

The Impact of Free and Quality Education in Sierra Leone on Its Secondary Schools

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Abstract:

This study aims to investigate the impact of Free and Quality Education on Secondary School Education in Sierra Leone. A mixed-method approach was used, with 300 questionnaires issued and received from education officers, principals, teachers, students, and parents. The data was captured using the Census and Survey Programme (CSPPro) and later exported to SPSS for further descriptive analysis.

The results show that free and quality education has had a positive impact on enrollment rates and student achievement, as well as reducing dropout rates. However, there are still challenges in providing quality education due to limited resources, inadequate teacher training, infrastructure, and cultural barriers. Overall, the findings of this study highlight the importance of free and quality education in promoting equitable and inclusive education systems.

The study recommends the government increase funding for education, focusing on teachers' training, developing relevant curricula, encouraging community involvement, addressing the gender gap, leveraging technology to enhance education, and ensuring that the country's education system remains competitive in the global market. These recommendations can help to ensure that every child in Sierra Leone has access to quality education and the opportunity to reach their full potential.

Keywords: Impact, Free and quality education, Sierra Leone

I. Background

It is well known that education is essential for the social, political, and economic development of any country. It significantly contributes to the end of poverty and makes it possible for people to actively participate in the development of society. According to Turkkahraman (2012), education offers instruction and personality development that keep people ahead of rapidly evolving social and economic conditions. Therefore, society has a responsibility and function to raise its citizens' abilities and aptitudes to the rate at which the world is changing right now. Due to poverty in third-world nations, including Africa, the United Nations Educational, Scientific, and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) noted that the use of school fees was a significant barrier to millions of children enrolling in and finishing their primary and secondary education (UNESCO, 2007).

The British colonized Sierra Leone. As a result, Sierra Leone was crucial to the 19th-century British colonial project's success in West Africa. Lagos, the Gold Coast (Ghana), and Bathurst Gambia colonies all had their administrative centers in Sierra Leone. Sierra Leonean scholars, clergymen, and professionals worked as doctors, engineers, and civil servants in Ghana, the Gambia, and Nigeria in the 18th and 19th centuries. So, during the colonial era, Sierra Leone served as the birthplace of education. Sierra Leone

thus made a significant contribution to Britain's successful management of all of its control in West Africa in the 18th and 20th centuries. This chance came to Sierra Leone because it had the good fortune to house Foray Bay College, the first institution of higher learning in British West Africa. Sierra Leone was therefore the cornerstone of Britain's colonial project in West Africa. Due to this privilege, Sierra Leone gained a well-respected British educational system that provided higher-than-average education comparable to that of Britain at the time. Thus, Sierra Leone became the site of the first British social energizing experiment in colonial West Africa. She established a constitution with numerous legislative and executive councils, making her the first British colony to do so. In brief, Sierra Leone inherited the British System of Education at Levels 7-5-2-4, which calls for seven years in primary and five years in junior secondary school, when it gained independence from Britain in 1961—two years in high school and four years in college. Before and in some ways following independence, Sierra Leone had some of the best educational systems in the world. Since it was founded in 1827, Fourah Bay College has earned the moniker "Athens of West Africa" for the foundation it provided within the sub-region. It is alleged that over time, the quality of the educational system in Sierra Leone significantly declined as a result of negligence, poor management, and corruption. Education is of the same caliber as it was before 1942 to 1961 declared independence.

For many years, Sierra Leone, once known as the "Athens of West Africa," lost its luster in the field of education. In the National Budget provided by the Ministry of Finance in 2018 which is 12%, the educational sector received little consideration, the reason why the Ministry of Finance cut down the education budget in 2018, because the external shocks (commodity price declines) and natural calamities (Ebola virus disease, mudslides, and floods) have, nevertheless, damaged the economy's ability to sustain its outstanding development. As a result, during the last year, the government has faced several budgetary issues and difficult policy decisions, which have been exacerbated by the need to re-establish economic stability while laying the groundwork for development and economic change. The funding and support provided to the basic and senior secondary education sectors were insufficient. Its teaching standards declined to just the number of graduates, which was below quality.

Therefore, this study aims to explore The Impact of Free and Quality Education in Sierra Leone on Its Secondary Schools. To respond to this, the researchers have identified four key questions in response to these research objectives:

1. What is the conceptual system of free and quality education raised by the government in secondary schools?
2. What are the mechanisms of free and quality education improvement put in place by the government in Sierra Leone on its secondary schools?
3. What are the benefits of free and quality education in secondary schools in Sierra Leone?
4. What are the challenges faced by the free and quality education system in secondary schools in Sierra Leone?

II. Literature Review

The foundation of the nation's development has been high-quality education. To nurture knowledge and civilize people for their overall growth, education is a fundamental requirement. The problems with education in Sierra Leone appear to be controversial and studied. Therefore, the primary goal of this research study is to evaluate the impact of the free quality education in Sierra Leone that was proposed by His Excellency Julius Maada Bio in 2018.

This literature review's major goal is to increase the researcher's understanding of high-quality instruction in public schools in Sierra Leone. Knowledge will be enhanced and supplemented in this subject by various theories about high-quality instruction. The assessment of the literature in various fields may help in the development of the theoretical framework and conceptual framework for moving the research's goals forward.

Quality education may prevail in schools with the active engagement of principals, teachers, parents, students, and other stakeholders in the management committee. According to MOE, (2003), kids' ability to learn, their capacity to learn, and their attendance at school all affect the quality of education. Parents' contributions to the establishment of high-quality education in schools may be very valuable. Whether they prefer community or institutional schools, parents can decide where to enroll their kids in school and send them there. According to MOE, (2003) providing parents with a high-quality education in schools is a key tactic for gaining their support and the hearts of the general public. It has been envisioned that the presence of institutional and human capacity will boost educational quality.

