

Evaluating The Effective Implementation of Catch-Up Policy: A Case Study of Selected Primary Schools in Chongwe District of Lusaka Province

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Abstract: The study evaluated the implementation and effectiveness of the Catch-Up Policy in selected primary schools in Chongwe District, Lusaka Province, Zambia. Introduced by the Ministry of Education to address foundational literacy and numeracy gaps—especially following COVID-19 learning disruptions—the policy aims to accelerate learning recovery. Despite its potential, national evidence highlights inconsistent implementation due to overcrowded classrooms, inadequate learning materials, and limited teacher preparation. A mixed-methods approach was used, combining questionnaires administered to pupils, teachers, and school administrators with interviews and classroom observations to assess policy adoption, learning improvements, and implementation challenges. Secondary documents from the Ministry of Education were also reviewed to contextualize findings.

Results revealed varied integration of the Catch-Up Policy, with 49% of schools conducting sessions daily and 26% weekly. Teacher preparedness was rated positively by 65% of respondents, though continued professional development remains vital. The policy was reported to improve learning outcomes, with 73% observing enhanced pupil performance, especially in literacy (79%) and numeracy (59%). Key challenges included overcrowded classrooms (72%), shortages of learning materials (13%), irregular attendance, low parental involvement, and limited opportunities for ongoing teacher training.

Despite these barriers, the policy has strengthened learner engagement, comprehension, and foundational skills. To enhance effectiveness, The study recommends: strengthening teacher capacity through continuous training and mentorship; reducing classroom congestion through additional staffing or smaller learning groups; increasing the provision of relevant teaching materials; improving monitoring and evaluation systems; promoting learner attendance through motivational strategies; and increasing parental and community involvement. Strong school-level administrative support and closer collaboration with district education authorities are essential for long-term sustainability.

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I. INTRODUCTION

Education systems globally continue to grapple with severe learning losses resulting from socio-economic disruptions, most notably the COVID-19 pandemic. Prolonged school closures, inconsistent instructional delivery, and limited access to digital learning widened existing educational inequalities and intensified what the World Bank (2022) characterizes as “learning poverty”—the inability of a child to read and comprehend a simple text by the age of ten. Current estimates reveal that 70% of 10-year-olds in low- and middle-income countries experience learning poverty, a dramatic increase from 57% before the pandemic

(World Bank, 2022). In response, governments and international organizations have prioritized accelerated learning and catch-up interventions aimed at restoring lost competencies in literacy and numeracy (UNESCO, 2023).

The crisis is particularly pronounced in Sub-Saharan Africa, where pre-existing structural challenges such as teacher shortages, inadequate financing, and limited instructional resources magnified the pandemic’s impact. UNICEF (2022) reports that nearly 90% of children in the region cannot read and understand an age-appropriate text by age ten. Although various remedial strategies—including community tutoring, remedial classes, and extended learning

time—have been introduced, their success remains constrained by weak monitoring systems and inconsistent policy implementation (African Union, 2024).

Zambia mirrors these regional trends. National assessments consistently reveal low literacy and numeracy performance among primary learners, with only 4% of Grade 2 pupils meeting reading proficiency standards and Grade 5 pupils averaging 35% in English and 31% in Mathematics (UNICEF Zambia, 2023). To address these learning gaps, the Ministry of Education, in collaboration with partners such as UNICEF and the World Bank, introduced the Catch-Up Policy, grounded in the Teaching at the Right Level (TaRL) methodology. Zambia's endorsement of the End Learning Poverty for All in Africa (ELPAf) campaign further demonstrates national commitment to advancing equitable and quality education (African Union, 2025).

Despite these initiatives, a disconnect persists between policy design and implementation on the ground. Evidence remains limited regarding how the Catch-Up Policy functions at the school level, particularly in rural districts like Chongwe. The extent to which the policy influences teaching practices, learning processes, and pupil performance is not fully understood. This study therefore examines the implementation of the Catch-Up Policy in selected primary schools in Chongwe District, exploring its effectiveness, the challenges encountered, and the policy's implications for foundational learning recovery.

➤ *General Objective: To evaluate the effective implementation of Catch-Up Policy in selected schools in Chongwe*

• *Specific Objectives*

- ✓ To evaluate the effective implementation of Catch-Up Policy in selected schools in Chongwe.
- ✓ To establish the effects of Catch-Up Policy in selected schools in Chongwe district in Chongwe.
- ✓ Ascertain the relationship between the impact of Catch-Up policy and pupil performance.
- ✓ To identify the challenges affecting the implementation of the Catch-Up Policy in selected schools in Chongwe.

➤ *Theoretical Framework*

This study is underpinned by Lev Vygotsky's Zone of Proximal Development (ZPD) theory, which argues that learners achieve optimal progress when supported to perform tasks they cannot yet complete independently. Central to this theory is scaffolding—targeted guidance provided by teachers or peers to help learners progress from their current ability level toward expected competencies.

The ZPD aligns closely with Zambia's Catch-Up Policy, which is implemented through the Teaching at the Right Level (TaRL) approach. TaRL groups learners by skill level rather than grade, enabling instruction to match each learner's developmental needs. This is particularly relevant in Zambia, where national assessments show that only 4% of Grade 2 pupils meet reading proficiency standards and Grade

5 performance in English and Mathematics remains low. These gaps underscore the need for scaffolded, ability-based instruction.

The framework highlights how diagnostic assessment, small-group teaching, and peer-supported learning provide scaffolding necessary for struggling learners to acquire foundational skills. Vygotsky's emphasis on social interaction further supports methods such as cooperative learning and teacher–learner dialogue, which have been shown to improve literacy outcomes in sub-Saharan contexts. Additionally, the ZPD perspective allows examination of systemic factors—such as teacher capacity, availability of materials, and policy support that influence effective policy implementation. Thus, the ZPD provides a comprehensive lens for analyzing how instructional practices, learner engagement, and institutional conditions shape the effectiveness of the Catch-Up Policy in enhancing learning recovery.

II. LITERATURE REVIEW

➤ *Effective Implementation of Catch-Up Policy*

Global research highlights the significant learning losses caused by the COVID-19 pandemic, with disadvantaged learners disproportionately affected. According to Vincent-Lancrin (2023) and Bethhäuser et al. (2023), school closures widened pre-existing inequalities, particularly for children from low-income households. Effective catch-up strategies—such as accelerated learning, remedial lessons, and targeted instructional support—require careful planning, adequate resources, and teacher capacity to meaningfully reduce learning gaps (Thorn & Vincent-Lancrin, 2021). Cost-effectiveness is also essential, especially in low- and middle-income countries, where policymakers must prioritize interventions that offer measurable learning gains (de la Maisonneuve et al., 2022). Strengthening teacher training, institutional support, and monitoring systems is critical for sustaining recovery programmes (OECD, 2022).

Studies from other contexts further demonstrate challenges and successes in Catch-Up Policy implementation. Requillo et al. (2024) found that the Philippines' "Catch-Up Fridays" programme addresses long-standing learning delays but faces difficulties such as increased teacher workload, limited training, and poor stakeholder coordination. Similarly, research from U.S. school districts (Carbonari et al., 2024) shows that despite large financial investments, catch-up interventions often fail to reach targeted learners due to staffing shortages, low student engagement, and insufficient intensity.

