

THE EFFECTIVE IMPLEMENTATION OF THE POLICY OF AUTOMATIC CLASS PROMOTION IN CAMEROON PUBLIC PRIMARY SCHOOLS: THE CASE OF NORTH WEST AND SOUTH WEST REGIONS

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Abstract. In response to the prevalence of high repetition rate in Cameroon primary schools, ministerial order № 315/B1/1464/MINEDUB of 21st February 2006 introduced the policy of automatic class promotion in primary schools. Analysis of repetition rates from 2006 to present shows relatively high repetition rates in classes where there supposed to be automatic promotion. This study intended to determine the level of effective implementation of the policy of automatic class promotion in Cameroon primary schools by assessing the degree to which teachers and head teachers comply with the administrative and pedagogic prescriptions of the policy. This study used complementary approaches of quantitative and qualitative paradigms. A cross sectional survey design was used wherein major data were collected with a questionnaire and interview guides. Four hundred and fifteen (415) teachers comprising classroom and head teachers returned completed copies of questionnaire and 25 basic education stakeholders were interviewed. Analysis of data collected reveals that

the implementation of the policy of automatic promotion in Cameroon primary schools is fairly effective wherein the teachers and head teachers comply more to the pedagogic prescriptions than the administrative prescription of the policy. Also, majority of teachers and head teachers have many misgivings about this policy. Based on the findings it is recommended that the Ministry of Basic Education ensures that; strict and regular supervision on the implementation of the policy of automatic promotion is carried out to ensure that both administrative and pedagogic prescriptions are adhered to.

Keywords: policy, implementation, effective policy implementation, automatic class promotion

Introduction

Ikechukwu & Chukwuemeka (2013) state that the need for enhancing development process in the developing nations is ever becoming more critical and urgent. The pace at which this can be realised is hinged essentially on the ability of the government to formulate appropriate policies and very importantly on the ability to effectively implement formulated policies. In contemporary times, emphasis has shifted from policy formulation to policy implementation following the realisation that effective policy implementation is not an automatic affair (Egonmwan, 1984; Ikelegbe, 2006).

Studies conducted in Cameroon reveal a repetition rate of more than 40% at the level of primary school in Cameroon¹⁾ (Amin, 1999). In response to this high repetition rate, ministerial order № 315/B1/1464/MINEDUB of 21st February 2006 introduced the policy of automatic class promotion in Cameroon primary schools. This text amongst others prescribes the following: (1) the teaching methods should be active and adapted to the diversity of pupils; (2)

assessment should be diagnostic, formative or criterion-referenced within levels; (3) assessment should enable teachers to adapt their lessons to the specific needs of pupils; (4) promotion of pupils is automatic within a level. However, a pupil can be authorized to exceptionally repeat upon request from the parent of the concerned pupil.

The first three prescriptions are pedagogic which according to this author should supplement and complement the fourth prescription which is administrative.

Theoretical framework

Three main groups of policy implementation theories are: top-down, bottom-up and hybrid policy implementation theories. Proponents of top-down theory of policy implementation include: Pressman & Wildavsky (1973), Van Meter & Van Horn (1975), Bardach (1977), Sabatier & Mazmanian (1979; 1980). The top-down theories address the following questions: (i) to what extent are the actions of implementing officials and target groups consistent with policy decisions; (ii) to what extent are the objectives attained over time; (iii) what are the principal factors affecting policy outputs and impacts; (iv) how is the policy reformulated over time on the basis of experience.

Top-down theories of policy implementation is influenced by system theory, which supports the idea that public policy is the input and policy implementation is the output. The top-down theory of policy implementation can be used to understand what happen at the level of the Ministry of Basic Education where the policy of automatic class promotion was formulated and in schools where the policy is being implemented. The Ministry of Basic Education empower education officials in the external services to supervise the implementation of her policies including the policy of automatic class promotion.

The bottom-up theories of policy implementation argue against the top-down theory. Key academics of these theories include; Lipsky (1980; 2010), Elmore (1979) and Hjern (1982). Proponents of bottom-up theories of policy implementation point out that policy formulation should begin at the bottom, wherein the actual implementation takes place. These theories stipulate that public and private players involved in the implementation process should examine the goals, strategies, and programmes they have created. The bottom-up theories of policy implementation suggest that local implementers are those that bring the policy to successful implementation, and implementation depends on the bargaining amongst local implementers. The implementation works its way upward to find the goals, strategies, in executing the programmes (Howlett & Ramesh, 1998). The bottom-up theories of policy implementation enable us to understand and explain what happens with the implementation of the policy of automatic class promotion at the level of the schools.