The majority of education experts agree that curriculum, materials, textbooks, social linguistics, local community values, and support for ethnic minorities may all be used to enhance the standard of education in classrooms. When teachers are of a high caliber, quality instruction may be anticipated in classrooms. The quality of the schools may be reflected in the teacher quality using indicators. In addition, other elements must be present for education to be of high quality, including curriculum, planning, curriculum transformation, infrastructure development, learning materials, student engagement, and organization and management.

Infrastructure development may also be taken into consideration when talking about the quality of education provided in public schools. To gauge the quality in the public sector, further tools could be needed. Regarding this, Imran (2008) argues in his doctoral dissertation that the most crucial and significant tool for bringing about changes in society at large is high-quality education. He compares the secondary education provided by public and private schools in Pakistan and evaluates the quality of each. He asserts once more that most public schools have their buildings, in contrast to most private schools, which do not. Even though head teachers and teachers at public schools have more training, experience, and qualifications, principals, teachers, and students in private schools are better.

III. Theoretical Framework

The researcher made a connection between the issue at hand and Walter Shewart's Total Quality Management theory (TQM), which has since been enhanced by numerous academics. This section examines the value of the overall quality management theory as the cornerstone of the framework for enhancing educational quality while offering free education in Sierra Leone's rural areas. Several quality experts were instrumental in the creation of the Total Quality Management theory (TQM), including Walter Stewart, one of its primary forerunners, as well as Philip Crosby, Edward Deming, Armand Feigenbaum, Kaoru Ishikawa, and Joseph Juran (Westcott, 2013).

This study was based on the TQM theory, which states that quality must be taken into account in all of its manifestations for free quality education to be successful. To meet the needs of students and the demands of society as a whole for development, they must ensure that there is quality in admissions or enrolment, materials, and infrastructure, competent and motivated teachers, as well as monitoring of educational processes in schools. To achieve quality, the process should be overseen to make sure that problems are promptly discovered and solutions are put in place.

According to the principal, schools should constantly strive for continual quality enhancement and meet students' requirements. Effective educational quality management in schools can be achieved through management commitment, teachers, and parents' involvement, the provision of a teaching environment and facilities, teacher training and motivation, quality methodologies, and teamwork. As a result, providing free education in rural primary and secondary schools would be greatly successful both in terms of expanding access to education and focusing on quality improvement using the metrics recommended by the theory of total quality management. The theory is a suitable method for assessing the level of quality in the free education offered in schools. The dedication to providing high-quality education takes into account all elements and realities that go into a school, including the staff, students, leaders, materials, infrastructure, and the family and setting in which teaching and learning activities are carried out.

IV. Conceptual framework of free and quality education

Since it is crucial for the growth of both individuals and communities, free and quality education is a subject that is of considerable importance around the world. Academics and policymakers have put forth a variety of conceptual frameworks to attempt and ensure that decent education is available to everyone and that it is accessible, equitable, and of high quality.

A conceptual framework is a research tool that aids in the researcher's understanding and awareness of the situation being investigated. According to the researcher, this structure can best explain how the variables under study naturally grow and relate to one another (Adom, Kamil, & Agyem, 2018). The researcher demonstrates how dependent and independent variables are related.

The most frequently cited conceptual framework for free and quality education is that proposed by the World Bank, which suggests that free and quality education are both necessary for a successful education system. According to this view, free education should be available to all, regardless of economic circumstances, and quality education should be available to all, regardless of economic circumstances. The World Bank (2015) argues that free and quality education are mutually reinforcing and that the two concepts should be seen as part of the same goal.

Another conceptual framework for free and quality education is that proposed by the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO). UNESCO (2016) suggests that free and quality education should be seen as complementary, with free education providing access to quality education. UNESCO also argues that access to quality education should be seen as a right, and that access to quality education should be seen as a shared responsibility, with governments, schools, and civil society all playing a role in providing quality education.

The Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD) also offers a conceptual framework for free and quality education. The OECD (2014) argues that free and quality education should be seen as part of the same goal and that free and quality education should be seen as a continuum, with free education providing the foundation for quality education. The OECD also suggests that free and quality education should be seen as part of the same system, with access to quality education requiring resources that are often provided through free education.

