

## **Quality of Basic Education Provided by Rural Community and Regular Schools in the Northern Province of Zambia**

Dickson C. Nkosha and Peggy Mwanza  
*University of Zambia*

### **Abstract**

Community schools provide an alternative mode of education delivery in Zambia. They have helped in making basic education accessible to many school going-age children. In addition, community schools have helped in strengthening relationships between schools and surrounding communities; and pupils do not have to travel long distances to schools. Considering that both regular and community basic schools play a very important role in the provision of education, the study sought to establish the quality of education in 12 selected rural basic schools belonging to both categories in the Northern Province of Zambia. Although the findings indicated that all stakeholders felt that some learning was taking place, it was clear that neither community nor regular basic schools provided what may be referred to as good quality education. However, the picture emerging from the findings was that the situation in regular basic schools was slightly better than that found in community schools. Suggestions from respondents on ways of improving the quality of basic education included, among other things, rehabilitating of existing infrastructure, building new classroom blocks and enough teachers' houses, provision of adequate desks as well as teaching and learning materials, deployment of an adequate number of trained teachers, and running of regular in-service training courses.

### **Introduction**

From 1998 to date, the Zambian Government, through the Ministry of Education (MoE), has placed emphasis on increasing enrolment levels in Government schools while supporting alternative modes of education delivery such as community schools and Interactive Radio Instruction (IRI) Centres and private schools (MoE 2004). In line with this policy, there was an increase in community schools from only 38 in 1996 to 883 in 2000 resulting in increased enrolments from 6,599 to 95,101. In 2004, the number of community schools had increased to 1,388 while the enrolment figure had risen to 230,699 (MoE 2004). Of this figure, 67,601 were orphans. By 2005, the number of community schools had increased to 2,162, thereby pushing the enrolment figure up to 358,699 (MoE 2006). The total enrolment of 108,978 in 2005 were orphans. Table 1 gives us information on all the agencies involved in the provision of basic education.

**Table 1. Basic Schools Enrolments by Agency and Year**

	<b>2000</b>	<b>2001</b>	<b>2002</b>	<b>2003</b>	<b>2004</b>	<b>2005</b>	<b>Total</b>
GRZ/GA	4 310	4 310	4 360	4 400	5 013	4 666	27 059
Private/Church	131	131	205	287	395	483	1 632
Community	883	1 336	1 337	1 386	1 388	2 162	8 492
<b>Total</b>	<b>5 324</b>	<b>5 777</b>	<b>5 902</b>	<b>6 073</b>	<b>6 796</b>	<b>7 311</b>	<b>37 183</b>

Source: MoE (2004, 2006) Educational Statistical Bulletin

As can be seen in the table above, the relevance of community schools in the provision of basic education in Zambia is demonstrated by the fact that more pupils were enrolled in these schools (8,492) than in private/church schools (1,632). In fact, in 2005, community schools were second to Government/Grant Aided schools in terms of high enrolment figures. Note also that according to Chondoka (2006), the number of community schools in 2006 increased to 2,457 while the enrolment figure rose to 426,979.

It should be noted, however, that these community schools are established by members of each community of a particular area where there are no Government schools. According to the Zambia Open Community Schools (ZOCS) (2008, p.3) a community school is defined as follows: "...a community-based learning institution that meets the educational needs of vulnerable children especially orphans and girls. The management and organisation of the schools lies in the hands of the community."

Community schools had been operating under Zambia Community Schools Secretariat (ZCSS) before dissolution. Currently, there are community schools which fall directly under the ZOCS, which was established in 1992. These schools are found in 14 districts of Zambia in Central, Eastern, Lusaka and Southern provinces. The majority of community schools do not have any Umbrella organisation. However, community schools in both categories (i.e. those that fall directly under ZOCS and those that do not) are run by communities themselves.

The Government provides grants and educational materials to supplement efforts of the parents. There have also been instances when some cooperating partners in collaboration with Government as well as the community have built classrooms, teachers' houses, toilets and provided water. Most of these community schools provide education to children from grades 1 – 7 while a few others go up to grade 9. Another notable feature in community schools is the use of multi-grade system particularly in rural areas where enrolment figures are low.