Local and regional studies provide insights relevant to Zambia. The International Growth Centre (2017) stresses that class size, resource availability, and student backgrounds significantly influence learning outcomes. Schools in rural districts like Chongwe, characterised by large classes and limited materials, may struggle to effectively implement catch-up initiatives unless additional support is provided. Research by Bwalya (2020) on the Re-Entry Policy and by

Sikwalyungu & Chansa (2023) on service-learning shows that inadequate infrastructure, low teacher training, and weak community engagement hinder education policy implementation more generally. Curriculum reform studies, such as Dewin (2019), similarly reveal that many schools lack preparation and training for new policies, with limited monitoring by education standards officers further weakening implementation efforts. These findings echo recurring system-wide challenges insufficient teacher orientation, poor resource allocation, and weak oversight.

Several Zambian studies highlight the positive impact of remedial programmes. Chanda (2024) found that catch-up lessons improve academic performance, enhance retention, and are well received by learners and parents, though resource shortages and overcrowded classrooms remain obstacles. Mukunga (2023) demonstrated that Zambia's Catch-Up programme significantly improves literacy levels when teachers receive appropriate training. However, issues such as inadequate materials, insufficient administrative support, and teacher transfers threaten programme sustainability. Ressler et al. (2023) further show that the Teaching at the Right Level (TaRL) approach enhances both academic and socio-emotional learning by grouping pupils according to competence rather than grade level. National surveys from the Zambia Statistics Agency (2022) and Central Statistical Office (2020) emphasise that household characteristics, socio-economic disparities, and regional inequalities strongly influence educational outcomes. Larger households and poorer rural communities common in Chongwe District limit children's access to learning resources. Therefore, effective catch-up implementation must account for school size, teacher availability, socio-economic barriers, and resource levels.

➤ *The Effects of Catch-Up Policy in Selected Schools in Chongwe*

Global evidence highlights the importance of catch-up policies in mitigating learning losses caused by school disruptions, particularly during the COVID-19 pandemic. Carbonari (2024) demonstrates that academic interventions such as tutoring, summer schools, and remedial programmes significantly improved student performance when resources were effectively allocated, students consistently attended, and teachers received adequate support. The study underscores the importance of strategic planning, targeted instruction, and ongoing professional development to ensure sustained academic recovery. Similarly, de Bruijn and Meeter (2023) found that school-based catch-up initiatives in the Netherlands had positive effects, particularly tutoring programmes, while general skills and homework support were less effective. Implementation quality and fidelity were identified as critical factors influencing success, highlighting that the delivery of interventions can be as important as their content.

In the context of developing countries, Landini (2017) shows that well-designed public policies tailored to specific technological and industrial contexts are crucial for "catch-up" efforts, whether economic or educational. Strategic interventions, such as capability building and targeted

support, enhance performance and reduce disparities, indicating that generic approaches are often ineffective. This insight parallels education, where policies must consider school-specific factors to be successful.

Socio-economic conditions strongly influence learning outcomes and the effectiveness of catch-up policies. Asongu et al. (2020) emphasize that higher educational attainment improves income potential, financial access, and social mobility, while disparities in education, including gender gaps, perpetuate inequalities. Catch-up programmes address such inequities by providing remedial lessons, tutoring, and after-school support, particularly for students from disadvantaged households or those who have experienced interruptions in schooling. By improving academic performance, these interventions enhance students' chances of progressing to higher education and better employment opportunities.

In Zambia's Chongwe District, catch-up policies are especially relevant due to challenges such as high student-to-teacher ratios, irregular attendance, and limited classroom resources (Hassan et al., 2022). Targeted interventions can bridge learning gaps in foundational subjects such as literacy and numeracy, ensuring that students keep pace with their peers. Evidence shows that remedial programmes not only improve academic outcomes but also promote equity by supporting learners from disadvantaged backgrounds (Mulenga, 2015; Kachingwe et al., 2017). Schools that implement catch-up policies effectively—through adequate staffing, teaching materials, and monitoring are more likely to achieve these positive results.

Further, educational interventions have long-term socio-economic implications. The African Development Bank (2021) notes that improved learning outcomes increase the likelihood of stable employment and higher household incomes. Students who benefit from Catch-Up Programmes are better positioned to pursue secondary or higher education and formal employment, reducing intergenerational inequality. Thus, catch-up policies serve a dual role: addressing immediate learning deficits and fostering long-term social mobility and economic empowerment.

In conclusion, research consistently shows that well-planned, targeted, and adequately resourced Catch-Up Programmes improve learning outcomes, reduce educational disparities, and support future socio-economic opportunities. Their effectiveness depends on teacher capacity, school resources, student engagement, and contextual adaptation. In Chongwe District, implementing such interventions can bridge gaps in literacy and numeracy, promote equity, and enhance long-term prospects for learners, demonstrating the critical role of education in shaping both academic and economic outcomes.

➤ *Relationship Between Effective Implementation of Catch-Up Policy and Pupil Performance*

Credit terms refer to standards or negotiated terms (offered by a seller to a buyer) that control the monthly and total credit amount, maximum time allowed for repayment,

discount for cash or early payment, and the amount or rate of late payment penalty (Kakuru, 2007). According to Agarwal (2009), credit terms include factors such as interest rate, collateral and loan repayment periods. Collateral required by commercial banks in developing countries has been a contentious issue in SME financing. However, real-estate collateral provides an incentive and a justification to lend and repay, as well as a means to offset losses in case of default (Otero and Lopez, 2001) in their credit rationing theory argue that in an equilibrium market with problems that are commonly found in financial markets, it would be rational for banks to engage in credit rationing. Due to problems of asymmetric information and agency, banks have difficulty distinguishing good risks from bad risks and monitoring borrowers once funds have been advanced (Organization of Economic Cooperation and Development, 2006).

These terms help in assessing credit worthiness of borrowers and hedge against the risk of loss in case of non-repayment. They include collateral, interest rate, and repayment period (Nyangoma, 2012). Collateral is a security in the form of an asset that one pledges to access loans. According to Shave (1983, p.38), the mortgage on property or chattel, floating charge on other assets, and personal guarantees will serve as security for a loan. More often than not, SMEs fail to get financial assistance from institutions due to lack of collateral. According to KPMG et al (2000) lack of collateral has been repeatedly raised as being one of the most difficult hurdles of entrepreneurs to overcome when trying to obtain loans. This problem is exacerbated by the fact that in many countries the SMEs sector has only existed for just about 10 years and business have not had sufficient time to build up a good equity base.

Catch-up and remedial programs have emerged as critical strategies to address learning losses caused by school disruptions, notably during the COVID-19 pandemic. Carbonari et al. (2024) examined U.S. school districts and found that interventions such as tutoring and summer schools produced modest improvements in math and reading. Gains were limited due to inconsistent student participation, staffing shortages, and scheduling challenges, highlighting that effective program delivery is as important as program design. The study emphasizes strategic planning, resource allocation, teacher professional development, parental involvement, and continuous monitoring as key factors in maximizing program impact (Carbonari et al., 2024; Lee et al., 2023). Similarly, de Bruijn and Meeter (2023) evaluated Dutch secondary school catch-up initiatives, finding that tutoring programs significantly improved academic performance, whereas homework support and general skills development were largely ineffective. Variations in success across schools underscored that context-sensitive implementation and tailoring interventions to students' specific needs are crucial for effectiveness.

