ISSN-L: 2307-3713, ISSN: 2307-3721
Vol. 1 No. 1, February 2013

THE CONCEPT OF FREE PRIMARY SCHOOL EDUCATION IN ZIMBABWE: MYTH OR REALITY

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ABSTRACT

The objective of this paper is to critically examine the perceptions of primary school teachers, and parents, to the concept of free primary school education in Zimbabwe and discuss to what extent this policy, adopted by the Government at independence in 1980, has been successful. While such a policy is considered quite noble as it sought to address the bottlenecks created by discriminative policies of colonial Rhodesia which marginalised the black majority, it is the researchers' contention that it has been fraught with its own challenges which resulted in the respondents and interviewees in this study having mixed feelings on it. The case study research design was adopted and data were collected using semi-structured interview guides with twenty parents and semi-structured questionnaire for twenty teachers, purposively sampled from five Masvingo District rural schools. This study established that some positive gains have been scored such as giving the poor and the marginalised blacks, especially in rural areas, access to the much-needed education in a technologically vibrant world. However, participants bemoaned that although the free education 'policy' remains in place, at least on paper, the parents are being asked to pay for their children's education in one way or the other through levies and incentives for teachers which prompted the research question on whether this policy is reality or myth. Furthermore, the policy resulted in ballooning enrolment figures at primary schools which compromised on quality. The paper recommends that developing countries such as Zimbabwe should not adopt free education policies which they will, by virtue of economic challenges, implement half-heartedly.

Key words: Free Education, Myth, Reality, Education for All

INTRODUCTION

This study critically examined the perceptions of primary school teachers and parents with regards to the concept of free primary school education policy in Zimbabwe, which the Government announced at independence in 1980. The research study sought to establish to what extent this policy has been successful and determine whether this policy is reality or myth. The research was both qualitative and quantitative in nature, spurred by an interest to assess the implementation of such a policy which sought to avail education to all people of Zimbabwe, particularly the economically deprived and marginalised members of the society, largely comprising blacks.

BACKGROUND OF THE STUDY

The Government of Zimbabwe announced free and compulsory education in September 1980 and primary school enrolment soared from 819 568 to 2 251 319 within the first eight years of independence (Mapako, Mareva, Gonye and Gamira, 2012).This was an attempt by the government to address (colonial regime) disparities which discriminated against the black majority. This policy was justifiable as it enabled the formerly deprived majority to acquire

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basic education as a right (Nhundu, in Chikombah, Johnston, Schneller and Schwiller, 1988). "Prior to independence, education was readily accessible to only about 5 percent of the population (mainly blacks) faced a series of obstacles" (Jaji, in Chikombah, Johnston, Schneller and Schwiller, 1988:46). Rhodesia was a country of explicit racial exploitation and ". . . education for the white child was compulsory and free from 1930 but for the African child, it was neither" (Nyagura, 1989: 35). Education was largely for labour exploitation and external servitude. The information above undoubtedly reveal an inherent desire by the white settler regime to relegate the black majority to a culture of eternal disorientation, disenfranchisement and dispossession, a system which prepared blacks to take their place only as hewers of wood and drawers of water. Dekker and Lemmer in Dekker and Lemmer (1993) argue that, colonial education had a divisive and elitist effect hence the need to work towards egalitarianism in independent Zimbabwe. One of the first steps in transforming colonial education was to democratise it so that it became a right for every citizen (Zvobgo, 1994). It is against this background that the Government of Zimbabwe, like most states in Africa, took it upon itself to provide free and compulsory education as a human right. In 1948, the UN legitimised the idea of the state's financial responsibility to provide education when it accepted, in Article 26 of the Declaration for Human Rights, everyone's right to education and that it ". . . shall be free, at least in the elementary stages" (Bray, in Dekker and Lemmer, 1993: 95).

To talk about "free" education is to imply that the financial responsibility is shifted from a parent/guardian to some other quarter. In this case, the Government becomes responsible and this has serious financial implications, particularly when we consider the population boom characterising African countries. At independence, Zimbabwe had a population of about six million, but in 2012, thirty-two years after independence, the population stands at about 14 million. To argue that such a population can meaningfully acquire free primary school education is to be deliberately blind to the impact that such has on the economy which is already in crisis. According to Zvobgo (1994: 95), "Although racial discrimination was removed at independence (in 1980), economic discrimination continued to operate and to provide special and superior education for children from middle and upper social classes and to prepare them for superior positions in society."

