

Education for All: Issues and Challenges: The Case for Zimbabwe

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Abstract

This present study was carried out in order to establish the benefits and challenges of the Education for All Policy in Zimbabwe. The study adopted the descriptive survey design since it was all about people's perceptions on the benefits and challenges of the policy of Education For All. In order to solicit data from the respondents, the questionnaire, and document analysis and interview schedule were used. The population of the study consisted of 306 prospective respondents, among them, Education Officers and Heads of Ministries in the different government departments in the seven districts of Mashonaland West Province. Out of a total population of 306, only 123 made it into the sample that was chosen through convenience sampling based on the availability and vicinity of the respondent to the researchers. However, results collated for the present study were from 115 respondents because some 8 prospective respondents did not submit the questionnaires issued to them. Results of the study show that the policy of Education for All has benefitted the masses a lot in a number of ways. These included churning out school leavers for industry and commerce, helping to break the cycle of poverty by creating a new generation that is literate and numerate and capable of being self employed, laying a foundation for skills training and further education and providing pupils with literacy and numeracy, life skills, and basic general knowledge of health, nutrition, and societal development, among others. Recommendations for the way forward included suggestions that there should be the involvement of all stakeholders in the provision of education for all and that communities should consider cost-sharing in terms of fees payment to cushion the disadvantaged families and making education more relevant to the needs of society.

Introduction

The investment in human capital and provision of education has been recognized as central to quality life. The provision for education and literacy for all, the cornerstone for quality life, have been recognized at national policy level. This is in accordance with the United Nations Declaration on Basic Human Rights. Upon the attainment of political independence, most countries are faced with a daunting task to make provisions for all services promised to the population during campaign periods. The majority of countries in Sub-Saharan Africa have found themselves in such a situation as leaders seek to appease the electorate. One area that has received attention from the political leaders has been the education system. Realizing that the majority of their citizens were deprived of formal education during the colonial era, most, if not all, countries embarked on an extensive education drive to provide the marginalized

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citizens with the much sought education. The benefits of such endeavors are undisputable as the majority of the counties made education accessible to the vast majority of the citizens. Zimbabwe, being one such country, experienced a boom in the enrolment figures as schools were established within a walk able distance from the children`s homes. While significant strides and positive results were realized, towards the attempt to make education readily available to all those in need through the policy of Education For All, a number of challenges were met. This study, therefore, was carried out with the main intention of establishing the benefits and challenges of the Education For All Policy.

Background to the study

The importance of providing Education for All (EFA) cannot be over emphasized. Most African states, upon attaining independence realized the need to educate the nation, for there was need to boost the manpower base and reap more social and private benefits from the education of the masses. On attaining independence, virtually all the African countries, embarked on a massive expansion of educational provision at all levels. Zimbabwe is no exception. According to Chivore (1992), on attaining independence in 1980, the country faced political, economic, and social challenges that normally accompany attempts to build a new nation. In the social arena, the government undertook massive and unprecedented expansion of education at both the primary and secondary school levels. In 1979, Zimbabwe had 2,401 primary schools with an enrollment of 819,586 pupils. By 1989, the country had 4,504 primary schools with an enrollment of 2,274,178 pupils. At the secondary school level, in 1979 there were 177 secondary schools with an enrollment of 66,215 pupils. By 1989, the country had 1,502 secondary schools with an enrollment of 695,882 pupils. The expansion was welcome as the majority of the marginalized people could access the education they had yearned for, for a long time. However, despite the exponential growth in the enrolment figures, a lot of challenges have been met in the process of providing education to the masses. It is the aim of the present study therefore to assess the benefits and challenges of the policy of Education For All from the period 1980 to 1990.

Statement of the problem

The process of attaining Education For All in Zimbabwe, has like in any other country, achieved unprecedented success as evidenced by the fact that Zimbabwe has the highest literacy rate (92%) in Africa. However, despite this mega achievement, problems continue to bog the process of fully implementing the policy of Education For All. This study therefore, sought to answer the question: To what extent has the education system succeeded in implementing the Education For All policy?

Research questions

In order to answer the question at hand, the following sub-problems were essential:

1. What benefits have the Zimbabwean education system derived from the policy of Education For All?

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2. What challenges have the Zimbabwean education system encountered in her attempts to introduce the Education For All Policy?
3. What are the potential remedies for militating against the identified challenges confronting Zimbabwean education system in her attempt to implement the policy of Education for All?