Evidence from developing countries highlights the broader relevance of targeted interventions. Landini (2017) shows that adaptive public policies, capability building, and support for firm-level learning are essential for economic catch-up, emphasizing that interventions must be context-

specific and responsive to technological and industrial conditions. McManus et al. (2025) demonstrate that intensive, accelerated learning programs for out-of-school children in Liberia can produce rapid gains in literacy and numeracy when implementation fidelity, attendance, and transition support are maintained. Systematic reviews by Evans and Popova (2016) reinforce these findings, showing that interventions tailored to students' learning levels and supported by repeated, task-specific teacher training consistently improve outcomes, whereas infrastructure or technology-focused initiatives are less reliably effective. Contextual adaptation and implementation quality are critical.

Within Zambia, studies on the Catch-Up Policy reveal similar lessons. Mwansa and Munthali (2018), Kadzamia and Mkandawire (2020), and Zimba et al. (2024) emphasize that teacher capacity, stakeholder engagement, community involvement, and equitable resource allocation are central to success. Inclusive participation of learners, continuous teacher training, and adaptive instruction promote literacy and numeracy improvements while addressing educational inequities (Munalula-Ndulo, 2019; Andersson et al., 2020). Overall, the literature consistently highlights that effective catch-up policies require well-planned, context-sensitive, and resourced interventions. Key lessons include targeting students' specific learning needs, providing professional development for teachers, engaging parents and communities, ensuring equitable access to resources, and maintaining robust monitoring and evaluation. These factors collectively enhance learning outcomes, reduce disparities, and support long-term educational and socio-economic benefits.

➤ *Challenges Affecting Effective Implementation of Catch-Up Policy*

Sevillano (2025) investigates teacher preparedness and challenges in implementing the "Catch-Up Fridays" program in Davao del Norte, Philippines, aimed at addressing learning gaps from COVID-19 school closures. The study, involving 100 teachers, finds that overall preparedness is positive, with educators possessing necessary knowledge and skills to facilitate catch-up learning effectively. However, teachers encounter moderate challenges, including large class sizes, limited instructional resources, time constraints, and varied student readiness. Pearson correlation analysis indicates a strong, significant relationship between teacher preparedness and positive implementation experiences, suggesting that well-prepared teachers are better able to navigate challenges and improve student outcomes (Sevillano, 2025; Nguyen et al., 2023).

The World Bank (2023) identifies systemic issues such as overloaded curricula, over-ambitious pacing, under-focused instruction, and insufficient professional development, all of which exacerbate learning gaps and reduce policy effectiveness. Excessive teacher responsibilities and unequal workload distribution further hinder implementation, echoing Sherwood's (2018) findings on performance and well-being under unequal burdens. Similarly, structural inequalities among students—due to

household responsibilities, socio-economic constraints, or gendered expectations—limit engagement in remedial programs and reduce effectiveness (Rasaq Raimi & Phiri, 2024; UNESCO, 2022).

Research highlights that catch-up initiatives are most effective when tailored to context-specific challenges, supported by teacher professional development, and supplemented with adequate resources and community engagement. Targeted interventions, flexible scheduling, and monitoring are essential to addressing disparities, ensuring equitable access, and enhancing learning outcomes. The evidence underscores that successful Catch-Up Programs require not only teacher preparedness but also systemic support, contextualized strategies, and attention to both school-level and student-level barriers (Kunda et al., 2023; Ressler et al., 2023; UNICEF, 2025).

➤ *Literature Critique and Literature Gap*

The literature on remedial education programs, such as the Catch-Up Policy, highlights their potential to improve literacy and numeracy among students who are behind academically (UNICEF, 2023; VVOB, 2025). Such interventions often use interactive, play-based methodologies to engage learners and enhance learning outcomes. However, multiple challenges limit their effectiveness. Inadequate school infrastructure, including overcrowded classrooms and limited learning materials, constrains teachers' ability to provide individualized support (Mungandi, 2025). High student-to-teacher ratios and shortages of trained educators further reduce program impact. Socio-cultural factors, such as gender disparities, early pregnancies, and domestic responsibilities, also restrict participation, particularly among female students (UNICEF, 2023). Limited community involvement diminishes accountability and undermines program success.

While existing research provides valuable insights into the objectives, implementation, and potential outcomes of the Catch-Up Policy (UNESCO, 2023; Kunda et al., 2023), several gaps remain. Most studies focus on national-level results or urban schools, leaving rural contexts underexplored, despite pronounced infrastructural and socio-economic challenges (World Economic Forum, 2023). There is limited understanding of how socio-cultural dynamics, household responsibilities, local perceptions, and gender disparities—interact with policy implementation. Moreover, few longitudinal studies assess whether short-term gains in literacy and numeracy are sustained or translate into broader academic achievement. Research on the role of school management practices, teacher accountability, and community engagement in influencing outcomes is also scarce.

Addressing these gaps is critical for developing context-specific, evidence-based strategies that enhance the Catch-Up Policy's effectiveness in rural schools. By focusing on infrastructure, equity, teacher capacity, and community involvement, future interventions can better support underserved learners and promote sustainable improvements in educational outcomes.

III. RESEARCH METHODS

This study employed a mixed-methods research design that integrated both quantitative and qualitative approaches within a cross-sectional framework. The quantitative component focused on measurable indicators, including pupil attendance, literacy and numeracy performance, teacher-to-pupil ratios, and the availability of learning resources. The qualitative component explored the experiences, perceptions, and challenges encountered by teachers and school administrators in the implementation of the Catch-Up Policy.

The integration of quantitative and qualitative methods facilitated methodological triangulation, thereby enhancing the validity and reliability of the findings (Dumitrescu & Hurlin, 2024; Ahmed et al., 2022). The cross-sectional design provided a snapshot of the current state of policy implementation, while the exploratory perspective enabled the identification of contextual factors and emerging themes that may inform future research and policy development (Van Ham et al., 2021; Kouadio et al., 2024).

➤ *Target Population*

Population refers to the complete set of units from which a sample is selected. According to Babbie (1992), a study population is the aggregation of elements from which sample elements are drawn. The population of interest for this study comprised administrative and teaching staff responsible for implementing remedial classes, as well as pupils receiving Catch-Up support. Including these groups ensured that insights were captured from multiple perspectives.

The selected schools represented diverse socio-economic and infrastructural contexts within Chongwe District. Participants included pupils from Grades 3 to 5, teachers with varying qualifications and professional experience, and school administrators involved in the planning, supervision, and monitoring of remedial programmes. This approach provided a comprehensive understanding of the implementation, effects, and challenges associated with the Catch-Up Policy (UNESCO, 2023).

➤ *Sampling Design*

stratified random sampling technique was employed to ensure representativeness across different school categories. Schools were stratified according to size, socio-economic status, and the level of policy implementation, after which random selection was conducted within each stratum.

Thereafter, teachers and pupils were randomly selected from the participating schools. This approach enabled the study to capture variations in school characteristics and learner backgrounds, thereby enhancing the generalizability and robustness of the findings (Robilliard, 2023; Cornia et al., 2016).

➤ *Study Sample Size*

The study included three primary schools and involved approximately 60 participants, comprising 45 pupils, 9 teachers, and 6 school and education administrators. This sample size was considered adequate for facilitating both

quantitative and qualitative exploration of the research objectives.