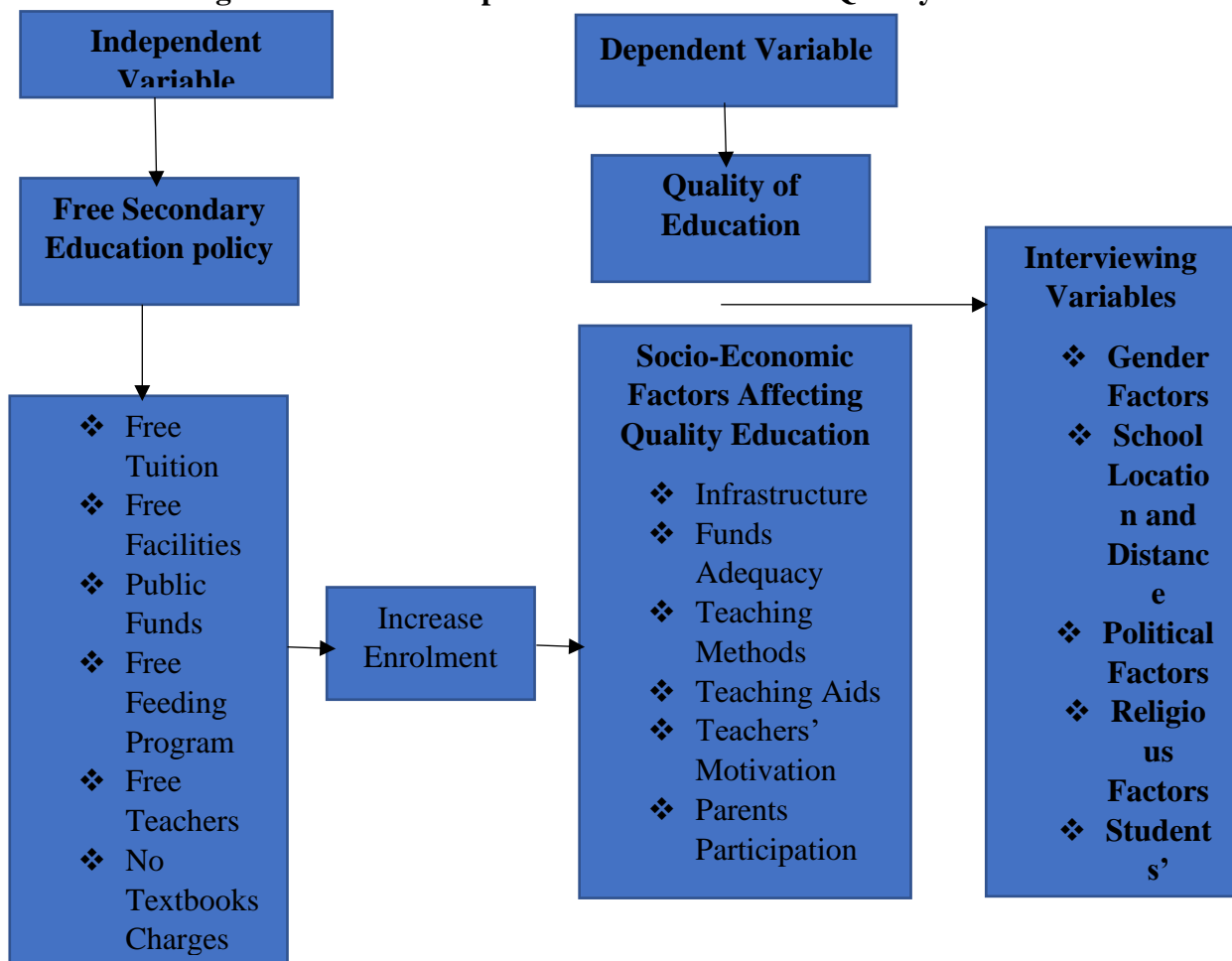
The conceptual framework for the quality of education in schools proposed here is based on systems theory applied to education. This theory is important for understanding any education system for it contrasts with numerous fragmentary reforms aimed at improving aspects or parts of the education system which may not normally succeed (Barile & Polese, 2010). This theory derives its notion from science, where it is believed that a set of parts of a system interact to achieve specified objectives (Banathy & Jenlink,

2004; Wright, 2008). Similarly, in an education system, various levels of the education system (national, tertiary, school, and pre-school) and their associated classrooms, together with their relevant stakeholders, should work together to achieve systemic educational goals. This involves developing relevant monitoring and evaluation instruments for use in monitoring and evaluating education to find out whether quality is being realized, which should be a joint effort of all education stakeholders.

Finally, the International Labour Organization (ILO) offers a conceptual framework for free and quality education. The ILO (2015) suggests that free and quality education should be seen as part of the same goal and that free and quality education should be seen as part of a continuum, with free education providing access to quality education. The ILO also argues that free and quality education should be seen as part of the same system, with access to quality education requiring resources that are often provided through free education.

The independent variable and dependent variable used in the researcher's conceptual framework for free education in this paper (see diagram below) should be stated at the secondary level of the educational system. This paper assumes that for free and quality education to be realized, there needs to be a clear understanding of the responsibilities of various stakeholders at the secondary level of the education system. This is why independent and dependent variables are taken into account at every level of the educational system.

Diagram of the Conceptual Framework of Free Quality Education



The relationship between the dedication to achieving quality education and the free education policy is depicted in the diagram above. It defines the variables to be researched to define the relationship between the two variables.

According to some reports, the public schools under Sierra Leone's free education policy are less likely to provide students with a high-quality education. More students were able to attend foundational education because of the free education program. The government offers children free access to school supplies, teachers, textbooks, dining options, and testing facilities thanks to public funding. As a result, the implementation of the free education policy led to a notable rise in enrolment, which had an impact on the delivery of high-quality instruction in public schools.

This paper determined the impact of the free quality education policy on the quality of education in the area under study by examining the socioeconomic factors affecting education quality (teaching methods, materials, infrastructure, adequacy of funds, teachers' motivation, supervision, and parental participation) and the existing mechanisms for promoting quality education in day public primary schools in Sierra Leone Rural area. Education quality is dependent on how free education is implemented; as a result, the free primary education policy is an independent variable and education quality is a dependent variable. Therefore, the interaction of the factors under investigation would result in the success of free education initiatives in Sierra Leone.

V. The impact of the Education

There is no denying the important role that education plays in our lives, but it frequently goes unnoticed. In the modern world, education is frequently associated with attending school, passing standardized examinations, and achieving academically. While achieving academic success still ranks highly on the agenda of education, it is equally useful to consider the role that education can play in bringing about social change. Education has, according to McCulloch (2011), "been a rallying call for social development, reform, and equality, and has been crucial to social class fights, campaigns for democracy, and the fight for social justice." According to this viewpoint, education not only enables people to be important and productive members of society but also gives them the resources to alter that society.

Education has been increasingly important over time, to the point where it is now recognized as a fundamental human right. The Universal Declaration of Human Rights emphasizes the promotion of "understanding, tolerance, and goodwill among all nations, racial or religious groups" while simultaneously advocating for accessible education aimed at the "full development of the human personality" (UN General Assembly, 1948). The Declaration also envisions young children receiving free and required primary education. The Declaration's emphasis is unquestionably on education as a way to shape a person, offering equal learning opportunities and directly promoting intercultural understanding among socioeconomic groupings.