Education for All Policy in Zimbabwe

Following the attainment of political independence in the country in 1980, there were expectations from the populace that there would be remarkable changes in all sectors of the economy. Rightly so the newly elected government heeded to the call for the provision of education to all those who required it regardless of race, creed, sex or religion. The Social Demand planning approach to education was considered to be the most appropriate planning model for it assumes that all those in need of education shall get access to it regardless of affordability. There were unprecedented rises in enrollments in all sectors of education which are pre-school, primary, secondary, tertiary and adult education. Access to education was realized in all the stated areas with the primary and secondary sectors realizing more enrolments. According to Zvobgo (2005), in 1980 there were 1 235 994 students enrolled in Zimbabwean schools and by 1982 the number had risen to 1 934 614. Projected enrolment figures given by the planning section of the Ministry of Education predicted a further increase of 11.4% form 1983 figure of 2 182 000 to 2 431 000. By 1990 the figure was expected to reach the 3 217 000 and rightly so the correct enrollment for that year hit the mark as forecasted.

The number of schools rose in all the 10 geopolitical regions of the country and policy had it that a school was to be established within a radius of five kilometers for primary schools and for every three primary schools a secondary school was supposed to be created. Though challenges were experienced in the construction of schools, the government did all it could to make sure that schools were within walk able distances of the children.

Due to increased enrollments, more teachers were required and teachers` colleges were established. The Zimbabwe Integrated Teachers` Education Course (ZINTEC) was introduced to cater for staff shortages. The programme entailed that student teachers stayed longer on teaching practice, in the field than in residential courses. Other teachers` colleges such as Belvedere, Chinhoyi, Masvingo, Hillside, Mkoba, Gweru and Shamva, among others have since been constructed to cater for the need to have the classes manned by trained teachers.

Despite all these attempts, not everything has been rosy. The education budget has continued to gulp most funds from the national fiscals and of late the education system has been seriously under funded with the government considering cost sharing strategies with communities against a background of economic structural adjustment programmes. Concern about the apparent low quality of education has been raised in educational circles, educational fora, journals and policy documents (Ota; 1995). The Ministry of Education, Sport, Arts and Culture reports that the national pass-rate which in the past had been hovering between 60% and 70%, declined to less than 40% in 2010 while some rural provinces had a pass-rate of

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below 20% (Interim Strategic Plan for the Ministry of Education, Sport, Arts and Culture July 2010 – December 2011). This study therefore, was an attempt to evaluate the gains and challenges of the EFA policy as dropout and failure rates continue to be reported when there is pomp and fanfare extolling the existence of Education for All.

Literature Review

Benefits of Education for All Policy

In spite of the fact that the implementation of the policy of education for all was carried out with political and moral imperatives, (Galabawa, 2001) a number of benefits have been reaped from its implementation.

The EFA Policy`s relevance to people`s lives and work

The Education for All policy has been accredited for churning out huge numbers of school leavers among which some have been absorbed by industry and commerce. This has had a positive impact on the sectors of the economy which have in the past relied heavily of foreign human capital. With the advent of Education for all, in most Third World countries, manpower has not been scarce especially for middle management and shop-floor employees as well as artisans. In the informal sector of the economy, through indigenization policies, citizens have found themselves informally employed, hence making use of the education attained, thanks to the policy of education for all. According to Avenstrup, Liang and Nellesmann, (2004), the Jomtien conference held in Jomtien, Thailand, confirmed that universal primary education is one of the most beneficial interventions for reducing poverty. By providing pupils with literacy and numeracy, life skills, and a basic general knowledge of health, nutrition, and society, education for all lays a foundation for skills training and further education. By increasing knowledge of health and family life, education for all empowers women to reduce the burden of care provision, thereby improving their possibilities for employment. Universal Primary education, an issue in education for all, also empowers children who would otherwise be engaged as child workers or be socially marginalized. Most important, EFA helps break the cycle of poverty by creating a new generation that is functionally literate and numerate (Avenstrup, Liang and Nellesmann, 2004). Issues relating to education for all`s quality and relevance to people`s lives include employment, productivity and external efficiency of investment in education for all. Evidence abound, however, that very little progress had been made towards achieving these under the Education for All policy (Galabawa, 2001).

