
Effects of Distance to School and Poverty on Learners' Academic Performance in Four Selected Rural Primary Schools in Chibombo District of Central Province

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Abstract

Long distance to school has a negative impact on the health and educational achievements of learners such as poor attendance by learners, school drop-out and poor academic performance while poverty also has negative effects on the academic success of a learner as school children growing up in impoverished homes with lack of basic necessities face more difficulties socially and academically than those from well to do families. Basically, such children have emotional and social problems which makes their academic journey slow and issues to do with their health in general also tend to slow their progress in the learning process. Therefore, the aim of this study was to investigate the effects of distance and poverty on learners' academic performance in four selected primary schools in Chibombo district of Central province. The study sought to establish whether distance to school and poverty have an effect on learners' academic performance. Four Head teachers, 16 teachers and 60 learners from the four rural primary schools in Chibombo district, plus 20 parents were purposively sampled for the study. Data was collected using questionnaires and in-depth interviews to allow the researcher a platform to ask open-response questions and to explore the educators' perspectives about the effects of teenage pregnancy. The data was analyzed thematically by carefully identifying and expanding significant themes that emerged from the informants' perceptions about the effects of distance and poverty on learners' academic performance. The study revealed that distance to school and poverty have a negative or detrimental effect on learners' academic performance. The study recommended that the Government through the Ministry of Education should construct more Primary schools in rural areas and promote school feeding programmes in rural areas among the vulnerable children.

Key terms: Academic performance, distance, effects, poverty, vulnerable children.

1. Introduction

Zambian education started a long time ago as traditional education where children were taught by elders, before the coming in of different missionaries from different parts of the world to Africa and before colonization by the British. Missionaries like Dr. David Livingstone came and introduced formal education and the first school was established at Limulunga in 1883 by Frederick Stanley Arnot in modern day Western Province of Zambia. Since that time and after

independence in 1964, demand and access to education has increased though distance and poverty have been a very big challenge to education access in some parts of the country more especially in rural areas. This has made it difficult for many children in rural areas to have access to education and quite a high number of children drop out of school and get married at tender ages in rural areas Kelly, (1999).

At independence, Zambia had one of the most poorly developed education systems of Britain's formal colonies with just 109 University graduates and less than 0.5% of the population estimated to have completed primary education. In a quest to improve primary school enrolment rates, the government introduced the free primary education policy in 2002. Though Zambia is on track to achieving universal primary education, few Zambian primary school pupils' access school and further, quite a handful of these learners progress to secondary school and also, enrolments in tertiary institutions are very low HeraldTribune (2003).

After independence from the British on 24th October, 1964 and in a quest to improve access to education for every child as to align education to the needs of the newly independent nation, the entire nation was involved in the formulation of educational policy through National debates in 1976 as the president at that time Dr. Kenneth Kaunda had given encouragement and his endorsement to the purposes of the reformers. The 1976 statement on education reform was an optimistic assumption that the government would be committed to transforming economic structures and systems of production.

From 1964 to 1965, Primary school teachers were trained to teach either at Lower Primary or Upper Primary. The two courses were two-year Lower Primary Teachers' course (L2) and two-year Upper Primary Teachers' course (U2). In 1966, at teacher education level, the Government introduced the Zambia Primary Course (ZPC) whose focus was on development of competences in student teachers that would enable such teachers teach all Primary grades. Besides, the course imparted English language skills in student teachers to enable them use English as a medium of instruction and communication in all the subjects. (MESVTEE 2012), the National In-service Teachers' College (NISTCOL) played a pivotal role in retraining serving teachers in the Zambia Primary Course (ZPC).

In 1977, the public debate on education culminated into the Educational Reform of 1977 which among its features aimed at providing nine years of compulsory basic education. However, a major policy development in the Zambian education system was the publication of the national education policy- "Educating Our Future" in May 1966. Educating Our Future created a path for educational development which was in line with the country's new political, economic and social direction (Yaari, 2008).

The Education Reform of 1977 brought further changes to the education system. The reforms brought in Basic and High school systems and at teacher education level, the Zambian Primary Teachers' Course was renamed Zambia Basic Education Teachers' Course (ZBEC) in order to link it to the school course. These reforms were implemented in the middle of the 1980s and (MESVTEE 1999:3) explains: "*Based on the national policy on education, 'Educating Our Future' of 1996, the Teacher Education Department in 2000 reformed the Zambia Basic*

Education Teacher's Course to Zambia Teacher Education Course (ZATEC) and this followed a change in the teacher education curriculum." According to Zambia Teacher Education Course (ZATEC), students spent one year in college and the other year in the school.