As a consequence of the normative schism of the top-bottom and bottom-up theories of policy implementation, hybrid theories of policy implementation was put forward. Hybrid theories try to overcome the divide between the top-bottom and bottom-up theories of policy implementation by incorporating elements of top-down, bottom-up and other theoretical models (Pülzl & Treib, 2007). Proponents of synthesis theories of policy implementation are O'Toole Jr (1988), Palumbo & Callista (1996) and Sabatier & Jenkins-Smith (1993). The policy of automatic promotion formulated at the level of the Ministry of Basic Education passes through intermediaries to reach the schools where it is being implemented. These policy implementation intermediaries (inspectors and delegates) form a link between the Ministry and frontline implementers in the schools. Hybrid implementation theories can enable us understand this linkage.

Conceptual framework

Some concepts are involved in this study and needs to be operationally defined and explained. They are policy, implementation, effective policy implementation and automatic class promotion.

UNESCO (2013) defines policy as a broad statement that sets out the government's main goals and priorities in line with the constitution. According to Ezeani (2006) policy is the proposed course of actions which government intends to implement in respect of a given problem or situation confronting it. This study adopts the definition of policy by Ezeani because the policy of automatic class promotion was formulated by government of Cameroon to confront the problem high repetition rates in primary schools. According to Paudel (2009), implementation literally means carrying out, accomplishing, fulfilling, producing or completing a given task. Policy implementation involves translating the goals and objectives of a policy into action (Khan & Khandaker, 2016). In the same vein, policy implementation is the process of translating a policy into actions and presumptions into results through various projects and programmes (Okoli & Onah, 2002; Ikelegbe, 2006; Ikechukwu & Chukwuemeka, 2013). Also, Ajaegbu & Eze (2010) state that policy implementation actually refers to the process and activities involved in the application, effectuation and administration of a policy. According to Ikechukwu & Chukwuemeka (2013) effective policy implementation entails implementing a policy in such a way as to attain the goals and objectives of the policy. In this study, effective policy implementation entails complying with the policy prescriptions in order to attain policy objectives. In this light, effective implementation of the policy of automatic class promotion in Cameroon primary schools is operationalized as complying with the following prescriptions: use active teaching methods (pedagogic); assessment within levels should be diagnostic, formative or criterion reference (pedagogic); promotion of pupils within levels is automatic but a pupil

can exceptionally be authorised to repeat upon request from the parent (administrative) as spelled out by the 2006 MINEDUB text on the promotion of pupils in primary schools.

That is, effective implementation of the policy of automatic class promotion entails complying with both the pedagogic and administrative prescriptions of the text on automatic class promotion of pupils.

Promotion refers to passing or progressing from one level or class to another and is largely based on formative and summative evaluation.¹⁾ Automatic promotion refers to the practice in primary and secondary schools of advancing pupils from one grade to the next at the end of school year regardless of the educational attainment of the pupils (Chohan, 2011). In the same vein, Dereje (2003) defines automatic promotion as a practice in the first cycle of primary schools which involves advancing pupils from one grade to the next higher grade at the end of the school year regardless of the educational attainment of the pupils. According to Chohan (2011) automatic promotion is synonymous to social promotion and chronological promotion. Social promotion is a practice whereby students pass automatically to the next grade with their peers and – if required – receives remedial academic assistance (Brophy, 2006). In this study, automatic class promotion is the practice wherein within each level of the primary school (level one consisting classes 1 and 2; level two consisting of classes 3 and 4 and level three consisting of classes 5 and 6) all pupils are promoted at the end of the school year to next class, except the parent request for the child to repeat.²⁾

Statement of the problem

By examining the prescriptions imbedded in any policy, it possible to determine its effective implementation by assessing the degree of compliance with the prescriptions of the policy and its impact. Non-Compliance to a policy

refers to a situation when the policy implementers do not act in ways that are consistent with policy prescriptions or prohibitions (Coombs, 1980). In response to high repetition rate (up to 40%), ministerial order № 315/B1/1464/MINEDUB of 21st February 2006 introduced the policy of automatic class promotion within levels (classes one, three and five) in Cameroon primary schools. The policy of automatic class promotion is being implemented in Cameroon primary schools for more than a decade. Current repetition rate of 11.7% in Cameroon primary schools is more than one digit relatively higher compared to those of other countries with one digit or near zero repetition rates and considering the fact that automatic class promotion is in practice. Also, it is observed that classes one, three and five where there is automatic class promotion, repetition rates are almost equal or greater than those of other classes where repetition is allowed. For example, repetition rates in Cameroon primary school for 2015 – 2016 school year for classes one, three and five respectively are 13.88%, 10.45% and 11.25% against 11.09, 11.15 and 12,26 for classes two, four and six respectively. The significant and relatively high repetition rates in Cameroon primary schools even in classes one, three and five (within levels) while automatic class promotion policy is being implemented in these schools put to question the effective implementation of this policy in Cameroon primary schools.