Accommodation of all children of school going age in the education system

Documentation in a number of African countries reflects a huge leap in enrollment figures after the proclamation of education for all policies. In Zimbabwe, in 1989, the country had 4,504 primary schools with an enrollment of 2,274,178 pupils. At the secondary level, in 1979 there were 177 secondary schools with an enrollment of 66,215 pupils. Due to the expansion as a result of education for all, the country had 1,502 secondary schools with an enrollment of

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695,882 pupils in 1989 (Chivore, 1992). In Tanzania, for example, new entrants to grade one of the primary school cycles have grown steadily since the 1970s. The number of new entrants increased from around 400,000 in 1975 to 617,008 in 1990 and to 851,743 in 2000, a rise of 212.9 percent in relative terms. The apparent intake rate was high at around 80% in the 1970s dropping to 70% in 1975 and rising up to 77% in 2000 (Galabawa, 2001). In Malawi, admission rates to primary schools soared by more than a staggering 80 per cent after free education was introduced in the mid-1990s. In 1993, there were about 1.6 million primary school students in Malawi but when free primary education was introduced in 1994, the number of students jumped to over three million. When Malawi introduced free primary education, a step towards education for all, enrolments increased by over 50% from 1.9m in 1993/4 to about 3.2m in 1994/5 in the first year of free education. Net enrolments prior to FPE had been 58% for girls, increasing to 73% by 1996; and 58% also for boys, but only increasing to 68% by 1996. Gross enrolments increased from 67.9% in 1990/1 to 158.1% in 1999/2000. Male and female gross enrolment rates were comparable in 1999/2000: at 157.9 and 158.3%, respectively (Riddell, 2003).

Increase in Literacy levels

Galabawa (2001) states that measuring the success of education for all policies should consider the literacy levels acquired through the introduction of the policy. Latest statistics on literacy rates show that Zimbabwe is now rated number one in Africa with a percentage of 92 %. This is a great achievement bearing in mind that quite a lot of African states gained independence well before Zimbabwe.

Challenges confronting the implementation of the EFA Policy

Location of the schools

In some geographical areas, location has contributed to some deserving children being deprived of their basic right to education and attendance at primary school, for example, has been curtailed. The geography of some areas has made it more difficult for children to get to school. According to Postiglione, Jiao and Gyatso (2006), for example; in high-altitude areas such as India, severe weather conditions for more than 7 months of the year make school attendance erratic and force children to remain at home. However, in Zimbabwe, the policy for the location of a school stipulates that a school should be established within a radius of five kilometers from the residence of the school going age children. The question that needs to be addressed is whether or not Zimbabwe has managed to provide schools as stipulated in the policy paper. Generally, Zimbabwe has a fairly gentle landscape and climatic conditions are not bad to the extent of making inhabitants of certain areas marooned and unable to get services from central or local government. In a study by Birdsall and Orivel (1996) in which they were investigating the relation between school location and school attendance in Mali, the results showed that fifty percent of the villages reported that the schools were far away, making students refrain from enrolling.

Lack of Resources and Inadequate Infrastructure

Rapid enrolment increases have challenged already weak systems. This is because resources have been scarce. For example, teachers have been in short supply and some instances, for example in Malawi, even before expansion due to education for all, there was a pupil-teacher ratio of 70:1 with 13% of teachers being unqualified and an average of 100 pupils crowding existing classrooms (Avenstrup et al, 2004). The biggest challenges were, not surprisingly, pressure on classroom facilities, insufficient teachers and an inadequate supply of instructional materials, all areas to which the development community responded, attempting to cater for shortfalls of the order of 38,000 new classrooms and at least 25,000 additional teachers.

Gender

Another aspect that has presented challenges for the education for all initiative has been the area of gender. Dowd and Green (2001) argue that gender contributes to a girl child's lack of access and attendance to education as investment in girls' education has been shunned in a number of traditional societies. This therefore, has resulted in widespread lack of access to primary education by the girl child in developing countries. According to Douglas (2003), some 78% of girls drop out of school, compared with 48% of boys. Therefore, a child's gender continues to contribute to access and attendance at schools. In 25 countries the proportion of boys enrolling in secondary school is higher than girls by 10% or more, and in five; India, Nepal, Togo, Turkey and Yemen, the gap exceeds 20%. Enrollment is low for both boys and girls in sub-Saharan Africa, with rates of just 27% and 22% (Douglas, 2003).