The Ministry of Education, in its effort to improve the delivery of educational services at all levels embarked on major policy reforms in the 1990's starting with Focus on Learning (1992), Educating Our Future (1996) and the Basic Education Sub-sector Investment Programme (BESSIP-1998). BESSIP was however, intended to accelerate the implementation of the policy goals of the Ministry of Education as articulated in Educating Our Future.

Whereas BESSIP focused on actual learning and teaching, access and completion rates, Educating Our Future outlined specific national targets for the short, medium and long term aspirations of the Zambian people in the area of education. One of the key reform measures was the change in language policy; at the lower basic level, which allowed for initial literacy instruction in a familiar (local) language instead of using English as the medium of instruction. This was not the case before 1964. Also, a wider programme, the Primary Reading Programme (PRP), supported by DFID, was thus conceived to take into account the new policy. (MESVTEE 2013), however, the baseline study of the Zambia Reading Programme which was conducted in 1999 noted that among Grades 1-6 learners who were tested in Reading, the majority read at two grades below grade level in English and three grade levels in their own Zambian language.

The Ministry of Education upholds the principle that every individual child has an equal right to educational opportunity regardless of personal circumstances or capacity has a right of access to and participate in the education system. Nevertheless, Zambia's educational problems today are numerous ranging from shortage of trained teachers, lack of suitable and adequate teaching and learning materials such as textbooks, inefficiency in utilization and management of existing educational facilities, inadequate and dilapidated school infrastructure, long distances covered by learners to school in rural areas, lack of water and sanitation facilities, high poverty levels in communities, ignorance and disease among others as outlined in the fifth National Development Plan (NDP) 2006 to 2010.

1.1 Statement of the problem

Learners' academic performance in Zambian schools, especially those in rural areas poses numerous educational problems today ranging from shortage of trained teachers, lack of suitable and adequate teaching and learning materials such as textbooks, inefficiency in utilization and management of existing educational facilities, inadequate and dilapidated school infrastructure, long distances covered by learners to school in rural areas, lack of water and sanitation facilities, high poverty levels in communities, ignorance and disease among others (MESVTEE 2013)..

1.2 Purpose of the study

The purpose of the study was to investigate the effects of distance and poverty on learners' academic performance in four selected primary schools in Chibombo district of Central province.

1.3 Specific objectives

1. To identify the challenges learners face in academic performance due to distance to school and poverty in the four selected schools.
2. To assess the perceptions of parents on the effects of distance to school and poverty on learners' academic performance in the four selected schools.
3. To establish the measures to address the challenges that learners encounter as a result of distance to school and poverty in academic performance in the four selected schools.

1.4 Theoretical Framework

The study was guided by Carol Weiss's Opposing program theory (1985). Opposing program theory and negative theory of change describes how a program is supposed to have beneficial influence or harmful consequences. The opposing program theory guided the investigation since the factors proposed by Weiss are equally crucial to achieving positive learners' academic performance in primary schools, (Leacock, 1971). According to Weiss' idea, any new intervention would have negative consequences that people would have to deal with. When change is launched, and plans are in motion in any normal situation, the program is expected to confront hurdles that may cause it to fail. In terms of this idea, suffice it to say that long distance learners cover to school and poverty levels have undoubtedly caused some obstacles for learners and even school managers, teachers as well as parents, hence the need for them to be established, (Rigole, 2014).

1.5 Significance of the study

It is hoped that the study would be significant as a valuable resource for academicians and other stakeholders interested in quality education provision in rural areas. It will serve as a source of information for other researchers and a tool for school administrators, teachers and parents. The Ministry of Education might benefit from hearing from parents and teachers about the negative impact of long distances learners cover to school and high poverty levels on learners' academic performance, which would aid the government in making further changes to education provision policy in rural areas. Finally, when changes and recommendations are applied, the study will increase learner performance.