This is why one of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), which was created by the United Nations in 2015, includes education as a primary objective. The fourth point, which is entirely focused on education, emphasizes the need for "inclusive and equitable" primary and secondary education for both boys and girls, addressing the disparity that is frequently present between genders (United Nations, 2015). This objective also emphasizes access to higher education, technical and vocational training, as well as education that can give people the necessary job-related skills. The SDGs' objectives make it clear that education is conceptualized about social, economic, and environmental development: in contrast to the Declaration's advocacy, the SDGs consider education as a key factor in human progress.

To define poverty more broadly, scholars have moved away from an economic definition. For example, Majumder and Chowdhury Biswas (2017) include factors like "poor health, insecurity, low self-esteem, sense of powerlessness, or the absence of rights" in addition to factors like lack of education and income. Other researchers mentioned the failure to provide fundamental human needs: According to Wolff (2019), the inability to provide for your children's clothing needs or plan a decent wedding can have serious effects on an individual's ability to meet social needs. In all cases, a person's financial situation may be poor due to their health, a lack of career opportunities, or even their social standing

VI. Sierra Leone and Education for All

Education is prioritized and given special attention everywhere in the world. Every nation needs to be educated, morally upright citizens for effective administration and national service. The international community as a whole is aware of the pressing issues surrounding primary school enrolment, girls' access to education, early childhood education and care, and the educational and developmental gap that must be closed as a collective responsibility for growth and development for all countries, particularly concerning the universal balance of education. Governments came together to set goals for "Education for All" at a conference in Jomtie in 1990. 155 nations, including Sierra Leone, participated in the World Conference on Education for All (WCEFA), which focused on an expanded vision and a revitalized commitment. There were also 125 non-governmental organizations, institutions, and 33 intergovernmental organizations present. The Field of Vision:

- Universalizing access and promoting equality
- Dedication to learning
- Expanding the means and scope of basic education
- Preparing the environment for learning
- Strengthening partnership

The governments agreed to set goals for expanded early childhood care and developmental activities, better learning outcomes, a universal primary school, expanded training for youth and adults, decreased adult illiteracy, and an increase in people seeking out knowledge on their own and as a family. They are also committed to establishing the values and skills needed for good living that are sound for sustainable development.

The "Education for All" program is a priority for the government of Sierra Leone, a member of the Commonwealth. The World Education Forum (WEF) in Dakar, Senegal, convened the meeting as a follow-up in 2000 to provide education for everyone. Although there were several shortcomings that the delegates found, there had been a significant advancement in some areas of the prior policies. Delegates made improvements by renaming their support for the EFA plan and by identifying six more specific aims. Three of them were targeted for completion by 2015, although goal five was also anticipated.

Goal 1 of the Dakar Framework for Action was to expand and improve comprehensive early childhood care and education, especially for the most vulnerable and disadvantaged children. This includes providing access to quality pre-primary education, as well as health and nutrition services to ensure that children are physically and emotionally prepared to learn. World Education Forum (WEF) in Dakar, Senegal, in 2000 was to "ensure that by 2015 all children, particularly girls, children in difficult circumstances and those belonging to ethnic minorities, have access to and complete free and compulsory primary education of good quality." The WEF was a major step forward in the global commitment to Education for All (EFA),

an articulated goal in the 1990 World Declaration on Education for All and the Framework for Action to Meet Basic Learning Needs.

Goal 2 is to guarantee that all children, particularly girls, those in challenging situations, and those from ethnic minorities, have access to high-quality, free, and mandatory primary education by the year 2015. Sierra Leone's government belongs to the Commonwealth.

Goal 2, which was also a component of the global consultative meetings, is still focused on raising educational standards. In February 2015, Africa hosted additional consultative meetings, as did other parts of the world. The goal of promoting fair and inclusive quality education and lifelong learning for all was reiterated during the joint discussions.

Goal 2 examined the educational standards of Sierra Leone in a 2015 Commonwealth report. According to the report, Sierra Leone's population was estimated at 6, 090 000, with a school-aged population of 16% and a birth rate of 4.8, but the country's Human Development Index was only 0.37. In 2015, the pre-primary was estimated to have a 0.07 school life expectancy, with an average Net Enrolment rate that was increasing by 0.4 per year. The school life expectancy was 0.05 standard deviations below average and decreasing per year.

Goal No. 2, which was Disabilities was committed as a human rights priority along with an additional commitment to the section on inequality. The Optional Protocol and Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities have been ratified. Primary scored 1.00, Primacy scored 0.98, JSS scored 1.01, and SSS (upper secondary) scored 1.01 according to the gender priority Index. The primary dropout rates for urban and rural areas were respectively 1.3 and 1.6. According to research, a sizable proportion of parents of children in primary school paid for private tutoring, indicating that education levels were low. It was assumed that it was due to the inadequate justification for the requirement to finish their course on time. When looking at the funding indicator through the lens of educational quality, it was discovered that GDP funding was 11.69% and budget funding was 8.29%. Adult literacy was 80%, compared to 90% for young people. A more detailed analysis shows that the funding (as a percentage of GDP) for pre-primary was 0.79, the primary was 1.79, and JSS was 1.60. Preschool had a teacher-to-student ratio of 22, the primary had one of 26, JSS had one of 18, and SSS had one of 15. Pre-primary had 57% trained teachers, the primary had 48%, JSS had 73%, and SSS had 75%. It is interesting to note that "Averages" are projected for 2015 using historical data that is clustered by the Human Development Index Levels (Very High, High, Medium, and Low).