For the quantitative component, Yamane’s formula was applied to determine the appropriate sample size relative to the total pupil population within the selected schools (Makhlouf & Lalley, 2023). The selected sample ensured adequate representation of diverse perspectives and supported meaningful analysis of the study variables.

➤ *Data Collection Methods*

Prior to data collection, the researcher introduced the study to participating schools and provided respondents with information regarding its purpose, relevance, and anticipated contributions. Written informed consent was obtained from all participants, while parental consent was secured for participating pupils.

Data were collected using multiple methods to ensure depth of understanding and facilitate triangulation. Structured questionnaires were administered to pupils, teachers, and administrators to collect information on attendance, academic performance, and access to learning resources. Semi-structured interviews were conducted to explore participants’ perceptions, experiences, and challenges associated with the implementation of the Catch-Up Policy. Classroom observations were undertaken to assess teaching practices and levels of pupil engagement. In addition, secondary data were reviewed from policy documents and relevant reports to provide contextual understanding and support the interpretation of findings (UNICEF, 2025; UNESCO, 2023).

➤ *Data Analysis*

Quantitative data were processed and analysed using Statistical Package for the Social Sciences (SPSS) and/or STATA. Descriptive statistics, including means, frequencies, and percentages, were used to summarize key variables such as pupil attendance, literacy and numeracy performance, teacher-to-pupil ratios, and access to learning resources.

Cross-tabulation analyses were conducted to examine relationships between categorical variables, including school size, gender, resource allocation, and student outcomes. Correlation analyses were further employed to determine the strength and direction of associations between implementation factors and measurable learning outcomes.

Qualitative data obtained from interviews and classroom observations were coded and analysed using NVivo software. The integration of quantitative and qualitative findings enabled methodological triangulation, providing a comprehensive understanding of the implementation, effectiveness, and challenges of the Catch-Up Policy across diverse school contexts (Chancel et al., 2022; Robilliard, 2023).

IV. FINDINGS AND RESULTS

➤ *Characteristics of Respondents (Bio Data)*

The study examined the demographic profile of respondents involved in the implementation of the Catch-Up Policy in selected primary schools in Chongwe District, including gender, age, and education level. Out of the 100 respondents, 62% were male and 38% female, indicating higher male participation, though women’s perspectives were meaningfully represented.

Regarding age, the largest group (24%) was aged 21–40 years, likely reflecting active involvement in educational decision-making. Respondents aged 11–15 years constituted 21%, 41 years and above 19%, 5–10 years 16%, and 16–20 years 9%, showing balanced participation across age groups with strong representation from adults directly engaged in schooling. In terms of educational attainment, 37% had completed primary or basic education, followed by 23% with certificates, 19% with diplomas, 13% with degrees, 7% with master’s degrees, and 1% with PhDs. No respondents reported secondary education as their highest qualification, indicating a community largely grounded in basic education but with limited representation of advanced academic credentials. Overall, the demographic profile reflects a mix of gender, age, and education levels, providing diverse perspectives on the implementation of the Catch-Up Policy.

➤ *Implementation of the Catch-Up Policy*

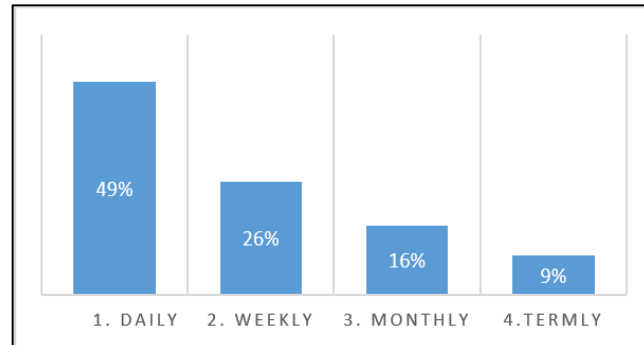


Fig 1 Frequency of Catch-Up Policy Programme Implementation
Source: Field Data

The study found that the Catch-Up Policy in Chongwe District primary schools is most commonly conducted daily (49%), followed by weekly (26%), monthly (16%), and termly (9%). This indicates that most schools integrate catch-up activities into regular schedules, demonstrating a strong commitment to consistent learning recovery efforts.

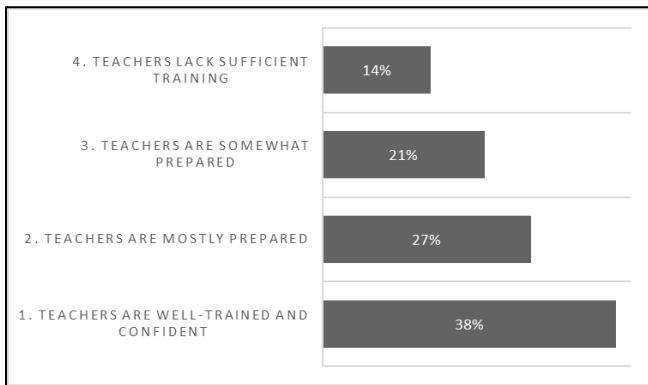


Fig 2 Teachers' Preparedness to Conduct Catch-Up Sessions
Source: Field Data

The study found that 38% of respondents viewed teachers as well-trained and confident, 27% as mostly prepared, 21% as somewhat prepared, and 14% as insufficiently trained. Overall, most teachers show reasonable readiness, though a significant portion still requires capacity building to improve Catch-Up Policy lesson delivery.

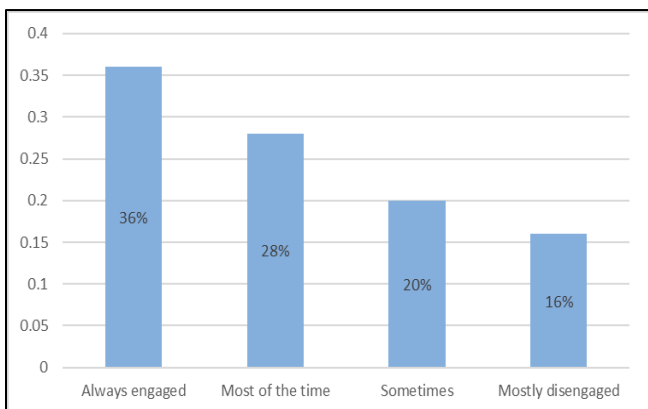


Fig 3 Student Participation in Catch-Up Classes
Source: Field Data

The study found that 36% of respondents reported students are always engaged in Catch-Up classes, 28% most of the time, 20% sometimes, and 16% mostly disengaged. Overall, most students consistently participate, though a minority exhibit low engagement in the sessions.

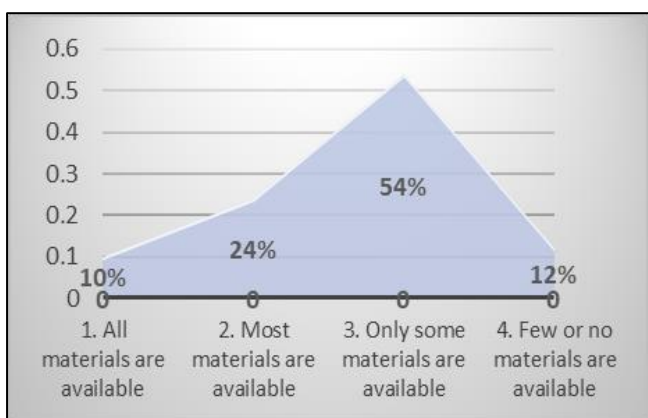


Fig 4 Sufficiency of learning materials in catch-up sessions
Source: Field Data

The study found that only 10% of respondents reported all learning materials were available for Catch-Up sessions, 24% said most were available, 54% indicated some, and 12% reported few or none. This inconsistency may hinder the program's effectiveness in supporting student learning.