2. Literature review

2.1 Distance to school

In towns very few learners mostly from poor families walk some distances to access school because of the alternative means of transport like school buses, public transport and private cars. Also, most schools in town are within learners' reach in the compounds where they reside MESVTEE (2012). However, even with these developments, there are still pupils who walk

long distance to school more especially in rural areas as schools are far apart. According to a recent study conducted by Germany educational experts, long distance to school has a negative impact on the health and educational achievements of learners. The long distance to school and the time children travel cause fatigue and kills concentration. The length of footing disorganizes their concentration in class. Some of them arrive at school sweaty, stressed and exhausted both physically and psychologically, which compromises their performance, the study says. Mutazihana (2006) adds that the fact that pupils are exposed to many things on their way to school affects their studies. There are many things that can distract the children on their way to school. For instance, some carry with their balls which they play with along the way while others can even fail to get to school on time due to unfriendly weather such as rainfall.

Ndahoyo (2014) quoted by the standard newspaper in Kenya, a teacher at Nyabitse primary school in Musanze, explained that pupils who travel long distance to school are likely to get to school late and miss an entire lesson which affects their overall learning in the long run. In the case of day scholars, absenteeism can become a syndrome due to long distance. Thoughts about how distant it is to get to school keep running in children's minds with the pile of home-work and school assignments demoralize them. Long distance to school also means getting up earlier, doing the home work and prepare for school as well as reducing the time a child is supposed to sleep which is crucial to the well-being of a human being.

Nhaku (2016) quoted a teacher of a Kigali school, who stated that buses provide some relief for children as they tend to manage time better and provide more relaxed way to travel to school. Although in rural areas, school buses are not fully adopted as it works better in urban areas, but the service should be developed and encouraged in areas too. This is because the time it takes for a child on a bus to get to school is shorter and the experience is not as stressful as that of a child who walks to get to school. Ezra (2017) adds that moving together on a bus enhances the bond among children while on the school bus, the children tend to spend time to know each other better, make friends and also learn to be interactive which is one of the major determinants of success at school.

2.2 Effects of long distance to school on learners

Pupils who cover shorter distance to school tend to be reluctant because they know they can make it to school at any time.

Research studies by UNESCO (2017) showed that distance to school contributes to poor attendance by learners, school dropout and poor academic performance. UNESCO also stated that conditions at home, in school and in the community are more likely to prevent children from having meaningful and conducive learning environment.

Schools of any kind must be easily accessible. This is particularly necessary for primary schools which are accessed by as young as seven-year old children. All schools should be brought closer to pupils' homes and must be within reach of learners. Only through this way will it be guaranteed that children are not exposed to the stress and dangers of long journey to school.

Learner late reporting and covering long distances from home translates into fewer learner-teacher contact hours, poor coverage of syllabi, lessens time teachers and learners spend on essential tasks in class and sometimes leads to learners dropping out of school. (Stanovich 1986), hence, these and many other key factors deprive learners acquiring strong academic foundational skills early. Hulme (2010) also confirms this as he says, absenteeism and late reporting due to distance to school impends on the teachers' carefully planned instructions and inhibits learners to become academic achievers at an early stage. Therefore, learners' absenteeism, late arrival at school and covering long distances to school negatively influence learners' academic achievement in rural primary schools.

2.3 Poverty

Poverty can be described as the state of not having enough material possession or income for a person's basic needs and poverty can have diverse social, economic and political causes and effects while relative poverty is measured when a person cannot meet a minimum level of living standards compared to others in the same time and place Handley et al (2009). Essentially, poverty refers to lacking enough resources to provide the necessities of life such as food, clean water, shelter and clothing though, today, this can be extended to include access to health care, education and transportation Chant (2010).

2.4 Causes of poverty levels

According to UNESCO (2017), causes of poverty are changing trends in a country's economy. Associated with the lack of education, high divorce rates, a culture of poverty, overpopulation, epidemic diseases such HIV/AIDS, malaria and now Covid19 and environmental problems such as lack of rainfall all cause poverty. Extreme weather conditions may be causes of poverty in many countries. Drought and flooding are other biggest causes of poverty. When natural disaster do not gain media attention, raising money becomes more difficult. This is made worse especially if governments do not make poverty reduction a priority.