After the concise description of the development of state funding of education, and diverse forms thereof, it will be argued that public education has become economically unsustainable. The researchers reached such a conclusion after a close assessment of primary school teachers' and parents' perceptions to the concept of free primary school education. "As the financing of education has become increasingly problematic, the debate on educational alternatives and the search for alternative sources has become a matter of urgency" (Berkhout in Dekker and Lemmer, 1993: 110). Economic decline has exacerbated an already strained system of financing education in Africa hence the need by the researchers to critically consider whether implementing free primary education in Zimbabwe is possible or is just a myth whereby government pays lip-service without seriously considering the success or failure of this policy. The most pertinent question that can be asked is: Can education be really free in a state like the Zimbabwe?

STATEMENT OF THE PROBLEM

In Zimbabwe, financing education in general, and primary school education in particular, remains a challenge especially in rural areas where the majority of people are largely subsistence farmers, bedevilled by sporadic but severe droughts such that they have very little surplus to sell and finance their children's education. Thus "Chung said Zimbabwe, whose

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ISSN-L: 2307-3713, ISSN: 2307-3721
Vol. 1 No. 1, February 2013

education once ranked top among SADC countries, was now placed ninth out of 14 countries in the region" (Bulawayo, 2012). Such is the calamity that has befallen Zimbabweans.

RESEARCH QUESTIONS

The study aimed at establishing the perceptions by teachers and parents to the concept of free primary education in Zimbabwe, a policy aimed at achieving Education for All (EFA) by 2015 as per the Jomtien Conference (1990) deliberations. To achieve this aim, the study sought to answer the following questions:

1. What challenges confronted the African/Zimbabwean child leading to the proposal of free and compulsory primary school education?
2. How did the Zimbabwean Government implement this policy and with what results?
3. How would such implementation be improved to achieve the 2015 target?
4. Is free primary school education a myth or reality?
5. What do parents and teachers say about the success/failure of the free primary school education policy?

LITERATURE REVIEW

There is no doubt that the declaration by the Zimbabwean Government at independence in 1980 that primary school education be free to every child was a noble idea meant to democratise this human right. While literature is available to applaud this development, it is also clear that financing education has become a classic debate with authorities also clear, with authorities also arguing that young economies in Africa can hardly sustain such. Zvobgo (1986: 57) argues that, "Educational provisions have been extended to every child of school-going age and thus making our education system a truly social and national system. The government has achieved its main objective of making primary education a basic human right by expanding the system to accommodate children of all races." To justify the fight for equality through free primary school education, Cole, Hill and Shan (1997) contend that, "Where . . . social systems exhibit inequalities of any form, those at the receiving end of exploitation, oppression and discrimination have, along with their supporters, historically resisted and fought back in various ways." The colonial hegemony met serious resistance that necessitated concerted efforts by Zimbabweans to fight such inhuman policies that sought to relegate blacks to perpetual passivity in the socio-economic issues of their country.

The driving force behind such transformations was a new set of policy makers genuinely determined to effect a new dynamism in the country's educational development. Rwambiwa, in Chikombah, Johnston, Schneller and Schwille (1988: 60) acknowledges such: "At independence, the new government pledged 'education for all, and thus far remarkable achievements have been made towards this goal. For example, primary schooling became free and compulsory for every Zimbabwean child." This was an attempt by the government to fulfil the goal of EFA (set in the UNESCO Constitution of 1945) restated at the conference in Jomtien, Thailand in 1990. In 2000, 164 countries came together in Dakar (Senegal) for the World Education Forum where they declared:

We reaffirm the vision of the World Declaration on EFA (Jomtien, 1990), supported by the Convention on the rights of the Child, that all children, young people and adults have the human right to benefit from education that will meet their basic learning needs in the best and fullest sense of that term (Bown, 2003: 48).

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From the above, it is clear that many governments in independent Africa embarked on massive reforms in education, with varied degrees of success, in an attempt to empower the previously deprived black majority. However, such ambitions have been met with serious challenges, particularly budgetary constraints. This issue brings to the fore the pertinent question: "Who should pay? This is a sophisticated issue with wide ranging dimensions to such an extent [that] they compromise the value dimension and their continuous search for creating learning opportunities" (Berkout, in Dekker and Lemmer, 1993: 118). Zvobgo (1994: 99) bemoans economic decline and scarcity of resources as impeding on the effective implementation of a truly free primary education system when he says, "The economies of most developing countries have been so badly mismanaged that they have virtually collapsed. High inflation, corruption, nepotism, political and social instability, lack of imagination on the part of policy makers, have left these economies at the mercy of multinationals and foreign governments. Wrong economic and social programmes and priorities in development have resulted in serious misallocation and misuse of resources." The consideration of cost should be constantly kept into perspective. Just as the education system has evolved over the decades after independence, so has the system of financing (Forojolla, 1993). Despite the promises made by the international community (UNESCO/UNICEF), "At present, 97% of the resources devoted to education in developing countries come from the countries themselves and only 3% from the international sources" (Bown, 2003: 49). It is clear, from the above observations, that the primary responsibility for achieving EFA by 2015 lies with national governments and international and bilateral agencies can help, marginally though, but the basic drive has come from the countries themselves.