➤ *Effectiveness of Catch-Up Policy in Meeting Pupil's Needs*

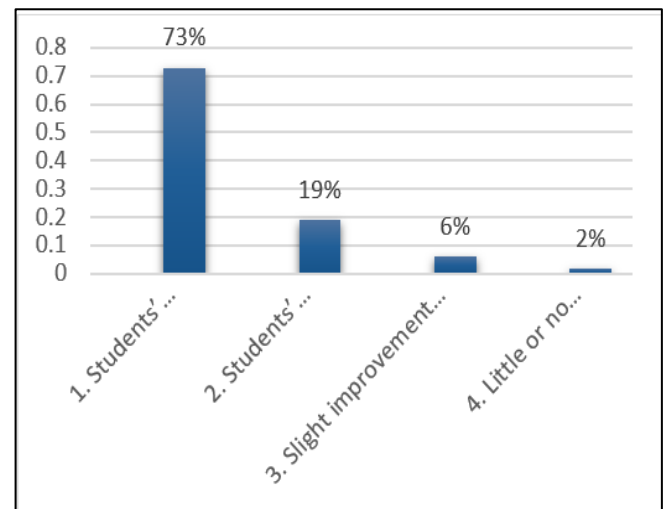


Fig 5 Effectiveness of Catch-Up Classes in Improving Students' Understanding
Source: Field Data

The study found that 73% of respondents believe Catch-Up classes greatly improve student performance, 19% noted moderate improvement, 6% slight improvement, and 2% little or none. This indicates that most view the program as highly effective in supporting learners' academic progress.

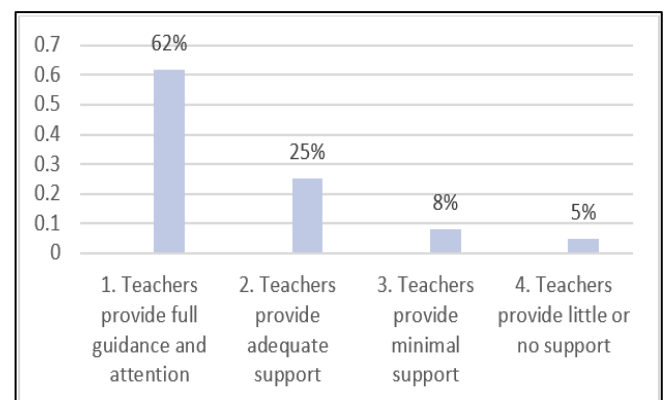


Fig 6 Teacher Support During Catch-Up Sessions
Source: Field Data

The study found that 62% of respondents believe teachers provide full guidance during Catch-Up sessions, 25% report adequate support, 8% minimal support, and 5% little or none. Overall, most teachers actively assist students, ensuring learners receive the guidance needed to benefit from the Catch-Up program.

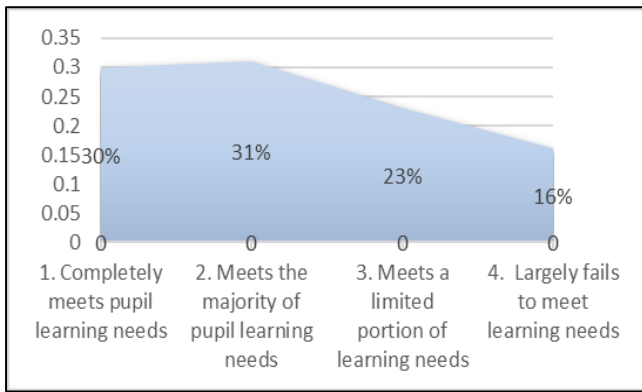


Fig 7 Effectiveness of the Catch-Up Policy in Meeting Pupils' Learning Needs

Source: Field Data

The study assessed perceptions of the Catch-Up Policy's effectiveness in addressing pupils' learning needs. Findings show that 30% of respondents believe it fully meets students' needs, 31% stated it meets most needs, 23% indicated it addresses only a limited portion, and 16% felt it largely fails. Overall, the policy is beneficial but does not fully satisfy all learning requirements.

➤ *Effects of the Catch-Up Policy*

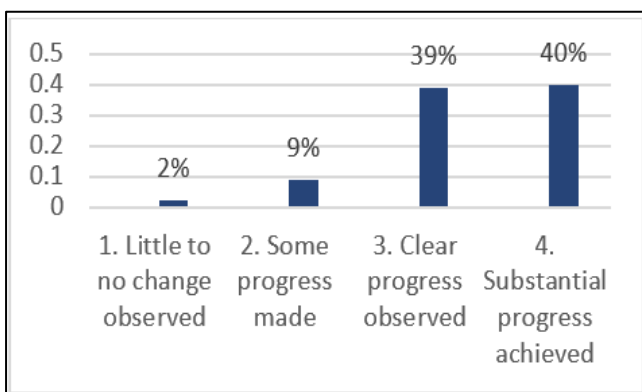


Fig 8 Effectiveness of Catch-Up Classes in Enhancing Reading Performance

Source: Field Data

The study evaluated the impact of Catch-Up classes on learners' reading performance in selected primary schools. Findings show that 40% of respondents observed substantial improvement, 39% noted clear progress, 9% reported some progress, and 2% saw little to no change. Overall, most students demonstrate significant gains, highlighting the program's positive effect on literacy development.

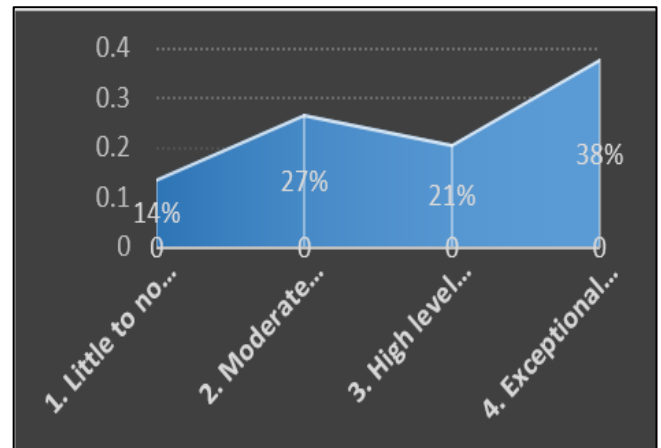


Fig 9 Growth in Pupils' Conceptual Understanding of Mathematics

Source: Field Data

The study assessed how Catch-Up classes enhanced pupils' conceptual understanding of mathematics in selected primary schools. Findings show that 38% of respondents observed exceptional growth, 21% noted high growth, 27% reported moderate growth, and 14% saw little to no progress. Overall, the sessions significantly improved mathematical understanding, though some pupils showed limited gains.