In addition, some of the major causes of poverty are the inability of poor households to invest in property and education, limited access to credit facilities in some cases these bring about high poverty levels. These instances, exclusion of ethnic, women and people living in persistent poverty is partially attributed to these classes not having access to credit institutions and markets. Wars and violence are some of the primary causes of poverty as well as organized crimes have affected many countries in the third world and poverty levels are twice in violent countries than that of non-violent countries as non-violent countries are more able to feed themselves. Furthermore, unemployment was another reason for living in poverty while other causes are inflation, poor management of resources, corruption, poor policies, epidemics, weather conditions and hunger, International Food Study Institute (IFSI,2000)

2.5 How poverty affect the academic performance of learners

Chant (2010) states poverty has negative effects of poverty to academic success of a learner as school children growing up in impoverished homes with lack of basic necessities face more difficulties socially and academically than those from well to do families. Basically, such

children have emotional and social problems which makes their academic journey slow and issues to do with their health in general also tend to slow their progress in the learning process. In poverty stricken families, the environment is rarely stable, conducive and safe as the primary caregivers who are the parents are unable to offer their children consistent support and guidance because their attention is directed towards how they must struggle to make ends meet. The result is that there is lack of development including gratitude, forgiveness, and empathy Chronic Poverty Research Centre (2009). Also, the absence of personalized complex activities in the home hinders the much needed enrichment of a child's mental capability as he or she grows.

These factors coupled with substandard parental education undermine young people's emotional and social development Handley, Higgins and Sharma,(2009). Poverty makes the home set up too devoid of conducive home environment and in most cases children are fully involved in putting food on the table. This lowers their concentration on school thereby making their performance poor. A socially and economically stable environment helps children to develop feelings of self-worth, confidence and independence, qualities that are crucial to the attainment of the much needed academic success among learners. However, where economic hardship persists, at rusting environment that is expected to build secure and good environment for academic success both in the home and at school is unattainable. Children from impoverished homes are more likely to develop psychological disturbance to a certain extent and disorders in a way they should function socially than the well to do friends Greenhill et al, (2015). This may be worsened by their parents' diminished self-esteem, which may affect children in terms of nurturing. Failure to focus on children's needs when they are in school makes them more likely to exhibit certain unfavorable emotional and social behaviors.

3. Methodology

3.1 Research design

The research design was descriptive survey with both qualitative and quantitative methods of data collection in order to attain the comprehensive results. Qualitative methods was appropriate to this investigation as it produced detailed data from a small group of participants, while exploring feelings, impressions and judgments Best & Kahn, (1989). On the other hand, quantitative method made the use of questionnaires, surveys and experiment to gather data that is revised and tabulated in numbers, which allows the data to be characterized by use of statistical analysis Martyn, (2008).

3.2 Population, Sample and Sampling procedure

The population for the study was purposefully drawn from the four rural primary schools. Purposive sampling procedure was used to select Head teachers (4) while the simple random sampling procedure was used to select the teachers (16), parents (20) and pupils (60), (Agesa,2012). The sample size comprised of 100 respondents. Also, the primary data was complimented by the secondary data which was derived from government policy documents, ministerial reports and relevant literature on distance to school, learner absenteeism and poverty.

In the sampling of institutions, the study adopted the stratified cluster random sampling technique. Sampling was done on the basis of urban and rural school and zone by zone. Schools were clustered by rural and zones. Two zones were purposively selected based on the basis of being rural. The sampling was done at three levels: Sampling zones and schools- level 1, Sampling teachers, parents and learners-level 2, Sampling Head teachers -level 3.

3.4 Data Analysis

In this research, data was analysed qualitatively as in-depth interviews, questionnaires and observation schedules were used as data collection instruments. Thematic approach was used, where data analysis started with the categorization of themes from the structured interviews, questionnaires and observation schedules Kombo and Tromp (2006). Charts and graphs were used to analyse data. The data gathered was analysed according to the themes of the study and per the order of the research objectives. Data generated from the interview guide was analysed manually and also, a combination of software MS Access, SPSS and MS Excel was used to analyse data. Analysis was mainly descriptive, that is, mean, median, mode, range, and standard deviation. Related statistics were applied where possible. Statistical testing took the form of Analysis of Variance (ANOVA), correlation and regression both simple and multiple, (Buetow, 2010:123-125).

3.5 Ethical Issues

The researcher avoided pressuring respondents to take part in the research. Alternatively, permission consents, assents were obtained from respondents involved in the research and the research topic was strategically selected to ensure that there was no harm whatsoever to the research respondents. In this research, the researcher was fully conscious of the need to abide by the ethical rule of respecting the privacy of individuals taking part in the research. In the same way, all the respondents of the research were to remain unidentified to the public as all their valuable views, opinions and perceptions were only known by the researcher for use only in the research and participant's identities will forever remain hidden.