VII. Empirical Review

Mohammadi et al. (2015) conducted this study to learn more about the challenges associated with implementing free secondary education (FSE) in secondary schools in Kenya's Mandera West Sub-County. As the researcher investigates the variables limiting the attainment of FSE objectives, the study is grounded in the notion of limitations. The study's methodology was a survey. The questionnaire served as the primary research tool. Before being used for data collection, the questionnaire's validity and reliability were assessed. The study's key conclusions were that the implementation of FSE is influenced by the principals' management skills, the timing of money transfers to schools, and parental support. Additionally, while the Board of Management members had a good impact, the socioeconomic factors had a detrimental effect on the implementation process. It was determined that the FPE policy was falling short of its lofty goals of promoting access to high-quality education. It was suggested that the Kenyan government, through the Ministry of Education, enhance capitation and quicken the fund transfer

procedure to the schools. Additionally, the Directorate of Quality Assurance and Standards should enhance the frequency of school supervision in addition to subjecting the principals to mandatory training in resource management.

According to Yusuph (2019), this study aims to examine how Tanzania's secondary education has been affected by the Free Education Policy's implementation. From ministries and other government agencies, secondary data for the study was gathered. Statistics were used to assess and show the data. Data collection, presentation, and discussion were influenced by four assumptions about the number of teachers, the enrollment rate, the pass rates for students, and the dropout rates. The results show that the government's choice to adopt a free secondary education program for students is the best one. The Free Education Policy has been in place since 2015, although it has only had a small effect on secondary education in Tanzania. However, the report advises the government to make greater efforts to successfully achieve the policy's promises without sacrificing the quality of education.

VIII Research Methods

This paper will briefly go through the research technique theory in this section. Simply put, research methodology refers to the numerous methods and procedures used to gather information and data and to analyze that information within a particular study framework. Research is described as a "systematized endeavor to gather new knowledge" by Redman and Mory (1923). This paper will use quantitative and qualitative to produce the rich, thick data needed to comprehend the feelings and experiences of school administrators, teachers, students, parents, and other stakeholders in supporting high-quality education.

IX. FINDINGS AND DISCUSSIONS

The sample's data is utilized to represent the population. The sample size for this study is (300) participants (inclusive of Principals, Teachers, Education Officers, Parents, and Students).

Respondents	Questionnaires distributed	Questionnaires received
EDUCATION OFFICERS	58	58
PRINCIPALS	2	2
TEACHERS	80	80
STUDENTS	130	130
PARENTS	30	30
Total	300	300

Response to the questionnaire has been very positive considering the return rate which was 100%. The same number of questionnaires distributed to the different categories has been the same received from these different categories of respondents making the sample frame of the work.

X. Empirical Analysis of Data Relating to the Research Questions

Conceptual System of Free and Quality Education Raised by The Government in Secondary Schools in Sierra Leone

ITEMS	Educ. Officers Principals Teachers Parents Students	
	Agree	Disagree
1. The government's conceptual system of free and quality education in secondary	122(40.66%)	178 (59.33%)

schools in Sierra Leone is clear and easy to understand.		
2. The conceptual system of free and quality education in secondary schools in Sierra Leone is fair and benefits all students equally.	116(38.66%)	184(61.33%)
3. The government's conceptual system of free and quality education in secondary schools in Sierra Leone has had a positive impact on the education provided by the school.	81 (27%)	219 (73%)
4. The concept of free and high-quality education provided by the government in secondary schools in Sierra Leone influenced the education that children are receiving	103 (34.33%)	197(65.66%)
5. Do you feel that the conceptual framework of free and quality education that the government has created in secondary schools in Sierra Leone has satisfied your needs	101 (33.33%)	199 (66.33%)
6. The government's efforts to address the challenges faced by the free and quality education system in secondary schools in Sierra Leone have been.	104 (34.66%)	200 (66.66%)
7. The benefits of free and quality education in secondary schools in Sierra Leone are clear to you.	123(70.33%)	177 (59%)
8. The challenges faced by the free and quality education system in secondary schools in Sierra Leone are being adequately addressed by the government.	72(24%)	228 (76%)
9. Do you believe that it is advantageous for the government of Sierra Leone to implement its concept of providing free and quality education in secondary schools?	207 (69%)	93 (31%)

The table above shows the responses of each category of the respondents on the conceptual system of free and quality education raised by the government of Sierra Leone. The majority of each category of the respondents disagreed that the government's conceptual system of free and quality education in secondary schools in Sierra Leone is clear and easy to understand. (at least 59.32%), while (40.66%) agree that the

concept of free and quality education is clear and easy to understand. It also reveals that the conceptual system of free and quality education in secondary schools in Sierra Leone is fair and benefits all students equally (at least 61.33%) disagree and (38.66%) agree that it is beneficial to everyone. It further shows that the government's conceptual system of free and quality education in secondary schools in Sierra Leone has had a positive impact on the education provided schools (at least 71.32%) disagree while 28.6% agree that it has a positive impact on the students of Sierra Leone, the table also shows that the concept of free and high-quality education provided by the government in secondary schools in Sierra Leone influenced the education that children are receiving (at least 65.66%) disagree while 34.3% agrees that the free and quality education has a positive impact on the education, it again shows that weather the respondent fell that the conceptual framework of free and quality education that the government has created in secondary schools in Sierra Leone has satisfied your needs (at least 66.32%) disagree while 33.6% agree it's satisfied their needs. The government's efforts to address the challenges faced by the free and quality education system in secondary schools in Sierra Leone have been sufficient (33.3%) agree while (at least 66.65%) disagree with that motion. The benefits of free and quality education in secondary schools in Sierra Leone are clear to you 41.0% agree with the motion while (58.99% disagree with the motion.

The majority of the respondents disagreed that the challenges faced by the free and quality education system in secondary schools in Sierra Leone are being adequately addressed by the government (at least 75.99%) disagree again 24.0% agree with that motion. It again shows that (at least 69%) agreed that it is advantageous for the government of Sierra Leone to implement its concept of providing free and quality education in secondary schools.

These implied that most of the concepts of free and quality education in Sierra Leone were negatively perceived by the majority of the respondents. It may also imply that the participation of MBSSE and Schools played a significant role in the data collection.