Costs to education attainment

While expenditure in education can be a dissuading factor towards enrolling, opportunity costs have had a high potency towards lack of access and attendance at schools. Some parents have weighed the cost of sending a child to school when the same child can be able to be employed in some way or the other. In some instances, children have been kept out of school because they are required to provide cheap labour at home, for example to work in the fields, informal mines or do household chores at home. For many families in developing countries the economic benefits of no primary schooling are enough to offset the opportunity cost of attending. Peverly (2006) argues that besides the opportunity costs associated with education, school fees can be very expensive, especially for poor households. In some instances family income is not adequate for family consumption let alone for fees. It remains to be seen whether in Zimbabwe costs have had a significant impact on education bearing in mind that funding has been forthcoming for the disadvantaged children.

Compromising the quality of Education

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Another area of concern has been the argument that the policy of education for all has resulted in the erosion of quality education in favour of quantity. Fears abound that the unsustainable teacher-pupil ratios have demotivated the teachers. The expansion in enrolment figures has further strained the existing resources and facilities (Gatawa, 1999). This seems to suggest therefore that the unprecedented rise in the enrolment was not followed by a proportionate increase in the funding of the education system.

Methodology

The present study adopted the descriptive survey design since it was concerned with the perceptions of respondents on the effects and challenges of the EFA policy. In order to come up with items that were included in the data collecting instruments, The ZANU PF Election Manifesto of 1980 and The Education Act of 1987 were used as both documents enunciated government focus towards the provision of education to all citizens regardless of race, sex, creed, political affiliation or otherwise. In order to solicit data from the respondents, the questionnaire, and interview schedule and document analysis were used. The use of the three data collection methods enabled the researchers to cross validate data and this helped to boost data validity and reliability. Document analysis was mostly used for quantitative data on enrollments, the number of teachers and schools before the EFA policy and after its inception in order to make a comparison to enable the researchers to make conclusions on benefits and challenges of the policy.

Population

The population for the current study consisted of 306 prospective respondents, among them, Education Officers and Heads of Ministries in the different government departments in the seven districts of Mashonaland West Province. The population was chosen due to its vicinity to the problem being investigated upon. Education officers, for example, are quite knowledgeable on the issue of education for all policy. These would provide the much needed data that would assist in answering the research question.

Sample and sampling procedure

Out of a total population of 306, only 123 made it into the sample that was chosen through convenience sampling based on the availability and vicinity of the respondent to the researchers. The sample size constitutes 40% of the population which is representative enough to make inferences about the whole population.

Data Presentation and Discussion

Out of the 123 respondents to whom questionnaires were sent, 115 questionnaires were received back fully completed. This constituted 38% of the original population. Efforts to recover all the questionnaires were futile as some respondents had relocated and the questionnaires could not be traced. Of the seven district heads, 5 were interviewed as per the original research plan. Documents kept at district offices provided data on statistics related to

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enrolment figures as well as statistics on staffing and available infrastructure in schools. The results of the current study are therefore based on the 115 questionnaires which were returned, the 5 interviews and the document analysis.

Table 1: The benefits that Zimbabwe has derived from the implementation of the policy of Education for All (N=115)

Type and form of Benefit	Benefitted		Not benefitted	
	No	%	No	%
EFA has churned out school leavers for industry and commerce.	70	61	45	39
Citizens are informally employed due to EFA policy	80	70	35	30
EFA has laid a foundation for skills training and further education	101	88	14	12
EFA has provided pupils with literacy and numeracy, life skills, and a basic general knowledge of health, nutrition, and society	95	83	20	17
EFA has empowered women to reduce the burden of care provision, thereby improving their possibilities for employment.	87	76	28	24
EFA empowers children who would otherwise be socially marginalised	114	99	1	1
EFA has improved access to education	115	100	0	0
EFA has boost national literacy levels (92%)	115	100	0	0
EFA has helped in socio-economic development programmes through literacy and numeracy	68	59	47	41
EFA brought about socio-geopolitical maturity and stability	88	77	27	23