Objectives of the study

This study intends to find out: (1) the extent to which teachers and head teachers comply with the pedagogic prescriptions of the policy of automatic class promotion to effectively implement it; (2) the extent to which teachers and head teachers comply with the administrative prescription of the policy of automatic class promotion to effectively implement it.

Research questions

The following two questions were formulated to guide this study: (1) to what extent do teachers and head teachers comply with the pedagogic prescriptions of the policy of automatic class promotion in order to effectively implement it; (2) to what extent do teachers and head teachers comply with the administrative prescription of the policy of automatic class promotion in order to effectively implement it.

Literature review

In some school systems grade repetition is seen as a valid corrective action that should be taken in cases of academic failure whereas in other school systems grade repetition is not permitted and instead it is the policy of “social promotion” where by students pass automatically to next grade with their peers and if required received remedial academic assistance (Brophy, 2006). Reviewing the study of Paul, Mainardes (2004) puts forward a cross sectional presentation of the prevalence and practice of promotion policies in the world as follows. Automatic class promotion policies and practices prevail in Ireland, United Kingdom, Britain, Denmark, Sweden, Finland, Iceland, Portugal, Greece and Norway wherein class repetition is not a common practice. In Denmark and Sweden, the parents are consulted about grade retention. Portugal and Greece use class repetition in exceptional cases. In Greece, class repetition is an exception to the principle of automatic progression and it happens only in cases of prolonged absence due to illness and in agreement with parents. There is limited retention in Belgium where the pupils can only repeat once during their primary education.

Automatic promotion policies are implemented in some Latin American countries such as Bolivia, Peru, Costa Rica, Chile, Venezuela and Brazil where class repetition has been eliminated in some classes, and particularly in the first

grades of Primary School. The “*promotion by age*” is a policy more common in English speaking countries in the Caribbean, such as Jamaica. In the African continent, the policy of automatic promotion is practiced in Ghana, Seychelles, Sudan, and Zimbabwe.

On the other hand, class repetition policies and practices are common in Germany, Netherlands, Luxemburg, Australia, Italy, France, Spain and Switzerland. In Spain, Italy and France the progression from level to level depends on the results of the student’s academic achievement during the school year. In France, pupil progress is measured by test scores and after consultation with parents. As regards class repetition, Brophy (2006) reported that grade repetition is more common in developing countries than developed countries and is especially common in remote rural areas.

Ministry of Education of Namibia (2009) stipulates that: (i) Learners will progress through grades 1-9 without repetition. Only in cases where the class teacher in consultation with the principal and head of department can a learner repeat a grade. A promotion committee of the school should discuss borderline cases. Parents and guardians must be kept fully informed why it is necessary for their child to repeat a grade as well as what will be done by the school to ensure that they achieve the necessary competencies and what can be done at home to support the learners; (ii) No learner shall repeat more than once in any of the primary and junior secondary phases. A learner, who does not comply with the minimum promotion requirements for the second time, must be transferred to the next grade; (iii) A learner in grades 1-4 shall be promoted if he or she has obtained a C grade or better in the language used as the medium of learning, including at least a C grade in the reading component; C grade or better in Mathematics; D grade or better in each of the remaining 5 subjects; (iv) A learner in grades 5, 6 and 7 should be promoted if he or she obtained a C grade

or better in English and Mathematics and D-grade or better in each of the remaining 4 subjects; (v) Learners who do not progress to next grade must receive counselling to help them understand their situation and must receive learning support focusing on the competencies they did not achieve.

