and gender in form 3 and form. 4.**

DISCODE	PB3-85	PG3-85	PB4-85	PG4-85
1	1.56	0.63	1.51	0.59
2	2.53	2.12	2.50	2.00
3	0.75	0.89	0.69	0.75
4	3.30	2.68	2.96	2.60

5	1.69	0.96	1.42	0.91
6	1.67	0.95	1.50	0.91
7	1.58	1.06	1.34	0.98
<b>Mean: 4000</b>	1.87	1.33	1.79	1.02
<b>Standard Deviation</b>	0.82	0.76	0.71	0.69

Percentages remained higher for boys than for girls. Five districts fell below the mean for both boys and girls.

The pattern of disparities continued throughout the period under study. When compared to raw scores, percentages computed were found to be inaccurate. This was mainly due to the use of overall population figures instead of primary school- going age population.

### Selectivity Index

To measure inequalities in access, selectivity indexes were computed. On the basis of gender, the selectivity index was found to be more accurate than percentage enrolments. However, due to operational barriers, both sets of computations (percentage enrolments and selectivity index) though being acceptable and appropriate in principle, proved to be unreliable. It became imperative to use measures of internal efficiency.

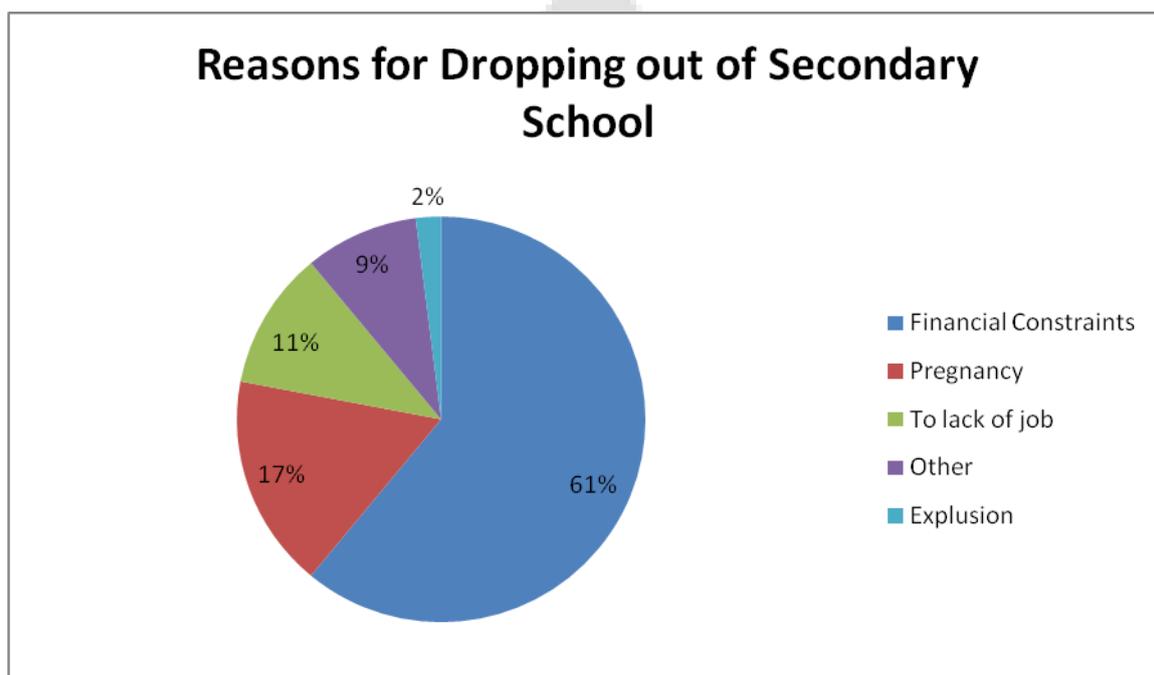
**Table 5: Survival Ratio of a Cohort of boys from 2000 – 2015.**

District	SRB 1	SRB 2	SRB3	SRB 4	SRB 5
1	77.61	72.11	64.53	59.05	51.58
2	88.54	77.16	77.41	76.92	74.61
3	88.97	92.69	96.68	100.12	100.84
4	89.17	86.09	81.58	77.40	75.59
5	85.77	82.16	76.43	69.28	66.09
6	100.07	78.58	82.11	77.84	74.39
7	82.24	81.89	81.20	77.07	77.52

Binga, a predominantly rural district had the lowest survival rates, followed by Tsholotsho which is also rural. Bulawayo had the highest rates. For the rest of the districts except Bulawayo, survival rates fell as the grades progressed. In Bulawayo, rates increased with

each grade. The increase could be accounted for by the transfer of rural pupils into urban schools as a way of securing vacancies in Form 1. Urban day secondary schools often reserve places for those who attend grade 7 in the same urban area.

Survival rates were generally higher for boys than girls, except for Bulawayo where the opposites were true. While Binga had the highest attrition rates, Bulawayo had the lowest. It was concluded that survival rates were lower and attrition rates higher for both girls and boys in rural districts than in Bulawayo. Overall, access to Education improved right across ten Province but the gap between rural and urban learners still existed. Measures of access were handicapped by lack of appropriate data. Hence this paper relied heavily on measures of internal efficiency to find inequalities based on gender and location .Gaps between rural and urban districts; urban and rural learners were still existing throughout all the yeas covered by this longitudinal study.



The highest cause of drop-outs was financial constraints. This confirmed that indeed the majority of students whose parents / guardians were considered poor ( Human Development Report of 2000) could not afford to pay for their children’s education when economic conditions became extremely harsh, even the male students dropped out f school college and university ; so as to look for jobs in neighbouring countries .

It cannot be denied that school enrolment has gone up. This is due to the dialectics which exist between state policy of “Education for All” and the popular belief that education is for

socio-economic development and upwards mobility of individuals. It is not certain whether or not the education received by learners in different school- types can ever get anywhere near: equality” equity. The private, elite schools have been allowed to co-exist with public schooling and because of this, the inherited inequalities are bound to continue and even worsen. Quality to any education system depends, not only on access, but more so on the quality of instructional processes and the learners’ likelihood of completing a given cycle. Re-institution of schools fees increased disparities between rural / urban and poor / rich communities. The very poor pupils (and students) face automatic exclusion and this defeats the goal of democratizing and universalizing (increase survival rates) education.

## RECOMMENDATIONS

- The Government of Zimbabwe and all the Non-Governmental organizations should continue to make provisions for education throughout all districts so that there is parity between rural and urban districts.
- Schools fees (both tuition and levies) should be subsidized by the state.
- From a theoretical perspective, attempts should be made to take the concept of educational equality in its totality so that in practice, all its dimensions are catered for educational planners and policy makers seem to concentrate on just one aspect, that is, access. Quantitative expansion often compromises quality.
- Inequalities that exist in the socio-economic domain have to be addresses because the socio economic status depends which school the parents, guardians can afford. The STEM programme is enigma in schools with infrastructural challenges. Most school in rural areas have no science laboratories, no libraries and no workshops for VOC- Tech subjects.
- Address remuneration f teachers because demotivate teachers exacerbate the plight of learners, especially in urban day schools located in high-density residential areas. With more motivation, they could do better and change the socio-economic status of the large numbers of students they teach, through promoting and assuring best results in public examinations.
- Political structures, that is, the Provincial Development Committees and District Development Committees should play their part in earnest. Underlying cases and conditions of inequalities have to be addressed so as to reduce disparities in education.

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