Results from the table above show that 70(61%) indicated that EFA had churned out school leavers for industry and commerce. The majority of the respondents indicated that citizens had benefitted from EFA through being informally employed. This is in line with the findings of Avenstrup et al (2004) and Galabawa (2001) who established that Education for All helped break the cycle of poverty by creating a new generation that is functionally literate and numerate individuals capable of being self employed. However, records show that out of the 300 000 secondary school graduates being churned out of the school system, only 10% (30 000) found themselves employed in the formal sector (The Herald Newspaper of 11 July 2004). Education officers interviewed were all in agreement that the education system was churning products that were useless due to the curriculum being followed which was more academic than practical. One remarked saying:

...the problem with education for all in Zimbabwe has been that everyone was eager to have some level of education and attain a white collar job. However, that area has been saturated and still the majority of the people still look for white collar jobs through the attainment of the academic education. The curriculum should be technically oriented.”

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EFA had also laid a foundation for skills training and further education, according to a majority of 101(88%). Galabawa, 2001; Furthermore, according to 95(83%), EFA provided pupils with literacy and numeracy, life skills, and basic general knowledge of health, nutrition, and societal development (Chivore, 1992; Galabawa, 2001; Riddell, 2003). However, 20(17%) indicated that this was not a benefit at all. According to 87(76%), EFA had empowered women to reduce the burden of care provision, thereby improving their possibilities for employment, while 28(24%) thought otherwise. EFA had also empowered children who would otherwise be socially marginalized, according to a majority of 114(99%) while a minority of 1(1%) indicated otherwise. Another benefit, according to 115(100%) respondents was that EFA had improved access to education while another overwhelming majority of 115(100%) thought national literacy levels of 92% were a result of EFA (Chivore, 1992; Galabawa, 2001; Riddell, 2003). Sixty-eight (59%) respondents indicated that EFA had helped in socio-economic development programmes through literacy and numeracy, with 47(41%) indicating otherwise. Finally, a majority of 88(77%) thought EFA brought about socio-geopolitical maturity and stability.

From the responses offered by some political leaders interviewed, there was maturity among some young men and women in their constituencies. One leader said:

When some uneducated youths have been called upon by unscrupulous politicians to cause havoc, those who have been to school have refused to join in the chaos. This has shown that education for all has had some impact on the majority of our youths.

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Table 2: The challenges Zimbabwe has encountered in attempts to implement the Education for All Policy

Form of challenge	Serious		Not serious	
	No	%	No	%
The geography of some areas has made it difficult for children to get to school.	35	30	80	70
Investment in the girl child's education has been shunned in a number of traditional societies.	70	61	45	39
Resources have been scarce.	112	97	3	3
School fees can have adverse effects on enrolment of pupils in schools.	104	90	11	10
Opportunity costs have had a high potency towards lack of access and attendance at schools.	97	84	18	16
Children have been kept out of school because they are required to provide cheap labour at home.	73	63	42	37
There has been pressure on classroom facilities, insufficient teachers and an inadequate supply of instructional materials	113	98	2	2
Massive expansion has compromised quality of education	75	65	40	35

Table I shows that the geography of some areas was not serious challenge to the provision of education for all. However, according to Postiglione, Jiao and Gyatso (2006) in some areas conditions made school attendance erratic and forced children to remain at home. Only 35(30%) indicated that the location of some areas had made it difficult for children to get to school while a majority of 80(70%) thought this was not serious issue. To the contrary, a study by Birdsall and Orivel (1996) revealed that fifty percent of the villages reported that the schools were far away, making students refrain from enrolling.

The view that investment in the girl child's education was been shunned in a number of traditional societies was a serious issue for 70(61%) of the respondents while only 30(39%) indicated that the challenge was not a serious one. This is in agreement with the findings by Dowd and Green (2001) which found out that gender contribute to a girl child's lack of access and attendance to education as investment in girls' education has been shunned in a number of traditional societies. Douglas (2003) concurs. A majority of 112(97%) said resources were scarce unlike only 2(3%) who indicated otherwise. School fees have had adverse effects on enrolment of pupils in schools according to 104(90%). Results also show that according to 97(84%) thought that opportunity costs had a high potency towards lack of access and attendance at schools (Peveryly, 2006).