Namibian Institute for Educational Development carried out a study on the evaluation of promotion requirements in all the 13 educational regions of Namibia (Sichombe et al., 2011). The findings of this study amongst others include: (i) Majority of stakeholders found the promotion requirements are ineffective. They believe that learners who were transferred were not compelled to work hard as they were aware of the fact that a learner can only repeat once in a phase after which he or she qualifies for transfer (automatic promotion) to the next grade up to the end of the phase (course); (ii) A fraction of the educational officials found nothing wrong with the promotion requirements especially on the transfer of learners to the next grade and repetition of grade. This group of stakeholders strongly believes that if all learners are supported as stipulated in the promotion requirements, transfer and repetition of learners would have reduced; (iii) The provision of learning support was hindered amongst others by overcrowded classroom, lack of knowledge of teachers to offer learning support, overloaded teachers and head teachers, limited time and space; (iv) Teachers did not receive enough support (especially advisory services) from the management of the school and the inspectorate while the principals claimed they did not have enough time to monitor and support teachers as required because of high teaching load.

In Brazil, promotion to the different classes and the repetition regulations in the primary education cycle are defined by the ministerial decree No. 270, 1989, and its amendment by the decree No. 10, (16-1-1996). These decrees stipulate that: (i) A second session examinations will be held for the pupils of grade 1 who fail, in the first session, to get 50% of the total marks of all or some

of the subjects. Then, all the pupils are promoted to grade 2; (ii) A second session examinations will be held for the pupils *of grades 2, 3 and 4* who fail in the first session, or who do not attend the examinations of the first session; (iii) It is permitted for the pupils of grades 2, 3 and 4 who fail to pass the examinations of the second session to repeat the grade for one time, then they will be promoted to the higher grade; (iv) Pupils of the fifth grade of primary cycle who fail to pass the examinations of the first and second sessions are allowed to repeat the grade once. Those who fail for the second time will be enrolled at the first grade of the vocational preparatory education.

The government of Pakistan introduced automatic promotion since 1959 when the following policy statement was enacted. “Unless such a measure (automatic promotion) is adapted progressively in our schools (with the exception for very retarded child), we risk clogging the first two classes with backward and overage children and having few or no place free for new comers. We strongly recommend that this matter should be seriously studied by departments. Applied with intelligence, it will be found that such a promotion policy will go far to reduce the number of withdrawals from schools and make the introduction of compulsory attendance a reality. A headmaster should reserve the power, however to hold back say four children out of a class of forty. Any greater number should be held back only with agreement of the inspector” (Chochan, 2011). It is important to note that this policy statement emphasises the application of automatic promotion policy with intelligence to reduce school dropout.

Some studies have been conducted on the implementation and practices of automatic class promotion. Amin (1999) study reported that repetition rate in Cameroon primary schools is high (40%) while Fonkeng³ reported that the use of compensatory and competence based teaching in addition to automatic promotion and New Pedagogic Approach tend to have impact on repetition by in-

creasing class promotion rates, pass rates in FSLC and Common Entrance examinations in primary schools as well as reducing the differences in performance between urban and rural schools.

Dereje (2003) conducted a descriptive survey on automatic promotion practices in the first cycle of primary schools in West Gojjam Zone in Amhara Regional State of Ethiopia. The study was carried out in 21 schools in 4 Woredas of Gojjam Zone. The participants consisted of 154 teachers of grade 1 to 3; 21 principals and 8 Woreda Education experts and supervisors. Data was collected through questionnaire, interview and observation checklists. Questionnaires were addressed to teachers and principals. Interview was conducted with 8 education experts and supervisors while observation was carried out in 10 schools of Gojjam zone. Dereje study reported that schools lack the main essence of automatic promotion and its implications and as such automatic promotion is ill practised in the first cycle primary schools of West Gojjam Zone.

In Ethiopia, a study was conducted⁴⁾ on the views of teachers and parents on the practices of automatic grade promotion policy introduced in 2002 in grades 1 to 3 in Ethiopian primary schools. This study employed survey research methodology wherein questionnaire and interview were used to collect data. It is reported⁴⁾ that teachers pointed out that students are promoted from one grade to the next (grade 1-3) based on the results of continuous assessment (60%) and final examination (40%). Also, the study⁴⁾ reports that all teachers provide extra support to students who scored below average in the form of tutorial classes and always an attempt is made by 76.19% of teachers to use instructional strategies and activities based on students' experiences. Most teachers indicated that they always advise parents about their children progress and consult on the provision of extra help for the students at home. However, interview responses indicate that teachers face challenges as regards the provision of extra support to low achieving students, namely organizing activities to the needs of diverse students,

lack of time to deal with curriculum content, identification of students' needs and high teaching load.