The Researcher got permission from the Head teacher to interview teachers and learners and from the local Chief to interview parents in villages. The names of respondents would remain anonymous for the sake of confidentiality, Bryman (2001) and Diener and Crandall (2008). However, the identity of respondents was concealed in the thesis but for identification in the thesis, the sixty learners were allocated numbers 1 to 60, the twenty parents were allocated ordinal numbers 1st to 20th, the sixteen teachers were allocated letters A to P, while the four Head teachers were allocated names of primary colours of Black, Blue, Yellow and Green. Zones and schools used pseudo names.

4. Findings and Discussions

4.1 Reasons for learner absenteeism

There were various reasons for learner absenteeism in the four rural primary schools in the two zones notable among them farming, fishing, selling to help raise money for the family and house chores. Learner absence in Mikango zone was 90% while that of Muuba zone was 80%

with the highest reason for absence being fishing (45.4%) in Mikango zone and the highest was farming (29.8%) in Muuba zone.

Learner absenteeism at Matenge Primary school (51%), Lumbu Primary school (49%) in Mikango zone and in Muuba zone at Lututu Primary school (45%) and Twikatane Primary school (35%). Learner absenteeism in Matenge zone was 90% while that for Muuba zone was 80%.

Table 1: Reasons for learner absence

ZONE	REASONS FOR LEARNER ABSENTEEISM	PERCENTAGE
MIKANGO	Farming	23.1
	Fishing	45.4
	Selling	1.0
	House chores	20.5
MUUBA	Farming	29.8
	Fishing	15.0
	Selling	20.2
	House chores	15.0

Learner absenteeism and school attendance as illustrated in Table 1 above had a negative effect on learners' academic performance. For example, teacher F at Lututu Primary school said, "it is not easy to assess learners' performance as sometimes learners at our school don't attend classes due to ill-health or arrive 30 minutes or even an hour late at school because of house chores given to them or distances covered from home to school."

4.2 Distance covered and time taken to school

On distance covered: less than 1km, Mikango zone (4.0%) and Muuba zone (6.5%), 1km to 3km, Mikango zone (33.2%) and Muuba zone (32.0%), 4 to 5km, Mikango zone (50.6%), Muuba zone (46.5%) and more than 5km, Mikango zone (13.2%) and Muuba zone (15.0%) as illustrated in Table 2 below.

Table 2: Distribution of percentage of learners and distances to school

Time taken	Percentage of learners living within stated distance from school		
	District	Mikango zone	Muuba zone
Less than 1km	4.0	4.0	6.5
1 to 3 kms	35.0	33.2	32.0
4 to 5 kms	45.5	50.6	46.5
More than 5 kms	15.5	13.2	15.0

On time learners took to travel to school: less than 15minutes, Mikango zone (4.3%) and Muuba zone (0.5%), 15 to 30minutes, Mikango zone (34.7%) and Muuba zone (31.4%), 30 to 60minutes, Mikango zone (55.5%) and Muuba zone (51.1%) and less than an hour, Mikango zone (5.5%) and Muuba zone (14.0%) as illustrated in Table 3 below.

Table 3: Distribution of percentage of learners and time taken to travel to school

Time taken	Percentage of learners and time taken to travel to school		
	District	Mikango zone	Muuba zone
less than 15 mins	10.9	4.3	0.5
15 to 30 mins	16.2	34.7	31.4
30 to 60 mins	53.1	55.5	51.1
more than 1 hour	19.8	5.5	14.0

Learner late reporting and covering long distances from home translated into fewer learner-teacher contact hours. (Stanovich 1986), hence, these and many other key factors deprived learners acquiring strong academic foundational skills early. (Wolf 2007) also confirms this as he says, learning is not a naturally-developing skill, because it requires carefully planned instructions, teacher-learner presence and time on task is essential if learners are to develop the cognitive processes to become academic achievers at an early stage. Therefore, learners' absenteeism, late arrival at school and covering long distances to school negatively influenced learners' academic achievement in the four rural schools.

Another factor which contributed to poor learner academic performance was teacher absence from school as it led to limited teacher-learner contact time, teachers' inability to adequately cover their syllabi, compromised the quality of lessons teachers delivered to learners and in terms of reading, very few learners were breaking through in reading skills. The fore-going assertion, is emphasized by (Neaum 2012) and (MESVTEE 2013) who stress that teachers and learners need adequate contact time in class and should strive to cover the syllabi in time.