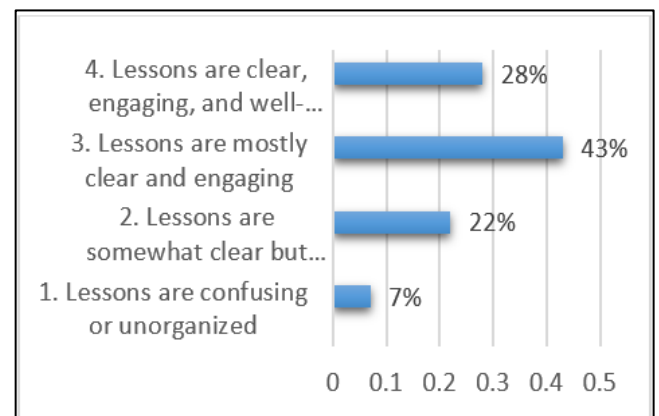


Fig 10 Effectiveness of Teachers in Delivering Catch-Up Lessons

Source: Field Data

The study assessed respondents' perceptions of teachers' effectiveness in delivering Catch-Up lessons in selected primary schools. Findings indicate that 43% of respondents found lessons mostly clear and engaging, 28% described them as clear, engaging, and well-structured, 22% saw them as somewhat clear but limited, and 7% found lessons confusing. Overall, most teachers are effective, though some need support to improve clarity and organization.

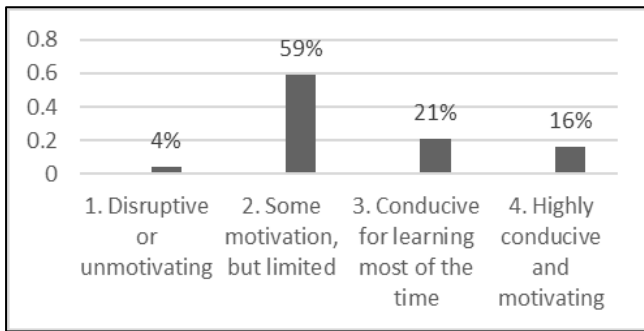


Fig 11 Supportiveness of the Classroom Environment in Catch-Up Sessions
Source: Field data

The study explored how the classroom environment supports learning during Catch-Up sessions in selected primary schools. Findings show that 59% of respondents felt the environment provides limited motivation, 21% reported it is mostly conducive, 16% observed it as highly motivating, and 4% found it disruptive. Overall, while classrooms offer moderate support, improvements are needed to create fully motivating and effective learning spaces.

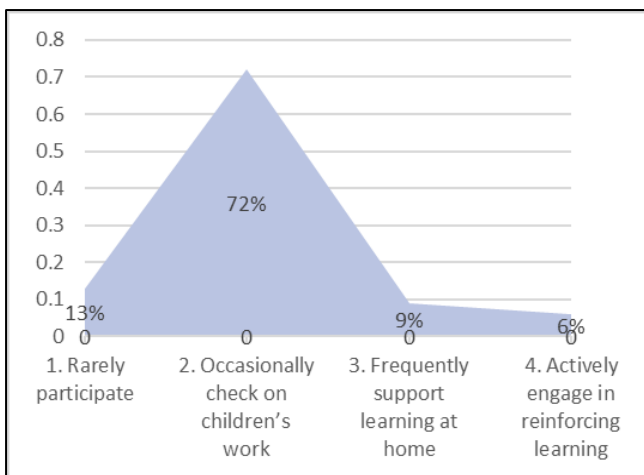


Fig 12 Parental Involvement in Supporting Children's Learning During Catch-Up
Source: Field Data

The study examined parental involvement in supporting children's learning under the Catch-Up program in selected primary schools. Findings show that 72% of parents occasionally check their children's work, 13% rarely participate, 9% frequently support learning, and 6% are actively engaged. Overall, parental involvement is generally limited, with most providing only occasional oversight, potentially constraining the program's effectiveness in reinforcing learning and improving student outcomes.

➤ Challenges in the Implementation of the Catch-Up Policy

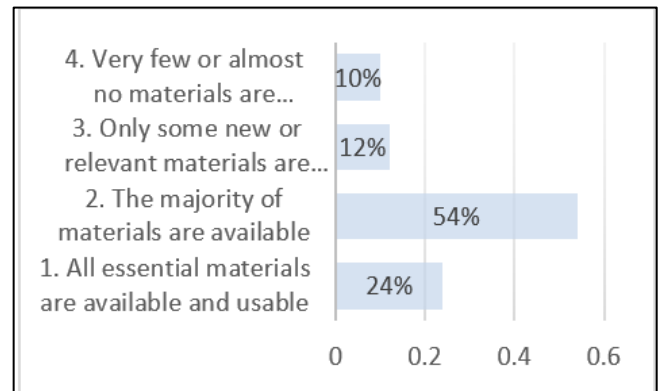


Fig 13 Sufficiency of Teaching Learning Materials for Catch-Up Policy Classes
Source: Field Data

The study evaluated the availability of teaching and learning materials for Catch-Up classes in selected primary schools. Findings show that 54% of respondents reported most materials are available, 24% indicated all essential materials are provided, 12% noted some materials are available, and 10% observed very few resources. Resource shortages in some schools may impact lesson quality and program effectiveness.

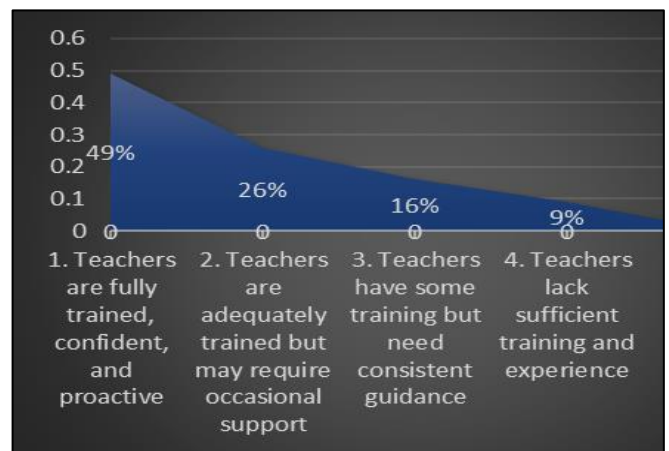


Fig 14 Teachers' Readiness to Deliver Catch-Up Lessons
Source: Field data

The study assessed teachers' readiness to deliver Catch-Up lessons in selected primary schools. Findings indicate that most teachers are perceived as well-trained, confident, and proactive, or adequately trained with occasional support needed. A smaller proportion require consistent guidance, while few lack sufficient training. Overall, teachers demonstrate substantial preparedness, though targeted support is necessary to enhance lesson delivery and ensure the program's effectiveness.

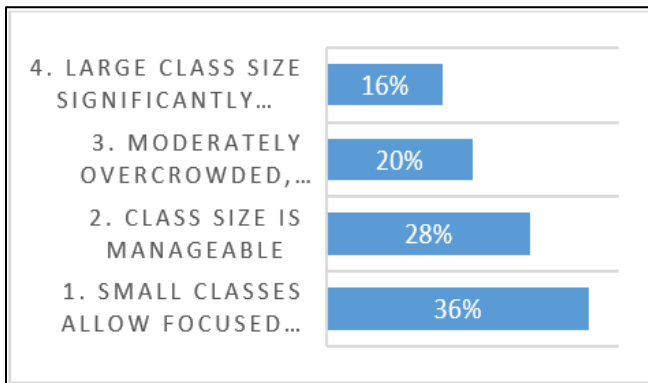


Fig 15 Effect of Class Size on the Effectiveness of Catch-Up Sessions

Source: Field Data

The study examined the impact of class size on Catch-Up sessions in selected primary schools. Findings show that 36% believe small classes enable focused teaching, 28% find class size manageable, while 36% report overcrowding hinders learning. Smaller classes enhance effectiveness, whereas large classes limit individual attention.