While these efforts are made, it is the researchers' contention that the financial implications for countries with a huge and impoverished rural community, such as Zimbabwe, need serious consideration. Bown (2003: 48) questions this ability, "But what assurance do we have that anything will be different this time around? Doesn't it begin to look as if EFA, like tomorrow, is always talked about but never comes?" There is credible suspicion that there is relative lack of progress towards EFA in the decade after Jomtien.

Statistics abound that point to this lack of progress in providing free primary school education to all children by 2015. Bown (2003: 47) observes: "Today, there are 100 million children, 60% of them girls, who never go to school at all. At least an equivalent number do start school but drop out – or are taken out for economic reasons – before they have learned anything useful." UNESCO estimates put the number of children currently out of school at between 220 000 and 480 000 and called such figures 'national disaster. "In 2009, a teachers' strike shook Zimbabwe. Evidence collected by UNICEF showed that around 94% of schools in Zimbabwe were closed . . . "(UNESCO Statistics, n.d) Lamenting the decline by the Zimbabwean government to fulfil this ambition, Fay Chung (2012), a former Minister of Education in Zimbabwe between 1988 and 1993,urged the Zimbabwean government to fully implement free primary education because many pupils are dropping out of school after failing to pay tuition fees. Chung (2012) said, Zimbabwe, whose education once ranked top among SADC countries, was now placed ninth out of 14 countries in the region. She further argues that, only 68% of children who complete primary school and only 58% go on to secondary school. It can be argued that policy often runs counter to practice or has the reverse effects of what was intended. The researchers, therefore, constantly question how genuine the concept of free education is, given such shocking statistics. Nhundu, in Chikombah, Johnston, Schneller and Schwille (1988: 38) critiques the free education policy: "For Zimbabwe, the greatest government immediately proposed ambitious and radical changes in education using a blueprint development during the war of liberation (one of which was the establishment of free and compulsory primary and secondary school education)." The

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ISSN-L: 2307-3713, ISSN: 2307-3721
Vol. 1 No. 1, February 2013

implications for these policies for educational planning are self-evident. Provision of free and compulsory education meant unprecedented and massive expansion of formal education. Numerical expansion connotes a heavier burden on the economy of the relevant country. Nhundu, in Chikombah, Johnston, Schneller and Schwille (1988: 49) views such impressive expansion as straining the state's budget for education which competes with such social services as health and housing. It is the researchers' contention that, the concept of free primary education is elusive given the economic constraints bedevilling sub-Saharan Africa.

Forojolla (1993: 322) says: "Educational financing in Africa is today at a cross-roads. The current crises in the economies of most countries, with high rates of inflation and falling revenues, and the threat of famine in areas like the Sahel and now central and southern Africa have pushed the issue of finance for education to the forefront of any discussions of educational organisation and development." UNESCO Statistics indicate that, due to Zimbabwe's erratic funding system, and hyperinflation over the last few years; public financing has dwindled, which has led to high school fees. Pakkiri (1989: 281) concurs: "Since Zimbabwe's independence in 1980, the rapid expansion in all levels of education has resulted in an escalating recurrent education expansion in the state budget." As a result, expenditures per pupil, especially at primary level, have been falling drastically since 1980 (Habte, in Chikombah, Johnston, Schneller and Schwille, 1988).

Many scholars have argued that educational planners must realize that a developing country has many different priorities, all competing for the same financial and human resources. It would, therefore, be unwise to try and provide education to all and sundry, regardless of the concerned children's diverse socio-economic backgrounds. Thus Nhundu, in Chikombah, Johnston, Schneller and Schwille (1988: 46) argues, "It is as immoral to provide free education to those who can afford to pay as it is to provide drought relief indiscriminately." The Report of the Presidential Commission of Inquiry into Education and Training (1999) shows that widespread support was expressed for cost-sharing, at, say, a dollar for the infrastructure and teaching and learning materials, to offset the financial burden on the government.