This study's focus on determining the quality of education offered by community and regular basic schools was in line with the MoE's pronouncement (1996, p.148) in the policy document "Educating Our Future." It states that:

Research is important in the operation and development of the education system. The isolation of successful strategies and interventions, the identification of problems affecting the system or any of its parts, the analysis of policy options that

could make the delivery of education more effective and efficient, and the evaluation of policy effectiveness, all require the information and insights that come from well-designed research.

### **Statement of the problem**

Quality in the provision of education involves, among other things, use of a suitable curriculum, supply of trained and qualified teachers, appropriate teaching/learning materials, Continuing Professional Development (CPD) of teachers, management, regular monitoring and assessment of schools by Education Standards Officers (ESOs) and other MOE officials, number of learning hours, and a good learning environment. In line with these factors, this study aimed at answering the following question: Do rural community and regular basic schools offer quality education?

### **Objectives of the study**

The objectives of this study were to:

- (a) establish what the different stakeholders regarded as quality education for rural community and regular schools.
- (b) establish how the different stakeholders went about providing quality education in rural community and regular schools.
- (c) assess the quality of education in rural community and regular schools in relation to the indicators of quality set out by the Ministry of Education.
- (d) ascertain what changes (if any) needed to be made to ensure provision of quality education in rural community and regular schools.

### **Research questions**

The study was guided by the following questions:

- (a) What do the different stakeholders regard as quality education for rural community and regular schools?
- (b) How do the different stakeholders go about providing quality education in rural community and regular schools?
- (c) What is the quality of education in rural community and regular schools in relation to the indicators of quality set out by the Ministry of Education?
- (d) What changes (if any) need to be made to ensure provision of quality education in rural community and regular schools?

### **The Development of Basic Education in Zambia**

The concept of basic education was first introduced in the 1977 Education Reform document. This was driven by the desire to shift from what was viewed as “theoretical knowledge” of academic disciplines of the school culture to Education with Production. It was anticipated that providing learners with the latter would enable them to acquire

practical skills that would enhance their entrepreneurship in society. It was, therefore, argued that the learners needed two additional years after grade 7, and that by then they would have matured to at least 15 years of age, acquired more practical knowledge and skills which they would use to effectively carry out works such as artisans, bricklayers and carpenters. This education could be provided in the formal or non-formal manner by involving the school, the family, the community, the providers of non-formal education, and the churches.

The Ministry of Education (MOE) started implementing basic education on a large scale in 1998 through the Basic Education Sub – Sector Investment Programme (BESSIP). This was a five-year sector plan (1998 – 2002), in collaboration with international development partners, meant to address MOE policy on basic education, which is well spelt out in the policy document “Educating Our Future” (1996).

### **Aims of basic education**

According to the policy document “Educating our Future” basic education aims at providing each pupil with a solid academic and practical foundation that will serve as the basis for a fulfilling life and that will equip each one with the pre-requisites needed for a working life, various forms of training, or the continuation of school education (MoE 1996, p.30). This is in line with the Education for All (EFA) vision of the 1990 Jomtien (Thailand) world conference derived from the Universal Declaration of Human Rights (1948), which emphasises that everyone has the Right to Education (MoE 2005). The aim of EFA was re-affirmed and operationalised at the World Education Forum held in Dakar (Senegal) in April 2000.

The Ministry of Education hoped to achieve the above aims, through BESSIP, by increasing the enrolment levels and improving quality of education countrywide. To this effect, issues of infrastructure, educational materials, teacher education, curriculum development, and capacity building were to be addressed. Furthermore, crosscutting issues such as HIV/AIDS prevention and impact management, environmental education as well as drug abuse would be integrated in the school curriculum. Other issues to be addressed were equal access to education regardless of gender, social/economic class, and the provision of food and health facilities to disadvantaged children through the School Health and Nutrition (SHN) programme. These strategies are in line with Millennium Development Goals, and the concept of Education for Sustainable Development adopted by UN General Assembly in December 2002.

### **Provision of basic education by community schools**

Government’s failure to provide enough school places for school going-age children became worse with the decline in the economy from the late 1970s onwards. To address this problem, the government encouraged alternative modes of education delivery such as grant – aided schools, private schools, community schools and Interactive Radio Instruction (IRI) centres.