This data implies that the majority of respondents have a negative perception of the concept of free and quality education in Sierra Leone. This could be due to a variety of factors, including the lack of resources available to schools, the poor quality of teaching, and the lack of accountability in the educational sector. It could also be due to a perception of inequitable access to education, with certain groups of people, such as those living in rural or remote areas, having less access to educational opportunities than those living in more urban settings.

The role of the Ministry of Basic and Secondary Education (MBSSE) and schools in collecting this data is also significant. Schools are the direct providers of education services, so they are in the best position to evaluate the quality of the education they offer. The MBSSE is responsible for setting the standards and policies that guide the education system in Sierra Leone, as well as monitoring and evaluating the performance of the system. Therefore, the MBSSE's role in collecting this data is essential in understanding the overall perception of free and quality education in Sierra Leone.

The table also shows that Ministry officials, principals, and Teachers had divergent views on some of the concepts of free and quality education. The majority of the respondents believe that it be advantageous for the people of Sierra Leone if free and quality education was fully implemented taking cognizance of the welfare of the teachers.

The Mechanisms for Free and Quality Education Improvement Put in Place by the Government in Sierra Leone on Its Secondary Schools

ITEMS	Educ. Officers Principals Teachers Parents Students	
	Agree	Disagree
1. The government has provided sufficient resources (such as textbooks, materials, and equipment) to improve the quality of education in secondary schools in Sierra Leone.	80 (26.66%)	220 (73.33%)
2. The mechanisms put in place by the government to improve free and quality education in secondary schools in Sierra Leone are effective.	80 (26.66%)	220 (73.33%)
3. The government has provided adequate support for extracurricular activities and programs in secondary schools in Sierra Leone.	100 (33.33%)	200 (66.66%)
4. The government has provided ongoing professional development opportunities for teachers to improve their knowledge and skills in delivering education in secondary schools in Sierra Leone	70 (23.33%)	230 (76.66%)
5. the government implemented different strategies to enhance the provision of free education at a high standard in secondary schools.	109 (36.33%)	191 (63.66%)
6. The government has implemented measures to ensure that secondary schools in Sierra Leone are inclusive and welcoming to all students.	128 (42.66%)	172(57.33%)

<p>7. The government has implemented initiatives to improve the involvement and participation of parents and communities in the education of secondary schools in Sierra Leone</p>	<p>83 (27.66%)</p>	<p>217 (72.33%)</p>
<p>8. The government has implemented initiatives to improve the quality of teaching and learning in secondary schools in Sierra Leone.</p>	<p>111 (37%)</p>	<p>189(63%)</p>
<p>9. The government has implemented policies and initiatives to improve the infrastructure (such as classrooms, bathrooms, and playgrounds) of secondary schools in Sierra Leone</p>	<p>130 (43.33%)</p>	<p>170 (56.66%)</p>

The table above shows the percentage of the respondents' perceptions on the mechanisms for free and quality education improvement put in place by the government of Sierra Leone, the table reveals that (26,66%) agree that the government has provided sufficient resources(such as textbooks, material, and equipment) to improve the quality of education in secondary school in Sierra Leone while (73.3%) disagree in that motion, it also shows that (26.66) agree also that the mechanisms put in place by the government to improve free and quality education in secondary schools in Sierra Leone are effective while 73.4% disagree on that motion. The table also reveals that (33.32%) agree that the government has provided adequate support for extracurricular activities and programs in secondary schools in Sierra Leone while 66.6% disagree that in that motion, again shows that (23.32%) agree that the government has provided ongoing professional development opportunities for teachers to improve their knowledge while 76.6% disagree that on the development opportunities for teachers to improve their knowledge, its further reveals that (42.66%) agree that the government has implemented measures to ensure that secondary schools in Sierra Leone are inclusive and welcoming to all students and (43.33%) agree that the government has implemented policies and initiative to improve the infrastructure (such as classrooms, bathrooms, and playground) of secondary schools in Sierra Leone.

In a contrast view from the table shows that (73.33%) disagree that the government has provided sufficient resources to improve the quality of education in secondary schools in Sierra Leone, (73.33%) disagree also that the mechanisms put in place by the government to improve free and quality education in secondary schools in Sierra Leone are effective, the table also reveals that (66.33%) disagree that the government has provided adequate support for extracurricular activities and programs in secondary schools in Sierra Leone, the table further reveals that(76.66%) disagree that the government has provided ongoing professional development opportunities for teachers to improve their knowledge and skills in delivering education in secondary schools in Sierra Leone, (72.32%) also disagree that the government

has implemented initiative to improve the involvement and participation of parents and communities in the education of secondary schools in Sierra Leone, (63%) disagree that the government has implemented initiatives to improve the quality of teaching and learning in secondary schools in Sierra Leone.

These implied that most of the mechanisms of free and quality education in Sierra Leone were perceived negatively by the majority of the respondents and that their implementation was not as well accomplished as it was expected. especially on the welfare of teachers, infrastructures, and capacity development of teachers.

The results of the survey also indicate that the majority of respondents had a negative perception of the mechanisms of free and quality education in Sierra Leone. This was because many of these mechanisms, such as the welfare of teachers, infrastructures, and capacity development of teachers, have not been properly implemented. The lack of proper implementation of these mechanisms has undoubtedly had a detrimental effect on the quality of education in Sierra Leone.

To improve the quality of education in Sierra Leone, the government must take action to ensure that these mechanisms are properly implemented. This should involve increasing funding for teacher welfare, improving existing infrastructure, and providing capacity development opportunities for teachers. Moreover, the government should ensure that resources are allocated in a way that is equitable and accessible to all so that all students can benefit from the same quality of education.