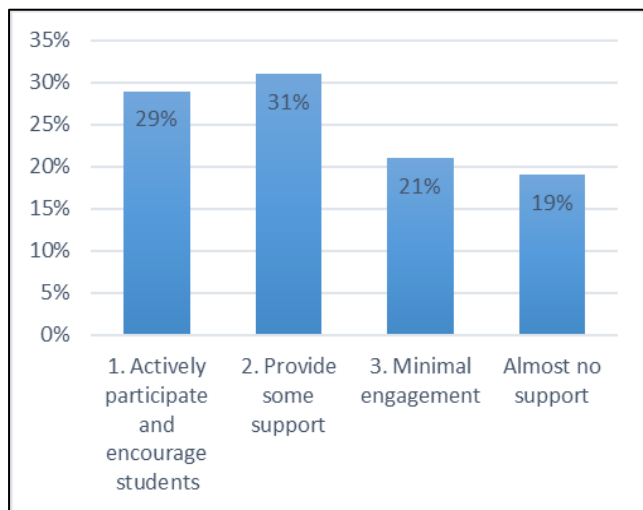


Fig 16 Parental and Community Support for Catch-Up Activities

Source: Field data

The study examined parental and community involvement in Catch-Up activities. Findings show 31% provide some support, 29% actively participate, 21% offer minimal engagement, and 19% provide little to no support. While many contribute, engagement levels vary, with some parents and community members showing limited involvement.

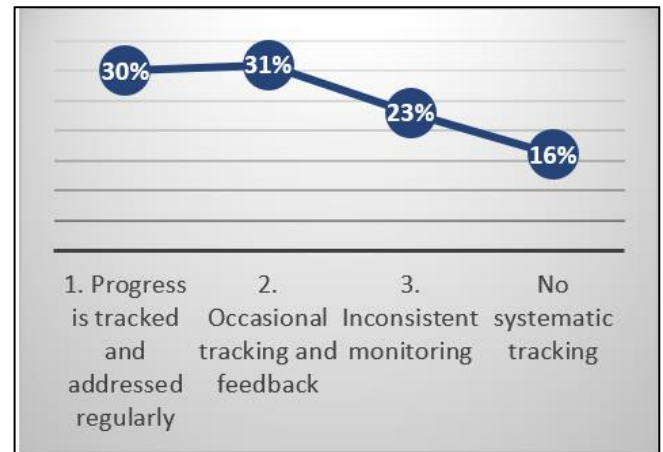


Fig 17 Effectiveness of Monitoring and Evaluation for Catch-Up Classes

Source: Field data

The study assessed perceptions of monitoring and evaluation in Catch-Up classes. Findings show 30% of respondents reported regular tracking, 31% occasional feedback, 23% inconsistent monitoring, and 16% no systematic tracking. While some schools implement effective M&E, many lack consistent mechanisms to assess and guide Catch-Up activities.

➤ *Lessons Learnt and Best Practices*

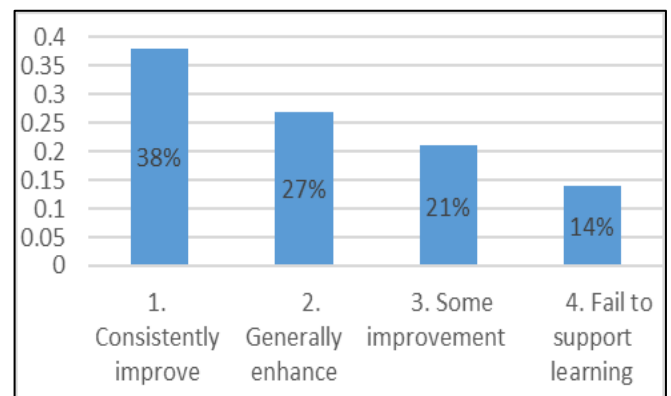


Fig 18 Effectiveness of Teaching Strategies in Catch-Up Lessons

Source: Field data

The study evaluated how well the teaching strategies employed in Catch-Up lessons enhance student learning in selected primary schools. Findings reveal that 38% of respondents reported that strategies consistently improve learning, while 27% indicated they generally enhance learning. Additionally, 21% observed some improvement, and 14% felt that strategies fail to support learning. These results suggest that, overall, teaching strategies are effective in promoting learning, though a minority of sessions may not fully engage or benefit students.

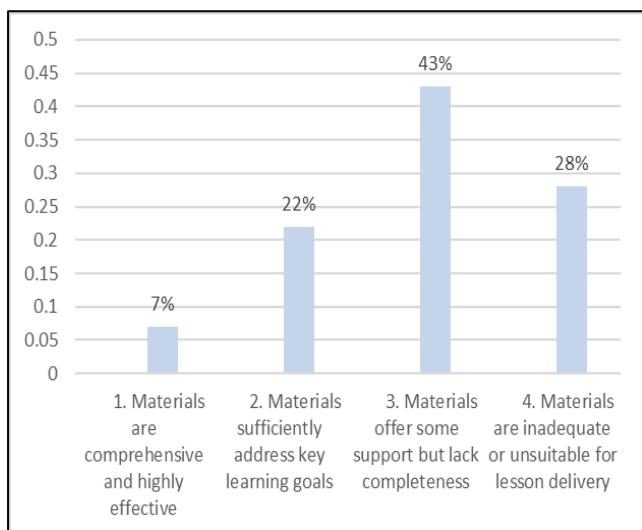


Fig 19 Supportiveness of Learning Materials
Source: Field Data

The study examined how well the available learning materials support the objectives of Catch-Up lessons in selected primary schools. Findings show that 43% of respondents indicated that materials offer some support but lack completeness, while 28% reported they are inadequate or unsuitable for lesson delivery. Additionally, 22% stated materials sufficiently address key learning goals, and only 7% felt that materials are comprehensive and highly effective. These results suggest that while materials provide some assistance, their quality and completeness are often insufficient to fully achieve lesson objectives.

➤ Discussion of Findings

• Implementation of the Catch-Up Policy

The study investigated the implementation of the Catch-Up Policy in selected primary schools within Chongwe District, revealing a strong integration of the program into daily teaching routines. Almost half of the respondents (49%) reported daily implementation, while 26% conducted sessions weekly, 16% monthly, and 9% termly. This variation reflects differing levels of institutional commitment to remedial learning, yet the predominance of daily sessions underscores an emphasis on consistent academic recovery efforts.

Teacher preparedness emerged as a critical factor in effective program delivery. Findings indicate that 38% of respondents considered teachers well-trained and confident, 27% mostly prepared, 21% somewhat prepared, and 14% insufficiently trained. These results suggest that while most teachers demonstrate competence, targeted professional development remains necessary to ensure uniform quality and responsiveness across schools.