Community schools, which are the main focus of this study, are the highest expression of community participation in the delivery of education (MoE 2004). The education document “Educating Our Future” (1996, p.19) puts it more succinctly, thus:

In a country-wide demonstration of self-reliance, communities – rich and poor, rural and urban – have mobilised themselves to provide the labour, materials or funds needed for the construction of classrooms. This initial community zeal has set the pattern for the future, since the further development of basic schools must depend largely on the continuation of such participation by the community. The Ministry will provide technical advice and, once the physical facilities are in place, will provide teachers, equipment and teaching materials for approved developments.

It is clear from the aforesaid that community schools have an important role to play in the provision of basic education in Zambia.

### **Indicators of Quality Education**

As indicated in the statement of the problem, quality in the provision of education involves use of a suitable curriculum, supply of trained and qualified teachers, appropriate teaching/learning materials, Continuing Professional Development (CPD) of teachers, regular monitoring and assessment of schools by Education Standards Officers (ESOs), and a suitable learning environment and proper sanitation (MoE 2003). These indicators are briefly defined below:

#### **(a) Use of a suitable curriculum**

A suitable curriculum includes the concepts, knowledge, competences, skills, attitudes and values relevant to the needs and aspirations of learners and society (MoE 1996; MoE 1999; MoE 2000). In other words, the curriculum should be concerned with the learners’ needs and aspirations such as those of the body (physical education, sport, performing art) as well as those of the mind (Concepts, literacy, numeracy, knowledge), affective (music, dance, creative arts) and social needs (hygiene, citizenship), moral (values, attitudes) and spiritual needs (living in harmony with self, with others, with supernatural) (Ibid.). Therefore, the three aspects which should correspond closely in a suitable curriculum are identification of what is to be taught and learned, how it is to be taught and learned, and the evidence that satisfactory teaching and learning have taken place. Policy further requires that besides a core curriculum, each school is required to integrate a localised curriculum so that the pupils can realise the relevance of their education.

#### **(b) Supply of trained and qualified teachers**

Using trained and qualified teachers is another factor which determines the quality

of education. In this regard, the essential competences required in every teacher are mastery of material that is to be taught, and skill in communicating that material to pupils (MoE 1996). Both aspects cover a great array of knowledge, understanding and skills that must become integral to every teacher.

Related to the issues raised above is the fact that teachers must be motivated. This motivation may take different forms; for example, providing teachers with adequate and appropriate teaching/learning materials, providing good conditions of service and salaries, and improving the learning environment.

### **(c) Continuing Professional Development (CPD) of teachers**

Besides teacher training, quality is also addressed through the teachers' continued professional development. This implies that there should be in – service programmes organised for teachers to enhance their competence and performance. These could be short or long term in nature. This strategy is supported by the MoE (1996, p.115) as follows:

Teacher education is a continuing process that must be extended throughout the individual's years of actual teaching. The foundation laid in the pre-service programme may be sound and adequate as a start, but it is not sufficient for life. As with other professionals, teachers have a responsibility, to themselves and to their profession, to deepen their knowledge, extend their professional skills, and keep themselves up-to-date on major developments affecting their profession.

### **(d) Appropriate teaching/learning materials**

Teaching/learning materials can only be termed appropriate if they both meet the goals of the curriculum and assist the teacher in achieving set lesson objectives. In this way, the choice of suitable teaching/learning materials ensures quality of education delivery. Some of these materials are textbooks, charts, maps, chalkboard, rulers, dusters, overhead projectors, etc.

### **(e) Regular monitoring and assessment of schools**

The quality of education delivery can also depend on regular monitoring and assessment of schools. In Zambia, this is done by Education Standards Officers (i.e., Inspectors of Schools). Their responsibilities are summarised in the quotation below (MoE 1996, p.155):

...their principal concern is with improving teacher effectiveness and school organisation. As disseminators of good practice, they stimulate teachers to examine their lesson preparation and follow, through their teaching strategies, the way they are developing or using curriculum materials, how they evaluate pupils, and how they organise the teaching session. They also advise school heads on such issues as timetabling, the effective use of teachers, and providing good leadership to all in the

school.

#### **(f) A suitable learning environment and proper sanitation**

A learning environment can be considered to be suitable if it has fairly modest or decent structures, clean classrooms with suitable materials as well as facilities for the display of pupils' work, enough space to both accommodate the maximum number of pupils (45 in Zambia), and allow for the use of pupil-centred methodologies with the stress on group work, projects and guided discovery (MoE 1996). There should be good sanitary conditions (water and toilets), and general surroundings must be clean. These conditions contribute to the provision of good quality education.