Finally, the government must work to ensure that all stakeholders, such as teachers, parents, and students, are involved in the decision-making process and are aware of the mechanisms of free and quality education. This will ensure that everyone is on the same page and can work together to create an effective and equitable education system in Sierra Leone.

The Benefits of Free and Quality Education in Secondary Schools in Sierra Leone

ITEMS	Educ. Officers Principals Teachers Parents Students
	Agree Disagree
1. Free and quality education in secondary schools in Sierra Leone has improved the overall academic performance of students.	109 (36.33%) 191(63.66%)
2. Free and quality education in secondary schools in Sierra Leone has increased access to education for disadvantaged and marginalized groups.	106 (35.34%) 194 (64.66%)
3. Free and quality education in secondary schools in Sierra Leone has improved the retention and attendance of students	186 (62%) 114 (38%)
4. Free and quality education in secondary schools in Sierra Leone has increased the employability and job prospects of students after graduation.	37 (12.33%) 87.66 (8%)

<p>5. Free and quality education in secondary schools in Sierra Leone has improved the overall well-being and quality of life for students.</p>	<p>61(20.33%) 239 (79.66%)</p>
<p>6. Free and quality education in secondary schools in Sierra Leone has increased the involvement and participation of parents and communities in the education of their children</p>	<p>111 (37%) 189 (63%)</p>
<p>7. Free and quality education in secondary schools in Sierra Leone has improved the overall infrastructure and facilities of schools.</p>	<p>105(35%) 195 (65%)</p>
<p>8. Free and quality education in secondary schools in Sierra Leone has increased the overall funding and resources available for education.</p>	<p>104 (34.66%) 196 (65.33%)</p>
<p>9. Free and quality education in secondary schools in Sierra Leone has improved the overall quality of teaching and learning.</p>	<p>105 (35%) 195(65%)</p>

The table reveals that (36.33%) of respondents had stated ‘agreed’ that the free and quality education in secondary schools in Sierra Leone has improved the overall academic performance of students. there had been an impact created by the current free and quality education, whilst the other (63.66%) stated ‘disagree’ that there had not been any impact created by the free and quality education in Sierra Leone. This finding has indicated that free and quality education has created a negative impact on the overall academic performance of pupils in Sierra Leone.

The study went further to provide evidence of that impact by asking respondents to state their views Free and quality education in secondary schools in Sierra Leone has increased access to education for disadvantaged and marginalized groups which reveals that (35.34%) agree while the other hand shows that (64.66%) disagree that the free and quality education in secondary school in Sierra Leone has increased access to education for disadvantaged and marginalized groups.

It is however believed that education is critical for breaking the cycle of poverty, especially in developing countries like Sierra Leone where the least a poor family could depend on is the end product of getting their children to school. However, despite the important role the government is trying to implement it also reveals that (62%) of the respondents agree that Free and quality education in secondary schools in Sierra Leone has improved the retention and attendance of students on the other side (38%) of the respondent disagree that the free and quality education has increased the retention and attendance of students, it has however been observed that (20.33%) of the respondent agree that Free and quality education in

secondary schools in Sierra Leone have improved the overall well-being and quality of life for students while (79.66%) disagree that the overall well-being and quality of life for students has not been improved. In the study, it has been discovered that only (35%) of the respondents agree that free and quality education in secondary schools in Sierra Leone has improved the overall quality of teaching and learning while (65%) of the respondents disagree that the overall quality of teaching and learning has not been improved. This implies that there is a lot to do if free and quality education is to be sustained in Sierra Leone, improve the overall infrastructure and facilities of schools, and increase the overall funding and resources available in education.

This leaves them with little time for education which is critical to changing the long-term prospects of developing nations, especially in Sierra Leone where it is believed that where you educate women, you have educated the nation. It is of the view that the many additional burdens to sustain free and quality education, undoubtedly set up an unfortunate cycle of poverty and inequality, especially for women without a proper education plan and support.

The Challenges Faced by The Free and Quality Education System in Secondary Schools in Sierra Leone

ITEMS	Educ. Officers Principals Teachers Parent Students	
	Agree	Disagree
1. Insufficient funding is a major challenge faced by the free and quality education system in secondary schools in Sierra Leone.	245 (81.66%)	55(18.33%)
2. A shortage of qualified teachers is a major challenge faced by the free and quality education system in secondary schools in Sierra Leone.	234 (78%)	66 (22%)
3. Poor infrastructure and facilities are major challenges faced by the free and quality education system in secondary schools in Sierra Leone.	260 (86.66%)	39 (13%)
4. Limited access to education for disadvantaged and marginalized groups is a major challenge faced by the free and quality education system in secondary schools in Sierra Leone.	234 (78%)	66 (22%)
5. Insufficient resources (such as textbooks, (materials, and equipment) are a major challenge faced by the free and quality education system in secondary schools in Sierra Leone.	249 (83%)	51(17%)
6. A lack of involvement and participation of parents and communities in the education of their children is a major challenge faced by the free and quality education system in secondary schools in Sierra Leone.	264 (88%)	36 (12%)

7. Insufficient support for extracurricular activities and programs is a major challenge faced by the free and quality education system in secondary schools in Sierra Leone	231 (77%)	69 (23%)
8. Inadequate support for the administration and management of secondary schools is a major challenge faced by the free and quality education system in Sierra Leone	230 (76.66%)	70(23.33%)
9. A lack of ongoing professional development opportunities for teachers is a major challenge faced by the free and quality education system in secondary schools in Sierra Leone	248 (82.66%)	52 (17.33%)

It is believed that education is one of the most important drivers behind helping people in developing countries, especially in Sierra Leone considering the weak socio-economic status of many Sierra Leones who believe sending their children to school will adequately improve their development. It is clear that in these schools located in Sierra Leone, there are some factors responsible for the weakness of students which have been compelling with the scarcity of qualified teachers being among those fundamental challenges revealing that (78%) agree that shortage of qualified teachers is a major challenge faced by the free and quality education system in secondary schools in Sierra Leone.