Nhundu, in Chikombah, Johnston, Schneller and Schwille (1988: 40) observes that, "To finance education, the government, burdened with growing enrolments, introduced a cost-sharing responsibility with parents and the community through local authorities. Unfortunately, most of the burden has fallen on rural parents. However, this situation does not help the highly impoverished rural communities. Just as much as rural pupils may suffer this financial and material handicap, urban pupils become victims of the blanket illusion of economic empowerment, even where industry is performing at its lowest ebb since 1980. Even the US$5/term tuition for the urban pupil would not guarantee accessibility by all, given the other not-so-obvious costs of uniforms, stationery and the controversial teacher incentive. There is need for commitment by government and other stakeholders in education to fully implement a completely free primary education system. Doherty (1994) observes that, to be effective, leaders must believe in the vision and really live the values and not just pay lip-service and be cynically compliant. The 1980s have seen the finance of education becoming a major part of the education crisis manifested in most countries where national reports and debates on the quality of education are now prominent (Berkout, in Dekker and Lemmer, 1993).

The literature above shows to what extent various governments in Africa have attempted to implement free primary school education, with varying degrees of success. However, such a policy has been received with mixed feelings as shall be discussed later in this study.

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METHODOLOGY

Data collection procedure

The research design for this study used a case study to determine whether the concept of free primary school education in Zimbabwe is a myth or a reality. Where it is perceived as reality, the researchers sought to establish, through qualitative inquiry, and critically examine the perception of primary school teachers and parents and parents. Data were collected using semi-structured interview guides with twenty parents and semi-structured questionnaire for 20 teachers, purposively sampled from five Masvingo District rural schools. These data collection tools are generally considered flexible in collecting both qualitative and quantitative information and provide for greater depth in responses (Sidhu, 1984) as they, particularly the interview, afforded researchers the opportunity to make follow-ups and re-direct the inquiry on the basis of emerging data into more fruitful channels.

Population and sample

The population for this study was all primary school teachers and parents in Zimbabwe. However, due to financial, material and time constrains, perceptions were sought from 20 parents/interviewees and twenty teacher respondents, among them ten heads of schools. The results obtained were considered generalizable since the respondents and interviewees came from diverse socio-economic backgrounds and had attained different levels of education. For the latter, the researchers occasionally resorted to the parents' First Language (L1) in order to fully reach out to them when their English seemed to impede effective communication.

Data analysis

The data collected through interviews and questionnaires was analysed qualitatively through thick emerging thematic descriptions for presentation and discussion. So, this discussion is both descriptive and analytic.

FINDINGS

This study, which critically explores primary school teachers' and parents' perceptions to the concept of primary school education (a qualitative dimension), has unearthed quite contrasting views, reinforcing the researchers' suspicion that the policy implemented by the Government of Zimbabwe in 1980 is noble but fraught with a plethora of challenges. The core question on who finances the so-called 'free' education and whether such is sustainable and realistic or just a myth meant to give some leaders a life-line while engaging in political rhetoric.

Findings from questionnaire for teachers

The twenty teacher respondents included ten heads of schools. They had mixed perceptions of free primary school education in Zimbabwe and our analysis will consider the positive views first. There was a 100 percent appreciation of the government's effort to provide access to education to all members of the Zimbabwean community, regardless of colour or creed, social standing, ethnic or geographical location. Among them, common responses were:

"Free primary school education showed sensitivity on the part of the independent Zimbabwean Government to the deprivation that we suffered under the discriminatory colonial establishment."

"This policy has given children even in the remotest parts of the country access to basic education which empowers them to be able to participate meaningfully in the socio-economic activities affecting them when they become adults, for example the current constitution

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ISSN-L: 2307-3713, ISSN: 2307-3721
Vol. 1 No. 1, February 2013

making process. Literacy and numeracy have positive implications for economic development."

"We are where we are today as one of the top countries in Africa with high literacy levels because of this struggle to educate every child regardless of socio-economic background."

"Because of the high literacy levels, it is easy to take programmes of national significance to a more receptive population. Programmes like HIV/AIDS campaigns and the Constitution making process would flop without the basic education that was made compulsory for every child in 1980."

"Here in the rural areas, some parents are so poor that they can hardly afford a decent meal a day. Without this provision, their children would languish in both poverty and ignorance which would be bad news because such would be carried from one generation to the other, thereby becoming that vicious cycle of poverty."