### **Methodology**

The methodology section of this paper comprises of the research design, population, sample size and sampling procedure, research instruments, data collection and data analysis.

#### **Research design**

This research used a “critical instance case study” approach. A critical instance case study is one which examines one or a few cases for one or two purposes. This means that it could involve the examination of a situation of unique interest, with little or no interest in generalisability, or its application could entail calling into question a highly generalised or universal assertion and testing it by examining one instance. This method particularly suits answering cause – and – effect questions about the instance of concern (Wikipedia, the free encyclopaedia, 2007).

#### **Population**

The target population included all the 351 communities and 880 regular basic schools in Northern Province, school head teachers(School Managers), teachers, pupils, parents and Education Standards Officers.

#### **Sample size and sampling procedures**

The sample size included 6 rural communities and 6 rural regular basic schools in the Northern Province of Zambia. For community schools, the intention was to select 2 supported by international agencies, 2 supported by MoE, and the other 2 by community members, using the purposive sampling techniques. However, since there were not any community schools that were supported by international agencies in Kasama District, researchers settled for 5 communities supported basic schools and 1 which was partly supported by the Government. In the former category, researchers visited Andele (85km from Kasama), Kanyanta (62km), Safwa (82km), Chanda Katebo (84km) and Katapa (68km) while in the latter category the researchers visited Ndoloka (62km). Of the 6

community schools selected, only 2 went up to grade 7. The rest went up to grade 4 only because they had not met minimum requirements set by MoE officials to be upgraded. These requirements ranged from infrastructure expansion to availability of good sanitary conditions and at least one or two trained teachers.

The six regular basic schools, which were also selected using the purposive sampling technique, were Chitwe (83km), Chilongoshi (62km), Kasonde Mutokwa (65km), Ngoli (53km), Chanda Mukulu (76km) and Mwelwa (55km). Most regular basic schools visited provided education up to Grade 7 and a few others went up to Grade 9.

The sample also covered 12 headteachers, 36 teachers and 36 pupils (3 from each school), 24 parents (2 from each surrounding community), 2 Education Standards Officers from the district office and 1 Zambia Open Community Schools' officer. It should be noted that although the researchers intended to interview 2 Education Standards Officers, they interviewed 4. This was done in order to not only get reliable information but also fairly representative views. The sample was selected after conducting a survey to determine the characteristics of the schools and respondents.

### **Research instruments and data collection**

The researchers employed Focus Group Discussions (FGDs) with teachers, pupils and parents. Personal open-ended interviews were used to collect data from headteachers and Education Standards Officers. It is also important to note that after realising that there were other MOE officials involved in monitoring and evaluation of schools, the researchers decided to increase the number of such officials from 2 to 4.

At every school, researchers reported to the Headteachers (school managers) before they began collecting information. They often began with the observation of classroom practices and the learning environment using the observation checklist. This was then followed by personal open-ended interviews with headteachers and FGDs with teachers, pupils and parents. The Education Standards Officers, other MOE officials, and the director of ZOCs were engaged in a personal open-ended interview. Armed with their notebooks and pens the researchers and their assistants wrote down all the relevant information they could get from the respondents.

### **Data analysis**

As is characteristic of qualitative research, preliminary data analysis was done while in the field. This involved identifying and categorising significant themes relevant to the research objectives. The researchers discussed the emerging themes extensively before making some generalisations. The researchers also used descriptive statistics to indicate categories of respondents and variance in the answers they gave. They also used percentages to indicate the degree of representativeness of the respondents' views.



## Research Findings and Discussion

The findings which are discussed in this chapter are linked to the emerging themes that were arrived at after matching the data collected and analysed with the research objectives.

As indicated earlier, at the time of writing the research plan, information available indicated that nearly all the community schools were established by members of each community of a particular area where there were no Government schools. However, while collecting data, the researchers discovered that there were instances when individuals established community schools. According to the Senior Education Standards Officer (SESO) responsible for Open and Distance Learning (ODL) in Kasama, this was the case in Mbala where one farmer established a school to cater for his farm workers' children and those of the neighbouring communities.