Some 73(63%) indicated that the fact that children have been kept out of school because they are required to provide cheap labour at home was a serious challenge as opposed to the views held by a minority of 42(37%) who thought otherwise. Another serious challenge was that there was pressure on classroom facilities, insufficient teachers and an inadequate supply of instructional materials. In agreement, Avenstrup et al, (2004) concluded that the biggest challenges to EFA were pressure on classroom facilities, insufficient teachers and an

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inadequate supply of instructional materials. This was according to 113(98%) of the respondents. Another majority of 75(65%) indicated that massive expansion as result of EFA had compromised quality of education in Zimbabwe (Gatawa, 1999). Due to the fact that resources were being overstretched by the abnormally huge enrollments, these were very insufficient to the extent that the quality of education was compromised. For example the teacher-pupil ratio in most schools was 1: 60. All these 60 students were crammed in one classroom making it impossible for the teacher to give individual attention. Zvobgo (1999) remarks that the pupil-textbook ratio was 80:1.

Table 3: The remedies for minimising the challenges confronting Zimbabwe in her attempt to implement the policy of Education for All (N=115)

Form of remedy	Effective		Not effective	
	No	%	No	%
Establishment of schools within a radius of 5km as stipulated by policy	80	70	35	30
Making it mandatory for the girl child to attend school	56	49	59	51
To include all stakeholders in resource mobilization	87	76	28	24
Government to pay fees for the vulnerable groups	45	39	70	61
Enact legislation to make it compulsory for all school going ages to attend school without fail	89	77	26	23
Involve development partners in the provision of resources	92	80	23	20

Remedies suggested by the respondents show that the majority 80(70%), were in favour of the establishment of schools within a radius of 5km as stipulated by policy, a remedy they thought to be effective in boosting attendance at schools. Fifty-six (49%) of the respondents suggested making it mandatory for the girl child to attend school while 45(39%) thought that an effective way was that government should pay fees for the vulnerable groups. Enacting legislation to make it compulsory for all school going ages to attend school without fail was viewed as effective by a majority of 89(77%) respondents. Ninety-two (80%) thought that involving development partners in the provision of resources was an effective way of addressing the challenge of shortage of resources in the education and had impeded the smooth implementation of the Education for All policy (Riddell, 2003; Galabawa, 2001)

Some District Education officers were of the opinion that government could do with development aid from friendly countries. In an interview one said that nongovernmental organizations should be called in to assist in the manner they were assisting in humanitarian aid efforts. Efforts towards that attempt were however, starting to bear fruit as books were, at the time of this study, being distributed to schools through Education and Transition Reform Programme which would help alleviate the textbook shortages.

Conclusion

Results from the current study indicate that EFA has to great extent achieved most of the objectives for which it was introduced in the Zimbabwean education system. Notable achievements have been realised in the following areas:

- churning out school leavers for industry and commerce

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- helping to break the cycle of poverty by creating a new generation that is literate and numerate and capable of being self employed
- laying a foundation for skills training and further education
- providing pupils with literacy and numeracy, life skills, and basic general knowledge of health, nutrition, and societal development
- empowering women to reduce the burden of care provision, thereby improving their possibilities for employment
- improving access to education
- helping in socio-economic development programmes through literacy and numeracy
- bringing about socio-geopolitical maturity and stability, among others.

Recommendations

Realising the need for progress in the provision of quality of education all a number of initiatives need to be considered. These include the following recommendations:

- Involvement of all stakeholders in the provision of education for all
- community cost-sharing in terms of fees payment to cushion the disadvantaged families
- Education for all should be results oriented and in particular be appropriate, relevant and transformative with regard to people's lives and work.
- Making education relevant to the needs of society
- Improving quality of existing schools so as to improve enrolment and retention rates
- Mobilize all development partners to fund the provision of educational resources
- Parents should be encouraged to fully participate in school related activities that bring about the existence of sufficient educational resources for the schools
- To cater for shortfalls in human resources measures may include an expanded teacher training programme through Open and Distance Learning which aims at producing more teachers at a lower cost within the shortest time possible than conventional full-time teacher training programmes.
- establishment of schools within a radius of 5km as stipulated by policy
- making it mandatory for the girl child to attend school
- government to invigorate efforts to pay fees for the vulnerable groups

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