The respondents also saw free primary school education as bringing about massive expansion in enrolment and infrastructure, which consequently impacted on the job market as more teachers and support staff were trained and employed and the construction industry was given a new life-line. It was further noted that an individual's social ascendancy no longer solely depended on one's background, but on ability. Some teachers were even honest enough to attribute their status as teachers then to this policy which they said was widely viewed as desirable. They further observed that even those pupils who fail to proceed to secondary school are better equipped to deal with socio-economic challenges and make informed decisions because, at least, they can read and write. In this era of entrepreneurship due to high unemployment levels, this policy is worthwhile and nobody can completely argue against it.

However, the same respondents were not blind to the numerous challenges that bedevil small economies like the Zimbabwean in trying to achieve EFA by 2015. This reminds one of the validity of Zvobgo's (1994: 96) observation, "Some inequalities, considered to be the consequence of colonial, have continued to prevail under African rule. The present education system continues to foster some of the inequalities generated during colonial rule. It is not, therefore, the colour of the people that makes good or bad government but systems and policies."

The above argument seems to summarise most of the sentiments given by these respondents where the pertinent question 'Can education be really free?' recurred. The respondents were unanimously critical of the free education policy. Though they accepted that it is desirable, their major worry was the Government's capacity to fund education with such high enrolments considering that the economy is teetering on the brink of total collapse. Fifteen respondents (75%) raised a number of interesting points which showed negative perception of what is termed 'free' when it does not fit that description in its strictest sense. One problem associated with free primary school education that the respondents noted is the failure by education planners to realise that a developing country like Zimbabwe has many different priorities, all competing for the top priority in the budget. This confirms why the government was compelled to cut educational expenditure for 1984-1985 by 9.5% compared to the previous fiscal year (Nhundu, in Chikombah, Johnston, Schneller and Schwille, 1988).

They further argued that there is no free education when children are only exempted from paying tuition, there being other attendant costs of uniforms and stationery. Even in urban areas where the tuition is said to be as 'low' as US$5, parents still have to fork out bus fare and pay high levies to cater for teacher incentives, in addition to the costs of uniforms and stationery. They added that where parents were asked to provide labour in the construction of classrooms instead of paying, can such be called 'free education'? The researchers could not

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help but concur with the respondents' concerns, bearing in mind the findings of the Report on the Presidential Commission of Inquiry into Education (1999: 208) that, "Poverty affects a very large percentage of the population and repercussions are felt and experienced by children, when parents have no means and when a government is said to be short of money and does not allocate enough for the education of children."

The respondents also bemoaned the ballooning enrolments which brought about increased teacher-pupil ratios and infrastructural and material challenges. Textbooks were a major constraint which militated against effective service delivery in the schools which are purported to be a responsibility of an incapacitated government and a community generally languishing in the mire of poverty. Such are highlights which indicate that the issue of free primary education is quite contentious and teachers' perceptions vary widely.

Findings from interviews with parents

The twenty parents, who were interviewed, like the teachers, also had conflicting perceptions on free primary school education. Some of their views echoed teachers' perceptions and such would be excluded in this regard. They provided added dimensions to the concept of free primary school education in Zimbabwe but were generally sceptical about education being free in Zimbabwe.

They conceded that Government policy at independence indeed opened up opportunities for all by opening up new schools and increasing enrolments. They further argued that there were no conditions like there had been during the colonial era when one needed to pass one level in the primary school before proceeding to the next. Such expansion meant that the marginalised and socio-economically handicapped, the orphaned and the vulnerable had access to basic education.

However, there was consensus by these parents that there was never a time in their lives when they ever perceived education at any level as free. "How would you talk of free education when we pay building fund, mould bricks, buy uniforms and exercise books for our children?" was a recurrent question which was thrown at the interviewer. One parent said that, in times of drought, he would have no choice but to withdraw his children from school and focus on food provision, a challenge occasionally eased by non-governmental programmes such as what has come to be known as 'Food for Work' in Zimbabwe. Another parent said, "If education has ever been free, then it is not in this part of the country or, maybe it is for the children of politicians whom we also don't see in our local schools!" It looked like a joke but one could tell by the expression on the interviewee's face that this was no laughing matter. Another interviewee dismissed the concept as, "mere talk to gain political mileage *maporitizheni matsotsi"* (politicians are crooks, so cannot be relied upon). Yet another lamented the mismatch between policy and practice thus, "*Ukamirira zvemahara, mwana haaendi kuchikoro. Nditaridzeiwo chikoro chemahara nditumirewo vana vangu"* (If you wait for free education, then your child won't attend school. Please show me a school where one does not pay anything so that I can also send my children).