Before this study was conducted there was also a perception that community schools were for orphans. However, researchers discovered that there were some communities with children who had parents. Such parents in fact testified that they sent their children to such schools because there were not any other schools that their children could go to in their areas. Others still indicated, in some cases, that the long distances to Government schools forced them to send their children to nearby community schools. This was the case for parents at all the six community schools visited in Kasama District.

All the stakeholders (headteachers, teachers, pupils, parents, Ministry of Education officials) at the 6 communities and 6 regular basic schools unanimously indicated that quality education would only be achieved in a situation where all the requisites were provided to aid the process of teaching and learning. The requisites cited were good and appropriate infrastructure such as decent buildings, enough desks, adequate and suitable teaching/learning materials, enough qualified teachers, adequate and decent staff accommodation, clean water and decent toilets, clean classrooms and surroundings, a suitable curriculum and enough teaching time. The aspects of teachers' Continuing Professional Development, management structures, procedures and styles as well as regular monitoring and assessment of schools, which were also factors which led to the provision of quality education, were also mentioned though they were not as prominent as the factors mentioned earlier.

It is important to note that besides coming to the same agreement on the indicators of quality education mentioned above, stakeholders also unanimously mentioned the same challenges that made delivery of quality education in community schools difficult. It should be borne in mind that the researchers made the same observations in this regard. Details of these observations are given below.

In most of the community schools visited, the school buildings were few, dilapidated and poor or non-existent at all. In most cases, the researchers found pupils learning in church buildings, uncompleted buildings, or under trees.

Owing to high poverty levels in rural areas in Zambia which stand at 80 % (Times

of Zambia 2008), most parents cannot afford to construct school buildings. In cases where parents had erected walls for school buildings, they had failed to buy corrugated iron sheets or asbestos for roofs. It was also common to find incomplete structures with a few iron sheets covering a quarter of the roof while others had grass thatched roofs. As a result of this, during the rainy season most roofs were leaking, which made the teaching-learning process difficult. It was clear, and teachers, learners and parents admitted, that the inadequate classroom blocks/classrooms and the poor state in which they were adversely affected the teaching-learning process.

Although most of the regular or Government basic schools had relatively better infrastructure, there were some whose infrastructure was just as bad as the community schools'. It was also noted that the classroom blocks and classrooms were not adequate to cater for big numbers of pupils in schools.

The researchers found that community schools were also using the Ministry of Education recommended curriculum used by regular basic schools. However, all the community basic schools visited did not have adequate teaching/learning materials. For the example, the book – pupil ratio was 1:8. In some cases, it was common to find more than 8 pupils sharing one textbook. There were also some situations where there were no textbooks at all and others where pupils were made to use inappropriate textbooks and/ or other learning materials (i.e., books or materials below their level). It was noted that even the few books that the community schools were using were borrowed from neighbouring regular basic schools. Related to this was the poor state in which the books were and lack of storage facilities. Some supervisors or headteachers kept the books in their houses which were in some cases in poor conditions. The situation in regular basic schools, in relation to teaching-learning materials, was almost the same, save for lower basic classes in the latter case where the book-pupil ratio was 1:2.

The learning environment both inside and outside the classroom was not conducive in some of the community schools visited. All the classrooms did not have desks and chairs, including the teacher's table. Learners were found sitting on broken pieces of furniture, logs, bricks, tins or bare floor with nothing to lean on while writing. In most situations, the classroom walls did not also depict a learning environment because they were bare. The surrounding environment in many of these community schools was also poor because there was no water. Besides this, there were very few pit-latrines, and the surroundings were dirty. In some of the community school pupils had to draw water from the neighbouring community wells.

Except for a few pieces of furniture in the form of desks, the learning environment in regular basic schools was not any better than that found in community schools. In fact, some of the 6 regular basic schools visited were just as bad.

The only characteristic that was peculiar to regular basic schools was overcrowded classrooms. In terms of the number of pupils in classrooms the ratios were 1 girl to 4 boys in regular basic schools and 1 girl to 2 boys in community basic schools.

In principle, the Ministry of Education is supposed to send trained teachers to

community schools. However, research findings showed that except for 1 community school where there were 2 trained teachers (11%), the other 5 schools had no trained teachers (89%). Pupils at these schools were taught by individuals who had not done their teacher training course. Twenty-two percent of these teachers had gone up to grade 9 while 67% had finished grade 12. Of the 16 untrained teachers in community schools visited, 3 (19%) had attended short workshops on teaching methodologies. The programme of Continuing Professional Development (CPD) of teachers was non-existent in community schools visited. Some of the lessons observed by researchers in these schools revealed a lot of inadequacies on the part of the teachers. One thing worth noting though is the commitment these teachers showed to work in spite of not receiving salaries from the government.