Also, the assertions advanced above are supported by the evidence presented where teacher absence in the four rural primary schools in both Mikango and Muuba zones which were far from the District administrative centre was higher as most teachers lived far from their working places due to lack of accommodation within the school vicinity. Lack of financial institutions and other social amenities forced teachers from both zones to travel longer distances leaving learners unattended to for about 2 to 3 days due to lack of public transport, poor road network and poor supervision of teacher attendance at school and district levels. Teachers in both zones suffered from prolonged illnesses and poor health while some teachers absented themselves from classes to write assignments instead of being on duty while others went to attend workshops or residential schools.

. 4.3 Effects of poverty on academic performance

According to study results, poverty has effects on learners' academic performance at any given primary school and these were: psychological disturbance (84%), health problems (93%) emotional and social problems (88%) while lack of self-confidence was at (95%). Study results also indicated that 90% of the respondents said that most of the learners engaged in small businesses to help families raise an income.

Data also showed that there was an association between learners' presence in school and their academic performance in school. According to data obtained, 80% of the learners performed poorly in school and some dropped out of school (90%), repeated a grade in school (90%) while 90% were absent from school as shown in Table 4 below.

Table 4: Distribution of effects of poverty on academic performance

Effects of poverty on academic performance	Actual	Percentage	
		Yes	No
Psychological disturbances	16	84	16
Grade repetition	10	90	10
Health problems	7	93	7
Emotional/ social problems	12	88	12
School drop-out	10	90	10
Poor performance	20	80	20
Absenteeism	10	90	10
Lack of self-confidence	5	95	5
Engage in business ventures	10	90	10

The study revealed that learners who lived in poverty stricken homes while at primary school level generally perform poorly as compared to learners who do not. This centred on lack of necessities of life, poor health status, and lack of parental support among others. The present study concurs with Banerjee and Duflo (2011) advocated that poverty can be associated with poor educational achievement, poor physical and mental health, social isolation and related factors. Hulme (2010) confirms the findings of the present study by advocating that most learners find school much harder than anticipated. In a similar vein, Chant (2010) maintains that poverty-stricken learners experience reduction in their education attainment compared to learners who do not live in poverty. The reasons behind poor academic performance of learners from poverty-stricken homes as revealed by the findings of this study are among others, dual responsibilities the affected learners are faced with. This is confirmed in the study conducted by Greenhill et al (2015) when they posited that managing to help put food on the table and devoting adequate time to school work is a great challenge for learners. Lack of parental support as revealed by this study also leads to poor academic performance. Kunio and Sono (1996) cited in Chigona and Chetty (2008:262) advocated that denying rural primary school learners the support they need to pursue education condemns them to a vicious circle of poverty and ignorance.

5. Conclusion

The following conclusions were drawn from the findings of this study:

Poverty and distance covered to access school have a detrimental effect on the academic performance of rural primary school learners. This is because these rural learners attend school irregularly and sometimes drop out of school. They come to school late and play truancy. The

educators in this study believed that poverty and distance to school resulted in poor school performance. The general performance of rural primary schools with higher rates of poverty is negatively affected.

Poverty negatively affects the learners' emotional and social behaviour of the rural learners. They experienced psychological disturbances, health issues and lack of self-confidence which included a withdrawal syndrome. The learners had a general negative attitude towards school and sometimes school authorities. The learners who walked long distances were reported to be generally aggressive and suffered inferiority complex and a low self-esteem. Eventually, some of them drop out of school or repeat a Grade.

6. Recommendations

The following recommendations were made on the basis of the findings that emerged from the study:

- Educators should instill a positive attitude in learners from distant places and living in poverty towards attending school on daily basis by pointing out to them the short and long-term disadvantages of irregular school attendance, and how this can permanently ruin their future. Parents' meetings should be held at least once per quarter for educators to address with the parents, issues related to poverty and to educate the parents on how to support their children.
- The government should establish School feeding programmes in all rural primary schools to alleviate the problem of absenteeism, truancy and ultimately grade repetition.
- The school administrators and teachers should consider giving emotional, social and psychological support to learners covering long distances to school and those living in poverty by showing them love and empathy.
- Rural primary school learners should be encouraged to study hard in order to improve their academic performance in the classroom. Teachers should impart in them study skills, provide Individual Support Programme (ISP) in case learners had challenges related to poverty and distance covering to school ailments and is unable to complete certain tasks.
- The government should offer or provide child support grants or empowerment schemes to poor rural parents. This will give income to rural parents who in turn will help reduce absenteeism, late arrival at school and school drop-out among rural primary school learners.

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