The respondents' and interviewees' comments captured above show mixed and diverse feelings to the concept of free primary school education.

DISCUSSION

It is against this backdrop whereby the concept of free primary school education is perceived differently that the researchers feel that it is objective to see this as free only as far as unrestricted access is concerned. It is a kind of 'brief-case policy culture' whereby the Government just proposes policies that it fails to implement wholeheartedly. It is clear from

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ISSN-L: 2307-3713, ISSN: 2307-3721
Vol. 1 No. 1, February 2013

the parents and teachers that there is a wide gap between policy and practice which implies lack of political will in uplifting the impoverished.

However, both parents and teachers have realised the opportunities opened to the marginalised and oppressed members of the Zimbabwean society. Such a move has tried to bridge the gap between the poor and the rich and enabled government to significantly raise literacy levels of our society, so that these people can meaningfully participate in government and other socio-economic programmes today. According to Bamgibose (1997: 7), "literacy liberates untapped human potential and leads to increased productivity and living conditions." It can, therefore, be argued that education, however basic, is positively linked to the improvement of the Zimbabwean economy (Mapako, Mareva, Gonye and Gamira, 2012). The rise of literacy levels cited herein would not have been realised if such a noble idea had not struck the Zimbabwean leadership at independence. The respondents and the interviewees alike have also acknowledged the social impact that, where a large population is exposed to free basic education, they end up all actively participating in the overall development of the economy in their various capacities.

It is also clear from the teachers that the concept of free education is either misconstrued or mythical because parents are burdened with paying building fund, buying uniforms and stationery for their children in a country where government subsidies are ever declining due to the economic downturn currently sweeping across the globe. What stands out clearly is that government has engaged in elusive rhetoric about financing basic education from an economy which itself is in the intensive care and requires serious resuscitation. Because of the high costs involved, it has almost been impossible to provide education which is absolutely free. As a result, colonial precedents are still much in evidence, not only in Zimbabwe, but also in Africa as a whole and they sometimes constrain the degree to which governments are to initiate new policies (Habte, in Chikombah, Johnston, Schneller and Schwille, 1988). The Presidential Commission (1999) findings echo that, on free education, opinion was unanimous that this policy is not suitable at a time when the country's financial base has been eroded because of Government expenditure on providing the requisite infrastructure for education. There are calls from various setors of the economy for cost-sharing but the problem is that the burden will ricochet to the parent when the so-called financiers renege on this crucial role. It has also been argued that it is stubborn for anyone to indiscriminately sponsor education in a country whose population is diverse in social standing. The government should identify the severely impoverished and channel more resources towards such. The current Cadetship Scheme which sponsors students in tertiary institutions is an example of some of the programmes which strain government's ability to sponsor basic education. To speak of free education is to shift responsibility to government or other stakeholder besides the parent and from the findings of this study, it is clear that genuine players are hard to come by. The issue of free basic education is indeed too complex to comprehend.

CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

From the foregoing, it is clear that parents and teachers appreciate government provision of free basic education to all, without discriminating like what obtained in colonial Rhodesia. The government has acknowledged and articulated an attempt to avail education even to the marginalised.

Despite the positive perceptions highlighted in this study, there is widespread belief that developing countries should carefully approach the question of free education so that they do not appear to renege on such a responsibility later on when they face challenges from other spheres of the economy. Just like mass education, not until resources are harnessed and

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channelled towards such a noble cause would we realise how free 'free education' really is. Because of the scepticism (by parents and teachers) shrouding the concept of free education, it is the researchers' contention that free education in Zimbabwe is an elusive concept, hence a myth.

Therefore, it is recommended that, if at all Zimbabwe intends to fully implement basic education which is free; this should be preceded by careful planning and resource mobilisation. There is need to put benchmarks which signpost a meaningful implementation and not engage in political rhetoric where policy and practice are operating at variance. Government should also downsize its intended beneficiary base so that those who are in dire need benefit, not the indiscriminate manner which leaves the marginalised at the deeper end of marginalisation.

Though basic education has positive implications for the economy of the country, the research recommends that, if the government is to implement this policy in its entirety, there is dire need to commit more resources from the Marange Diamond Fields (Manicaland, Zimbabwe) to education and also court the support of NGOs instead of frightening them away (with threats of bans) for gains which are clearly political.

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ISSN-L: 2307-3713, ISSN: 2307-3721
Vol. 1 No. 1, February 2013

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