Student engagement during Catch-Up sessions was generally positive. Approximately 64% of respondents reported students as always or mostly engaged, whereas 36% observed partial or low participation. This indicates that while the program successfully encourages active learning, certain

pupils require additional support to sustain consistent engagement.

• Resources, Support, and Scheduling

The availability of learning materials was identified as a key implementation challenge. Only 10% of respondents indicated full provision, 24% reported most materials available, 54% mentioned partial availability, and 12% observed minimal resources. Insufficient learning materials can limit lesson effectiveness, particularly in remedial contexts where targeted resources are essential. Teacher support was generally high, with 62% providing full guidance and 25% offering adequate support, highlighting the active role of educators in facilitating learning recovery. Nevertheless, 13% reported minimal or no support, signaling gaps in instructional responsiveness.

Timing and duration of sessions were reported as moderately effective, with 60% of respondents rating them as well-timed or mostly well-timed, while 40% indicated irregular scheduling. Similarly, the policy’s responsiveness to pupils’ learning needs revealed partial effectiveness, with 30% of respondents reporting full alignment with learning needs, 31% indicating most needs were met, 23% noting partial coverage, and 16% perceiving limited effectiveness. These findings underscore the need for strategic planning to maximize instructional outcomes.

Catch-Up sessions positively influenced literacy and numeracy outcomes. Forty percent of respondents observed substantial reading improvement, and 39% reported clear progress, while only 11% noted minimal or no change. In mathematics, 38% of respondents observed exceptional conceptual growth, 21% high growth, 27% moderate improvement, and 14% minimal progress. This indicates that while most pupils benefit from the program, a minority continue to struggle with complex concepts.

Attendance patterns were generally consistent, with 34% attending most sessions, 30% about half, 19% nearly all, and 17% very few sessions. Irregular attendance may limit learning gains and highlights the need for strategies to encourage consistent participation. Teacher delivery was largely effective, with 43% of respondents rating lessons as clear and engaging and 28% as well-structured and interactive, though 7% found lessons confusing, indicating a need for occasional instructional support.

The classroom environment and parental involvement were identified as moderating factors. While 59% described classrooms as somewhat motivating and 21% as conducive most of the time, only 16% found them highly motivating, suggesting room for improvement. Parental engagement was limited: 72% occasionally supervised learning, 13% rarely participated, and only 15% actively supported children, highlighting the importance of broader community involvement.

- *Challenges in Implementation*

Resource availability was inconsistent, with 22% of schools experiencing shortages that constrain lesson quality. Class size also influenced teaching effectiveness; 36% of respondents cited overcrowding as a barrier, whereas 36% found smaller classes promoted focused instruction. Teacher readiness, student engagement, and time allocation were generally positive, though a minority of teachers and learners experienced challenges. Administrative support varied, with 62% reporting active involvement, 25% moderate support, and 13% limited or absent oversight. Monitoring and evaluation practices were inconsistent: 30% tracked progress regularly, 31% occasionally, and 39% inconsistently or not at all, potentially limiting feedback and continuous improvement.

- *Lessons Learned and Best Practices*

The study identified key lessons and best practices for effective Catch-Up delivery. Teachers' preparedness is critical: 40% reported full readiness, 39% adequate readiness with occasional support, and 11% limited readiness, emphasizing the need for ongoing professional development. Effective teaching strategies were reported by 38% as consistently improving learning outcomes, and 27% as generally enhancing outcomes, although 35% noted partial or insufficient impact. Learning materials were available but often lacked depth, with only 17% considered comprehensive, highlighting the importance of quality resource provision.

Large class sizes (59%), limited teacher training (21%), low student attendance (16%), inadequate materials (13%), and irregular attendance (6%) were identified as barriers. Overcrowding emerged as the most pressing challenge, constraining teacher-student interaction. Best practices included student-centered pedagogy (39%), enhanced monitoring and feedback (32%), collaborative teacher teamwork (31%), and effective lesson planning (8%). These strategies collectively underscore that interactive teaching, collaborative practice, and systematic evaluation enhance the effectiveness of remedial programs.

V. CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

- *Conclusion*

The implementation of the Catch-Up Policy in selected primary schools of Chongwe District has demonstrated notable progress in enhancing learning outcomes, teacher effectiveness, and overall classroom engagement. The findings indicate that most schools have successfully integrated Catch-Up sessions into regular teaching schedules, providing consistent support for learners who previously lagged behind. Teachers exhibit strong preparedness and confidence, while students show increasing participation and enthusiasm, particularly in literacy and numeracy, affirming the policy's role in promoting learning recovery and strengthening foundational skills.

Despite these successes, several challenges persist, limiting the policy's full potential. Overcrowded classrooms, inconsistent availability of teaching and learning materials, and limited parental and community involvement continue to affect lesson quality and individual learner attention. While time allocation and administrative support are generally adequate, the shortage of quality resources and high pupil-teacher ratios hinder optimal implementation. In addition, inconsistencies in monitoring and evaluation practices reduce the ability to systematically track progress and make timely improvements.

Valuable lessons and best practices have emerged, including the adoption of student-centered teaching, strengthened teacher collaboration, and continuous monitoring and feedback. These strategies enhance learner engagement and foster a culture of accountability among educators and administrators.

The Catch-Up Policy has made a meaningful contribution to bridging learning gaps and reinforcing foundational competencies in Chongwe District. To sustain and scale its impact, structural challenges such as overcrowded classrooms, insufficient resources, and weak parental involvement must be addressed. Continuous professional development for teachers, targeted resource provision, and robust institutionalized monitoring systems will be critical to ensuring equitable and effective learning for all pupils under the Catch-Up Policy.

- *Recommendations*

Enhance Teacher Capacity Building: Provide regular in-service training and professional development workshops to strengthen teachers' pedagogical skills, confidence, and mastery of Catch-Up methodologies. Facilitate mentorship and peer-learning opportunities to allow teachers to share innovative strategies and best practices.

- **Reduce Classroom Overcrowding:** Recruit and deploy additional qualified teachers to lower pupil-teacher ratios. Implement smaller learning groups or staggered Catch-Up sessions to provide individualized attention to learners.
- **Improve Availability and Quality of Learning Materials:** Ensure consistent provision of updated, relevant Catch-Up materials aligned with learners' grade levels and learning gaps.
- **Encourage schools to develop low-cost, locally adapted teaching aids to complement government-provided resources.**
- **Strengthen Monitoring and Evaluation Mechanisms:** Establish structured systems to regularly track learner progress, teacher performance, and resource utilization. Use evaluation data to inform decision-making and refine Catch-Up program implementation.
- **Promote Student Engagement and Attendance:** Introduce motivational strategies, such as recognition of consistent attendance and improved performance. Collaborate with parents and communities to sensitize learners on the importance of active participation.

- Increase Parental and Community Involvement: Conduct awareness campaigns to encourage parents to support learners' study routines at home. Foster school–community partnerships to mobilize local resources and sustain Catch-Up initiatives.
- Enhance Administrative and Policy Support: Prioritize Catch-Up programs in school planning, budgeting, and resource allocation. Strengthen collaboration between the Ministry of Education, district education boards, and schools to ensure ongoing policy support and supervision.
- Promote Effective Teaching Strategies and Collaborative Practice: Encourage student-centered, participatory, and inclusive teaching methods to address diverse learner needs. Foster teacher collaboration in planning, lesson delivery, and sharing of effective practices.

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