All the 18 teachers (100%) interviewed in regular basic schools were not only trained but also on government payroll. Except for one teacher (6%) who had a secondary teachers' diploma, the other 17 (94%) had done a primary teachers' course called Zambia Teacher Education Course (ZATEC). In spite of receiving better preparation and remuneration for their work, these teachers showed very little commitment to their work. Asked why they were demotivated 3 of these teachers claimed that they were not satisfied with their conditions of service and salaries.

A regular visit to schools is one of the methods used by Ministry of Education Officers to monitor and assess the performance of learners, teachers and school managers. Under the current arrangement in the Ministry of Education, Education Standards Officers (ESOs) and other relevant officers are charged with the responsibility of monitoring and assessing schools. In spite of these officers being aware of the existence of community schools and their acknowledgement that these fall under their jurisdiction, the researchers found that community basic schools were rarely monitored and assessed. This means that besides informal parental involvement in monitoring and assessing schools' academic performance, MOE officers are doing very little or nothing at all to support community schools in this regard. Heneveld (1994) points out that support to individual schools from the Education System is effective when the system monitors and evaluates schools' academic performances and their improvement efforts. This, too, poses a serious challenge in ensuring that community schools provide good quality education.

Although it has been the Zambian Government's intention to support community schools by, among other things, providing them with trained teachers, teaching- learning materials and funds, this is not often the case. As a result of this, community school teachers work under poor conditions. For example, they are usually paid in kind (i.e., they are given farm products such as groundnuts, maize and cassava for their labour). It must be borne in mind that inadequate funding in community schools also affects other areas such as teacher training, infrastructure development, provision of teaching-learning materials, as well as improvement of the learning environment and sanitary conditions.

It is important to note that the challenges faced by community schools which do not fall under any umbrella organization are far much more than those which fall

under Zambia Open Community Schools (ZOCS). Since ZOCS lobbies for funds from government and other organisations, schools which fall under it have better infrastructure and learning environments than those which do not have supporting agencies. It must also be noted that ZOCS helps in training teachers for their schools. As a result of this, there are more trained teachers in community schools which fall under ZOCS than those which do not have any supporting agency.

In spite of the constraints, headteachers, teachers, parents, pupils and MOE officials indicated that they endeavoured to provide some quality education by playing different roles. On their part teachers said they used the available meagre resources to prepare lessons, improvise teaching/learning materials, report for work punctually on every work day, and encourage parents to send their children, attend any relevant training workshops and ask for books from well established schools. Headteachers stated that they ensured that teachers prepared their lessons and carried out both their curricular and co-curricular duties, sourced teaching/learning materials, and encouraged parents to support the school by sending their children to school and engaging in self-help projects. In addition, Headteachers in community schools encouraged parents to continue supporting community teachers who were not on Government pay roll.

Parents also stated that they paid teachers in kind for their work (for those in community schools), for example, by giving them farm produce such as groundnuts, cassava and maize or ploughing their fields for their services. Sometimes parents paid the teachers in monetary terms by subscribing 1,000 kwacha per child per month. They also engaged in self-help activities such as moulding bricks and building classroom blocks, toilets as well as teachers' houses. The other activities parents were involved in were providing school requirements for their children, encouraging them to go to school, and feeding them before they went to school so that they were able to concentrate on their work in class. Although pupils did not have much to say, they indicated that they contributed to the provision of quality education by attending lessons regularly and cleaning the classrooms and surroundings. As for the role of MOE officials, the information from other stakeholders, mainly in regular basic schools in the field indicated that Education Standards Officers paid regular visits to schools, two to three times in a year. It should be noted, however, that there were some community schools which were not visited by MOE officials.

Information obtained from MOE officials at the Provincial Headquarters in Kasama in one to one open ended interviews was in many ways in consonant with the views expressed by other stakeholders in the field. They (MOE officials) also indicated that owing to the constraints and/ difficulties catalogued earlier by other stakeholders, the kind of education currently offered by community and rural regular basic schools was far from being satisfactory. The four MOE officials interviewed agreed with the perception that community schools were in a worse situation than regular basic schools. However, one Education Standards Officer in the study was quick to add that since pupils in community schools eventually find themselves in the mainstream education system, it was necessary

to give them the same requisites and/assistance as their counterparts in regular basic schools.