The table further reveals that (88%) of respondents had stated ‘agreed’ that the free and quality education in secondary schools in Sierra Leone's lack of involvement and participation of parents and communities in the education of their children is a major challenge faced by the free and quality education system in secondary schools in Sierra Leone, while (12%) stated disagree. This finding has indicated that free and quality education has created a negative impact on the parents and communities in Sierra Leone.

Poor infrastructure is also a challenge to free and quality education which shows that (86.66%) agree with that motion, while 14% disagree with the motion.

The study went further to provide evidence of that impact by asking respondents to state their views Free and quality education in secondary schools in Sierra Leone has increased access to education for disadvantaged and marginalized groups which reveals that (78%) agree while on the other hand shows that (18%) disagree that the free and quality education in secondary school in Sierra Leone has increased access to education for disadvantaged and marginalized groups.

XI. Conclusion and Recommendations

The findings for both School A and School B are closely related looking at all the parameters discussed in the study. It has been discovered that only (35%) of the respondents agree that free and quality education in secondary schools in Sierra Leone has improved the overall quality of teaching and learning while (65%) of the respondents disagree that the overall quality of teaching and learning has not been improved. The same problems of infrastructure were also discussed in the same vein.

The availability of free and quality education has increased the number of enrollments of pupils in all government-assisted schools in Sierra Leone. and its quick implementation and access have been a problem for many countries, especially in Africa and beyond. Its extension among other things has been connected with the fact that not much is done by leaders to ameliorate these problems hence they further become compounded. Sierra Leone is among other countries in Africa that are going through a similar

situation and the mechanisms put in place to tackle this problem still further create issues considering its effectiveness and inefficiency. However, the research has made it clear that free and quality education has huge relevance to the performance of students in schools, and the reason for this is connected with the well-being of teachers, infrastructures, and qualified teachers.

In addition to its relevance, there has been a positive impact created in terms of enrollment in schools. As a way of responding to the acute problem, the local authorities have made it possible to make some structures that will intervene to get the problem reduced though they are not enough based on the current enrollment of pupils in school. However, the lack of supervision that has been shown has further challenged the process.

The research questions in this paper focus on the conceptual system of free and quality education raised by the government in secondary schools in Sierra Leone, the mechanisms of free and quality education improvement put in place by the government, the benefits of free and quality education in secondary schools in Sierra Leone, and the challenges faced by the free and quality education system in secondary schools in Sierra Leone.

The government of Sierra Leone has undertaken several initiatives to improve the quality of education in the country's secondary schools. These initiatives include the implementation of a free basic education policy, the introduction of a school-based management system, the improvement of school infrastructure, the provision of teachers' training, and the establishment of student support services.

The findings also reveal that the primary cause of the poor quality and availability of free education in Sierra Leone is the lack of resources and funding available to the government. A lack of funding has caused a lack of resources for educational systems such as insufficient teacher training, inadequate school infrastructure, and inadequate access to educational materials and resources. This lack of resources has led to a lack of access to quality education, especially in rural and remote areas where access to educational resources is limited. Additionally, the government has not implemented sufficient policies to ensure the quality and availability of free education. This has led to an overall decline in educational standards, especially in rural and remote areas.

The findings of this study also reveal that many other factors have contributed to the poor quality and availability of free education in Sierra Leone, such as poverty and inequality, gender inequality, lack of political will, and inadequate governance. Poverty and inequality have led to decreased access to educational resources, and gender inequality has led to a disproportionate number of girls not receiving access to education. Additionally, the lack of political will has been a major reason for the inadequate implementation of policies and initiatives, as well as weak governance which has led to mismanagement of resources.

The study also suggests that to improve the quality and availability of free education in Sierra Leone, there needs to be an increased focus on providing adequate funding and resources, as well as implementing effective policies and initiatives to ensure that all children have access to quality education. Additionally, there should be a focus on tackling poverty and inequality, gender inequality, and inadequate governance to ensure that all children have access to quality education.

The study also reveals that the majority of respondents have a negative perception of the concept of free and quality education in Sierra Leone. This was due to a variety of factors, including the lack of resources available to schools, the poor quality of teaching, and the lack of accountability in the educational sector. It could also be due to a perception of inequitable access to education, with certain groups of people, such

as those living in rural or remote areas, having less access to educational opportunities than those living in more urban settings.

The benefits of free and quality education in secondary schools in Sierra Leone include increased access to education, and increased student enrollment rate. At the same time, the free and quality education initiative in Sierra Leone faces many challenges. These challenges include inadequate funding, limited access to technology, lack of qualified teachers, inadequate school infrastructure, and limited government support.

In conclusion, the Government of Sierra Leone has implemented several series of initiatives to improve the quality of education in secondary schools, and these initiatives have had positive effects on student achievement, teacher training, school infrastructure, and student support services. However, these initiatives are facing several challenges, including inadequate funding, limited access to technology, lack of qualified teachers, inadequate school infrastructure and materials, and limited government support.

Based on the study and its findings, the following have therefore been suggested:

To the Government

The government should enact laws that will protect school pupils/students for all Universities in Sierra Leone to allow new graduates to teach in schools to help minimize the issues of unqualified teachers in Sierra Leone, build more schools, and increase the salaries of teachers.

To the community people

The local people have an information-sharing system that will help tackle and reduce the acute shortage of teachers in schools, either through helping them with an incentive for unpaid teachers. This will reduce the challenges principals are facing in handling some of the subjects in schools.

To Donor Funds

Donor partners should ensure that they provide more funds for the people of Sierra Leone if only we are to achieve the free and quality program initiative by the government. People with the requisite funding that will enable them to construct schools where they are needed. This will improve the accommodation space in schools.

XII. References

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