Interview data collected from MOE officials further revealed that there were some individuals (for example, the Mbala case cited earlier on), Non-governmental Organizations (some faith-based), besides parents and the Government, who were involved in the provision of education in community schools. One characteristic of individual and NGO supported community schools is that they, like regular schools, had relatively good infrastructure and conducive learning environment. As far as pupils' performance was concerned, MOE officials in Kasama emphatically stated that it was generally poorer in community schools. What baffled MOE officials, however, was that the pass rate at grade 7 level in some community schools was higher than in regular basic schools. What was also common, according to one Education Standards Officer, was that the performance of Grade 7 school leavers from community schools in Grade 8 did not reflect the excellence depicted in their grade 7 examination results. Some could hardly read or write. This was quite paradoxical.

## **Conclusion and Recommendations**

As far as the indicators of quality education, which are outlined in this study, are concerned, it was clear that neither community nor regular basic schools provided what may be referred to as satisfactory or good quality education. However, the picture emerging from the findings was that the situation in regular basic schools was slightly better than that found in community schools.

According to research findings, the provision of good quality education in both community and regular basic schools would not be achieved due to a number of reasons such as lack of trained teachers, especially in community basic schools, and upper basic school level in regular basic schools; dilapidated and inadequate infrastructure; inadequate teaching and, in some cases, inappropriate teaching-learning materials; poor learning environment as well as inadequate and poor sanitary conditions; inadequate learner support services, especially in community schools; and teachers' poor conditions of service.

In view of the aforesaid, it is recommended that:

1. the Government, Faith-based Organizations, and Non-Governmental Organizations (NGOs) should provide bursary schemes to community teachers and teachers for upper basic school level in regular basic schools for them to undertake teachers' training programmes by distance learning in order to improve their performance.
2. the Government, the community, the private sector and all stakeholders should rehabilitate existing infrastructure, build new classroom blocks and provide adequate desks.
3. Faith-based Organizations and Non-Governmental Organizations should collaborate

with the Government to ensure that adequate and appropriate teaching/learning materials are provided to community and regular basic schools.

4. school managers and the community should be innovative enough to raise financial resources in order to improve the learning environment and sanitary conditions in schools.
5. Ministry of Education officials such as Education Standards Officers and Senior Education Standards Officers should visit community and regular basic schools regularly in order to monitor quality of education.
6. provision of accommodation for teachers should be done in partnership with the Ministry of Education, Education boards and the community.
7. teachers in both community and regular basic schools should be paid decent salaries.

## References

- Chondoka, Y. A. (2006). *Situation Analysis of Community Schools in Central Province of Zambia*. Lusaka: Government Printers.
- Heneveld, W. (1994). *Planning and Monitoring the Quality of Primary Education in Sub-Saharan Africa*. Washington, D.C: The World Bank.
- Ministry of Education (1996). *Educating Our Future, National Policy on Education*. Lusaka: Ministry of Education.
- Ministry of Education (1999). *Primary and Basic School Teachers' Views on the Basic School Curriculum: A Summary of 500 Teachers' Questionnaires*. Lusaka: Ministry of Education.
- Ministry of Education (2000). *The Basic School Curriculum Framework*. Lusaka: Government Printers.
- Ministry of Education (2003). *Strategic Plan: 2003-2007*. Lusaka: Ministry of Education.
- Ministry of Education (2004) *Challenges of taking BESSIP to the classroom: Towards effective partnerships in basic education*. Lusaka: Government Printers.
- Ministry of Education (2005). *Educating the Nation: Strategic Framework for Implementation of Education for All 2006 – 2015*. Lusaka: Government Printers.
- Ministry of Education (2006). *2005 Educational Statistical Bulletin*. Lusaka: Government Printers.
- Times of Zambia (2008). Zambia: JCTR Challenges State on Poverty levels. Newspaper article dated 8<sup>th</sup> September 2008. [[www.allafrica.com/stories/200809081070.html](http://www.allafrica.com/stories/200809081070.html)]
- ZOCS (2008). Zambia Open Community Schools. [[www.zocs.org.zm](http://www.zocs.org.zm)]