Ochieng (2012) conducted a descriptive survey in which questionnaires and document analysis guides were used to collect data. Simple random sampling technique was used to obtain a sample size 420 comprising 20 head teachers and 400 pupils (200 class seven pupils and 200 class eight pupils). This study reported that the implementation of no forced class repetition policy as directed by the Ministry of Education of Kenya in the year 2009, through circular No. QAS/N/22/(39) has not been complied with in all schools that took part in the study.

Methodology

Area of the study

This study is delimited to the North West and South West Regions of the Republic of Cameroon which is a bilingual country with ten regions (2 English-speaking and 8 French-speaking) and located between latitudes 2° and 13° north and longitudes 3° and 16° east. The North West and South West Regions constitute the English-speaking Regions and are located between latitude 4° and 7° north of the equator and longitude 8°30' to 11°30' east of the Greenwich Meridian (Collins-Longman, 1985). Administratively, the North West Region is made up of seven Divisions and 34 Subdivisions while the South West Region comprises of six Divisions and 31 Subdivisions.

Research design

This study used complementary of quantitative and qualitative research design paradigms. It adopts descriptive cross sectional survey design. A questionnaire survey was conducted with head teachers and teachers as respondents.

Also, interviews were conducted with educational stakeholders comprising parents, Inspectors and Delegates of Basic Education.

Population of the study

The target population of this study consists of 66264 teachers (32984 males and 33280 females) teaching 3412087 pupils distributed in 12603 public primary schools in Cameroon. The accessible population of this study consists of administrative and teaching staff of public primary schools of the North West and South West Regions of Cameroon comprising 10255 teachers (3922 males and 6333 females) distributed in 2139 public primary schools.

Sample and sampling techniques

By Krejcie & Morgan (1970) table, a population of 2349 schools requires a sample of 331 schools whereas a population of 10255 teachers requires a sample of 370 teachers. Guided by this table a sample of 450 individuals comprising classroom teachers and head teachers was targeted as the sample size of this study. The population of this study is distributed in clusters namely, region, divisions, subdivisions and schools. The sampling technique used was multi-stage sampling technique. Stage one consisted of selecting the subdivisions to be involved in the study. For each Division of the two Regions, depending on the number of Subdivisions per Division, a given number of pieces of papers of the same shape, size and colour were obtained. On each of this piece of paper, the name of a Subdivision was written and then folded. This process was repeated until the names of the all the Sub-Divisions of a given Division were written and folded. All the folded pieces of paper were put in a container, shuffled and one randomly selected. At the end of this stage thirteen (13) Subdivisions were selected.

Stage two consisted of selecting schools within each sampled Subdivision. The sampling frame for the distribution of public primary schools in the

thirteen selected Subdivision of the North West and South West Regions was constructed. To select the schools per Subdivision, proportionate random sampling technique was used since the Subdivisions that make up the population differ in terms of number of public primary school teachers. Stage three consisted of selecting the teachers to be involved in the study. After selecting the schools per each sampled Subdivisions, it was adopted that three teachers, each per level per school, was to be selected (quota sampling). This sampling gave a sample size of 450 teachers and head teachers comprising 235 for North West Region and 200 for South West Region) distributed in 150 schools).

Purposive sampling technique was used to select the subjects for interview. The basis for the selection of senior education officials was having expertise and in-depth knowledge on the policy of automatic promotion, pedagogy and educational practices. The administrative structure of the Ministry of Basic Education guided the selection of senior education officials. Parents who were interviewed were selected on the basis of having child who was automatically promoted or repeated classes (one, three and five) where automatic promotion is practised.

Research instruments

The principal instrument used for data collection is a questionnaire addressed to classroom teachers and head teachers. The questionnaire was used to collect both quantitative and qualitative data. The interview was used to collect qualitative data (Appendix).

Measures were taken to ensure the validity and reliability of the various research instruments developed. For the questionnaire, respondents' bias was avoided by disclosing the objective of the study while requesting for honest responses and assuring respondents that their responses will be kept anonymous

and confidential. The questionnaire items were constructed based on research questions and objectives. This thematic organisation of questionnaire items ensured content validity of coverage of concepts under study. After constructing the questionnaire, it was peer reviewed and then given to experts to review them for logical validity of structure, format, and content. These experienced persons made corrections on the structure, format and content of the questionnaire. The questionnaire was highly structured and most of the items were close ended to ensure objectivity of responses. Many questionnaire items per variable were constructed to increase reliability of the questionnaire. Appropriate sample of items per variable was also used to enhance their validity for the variable being measured. Furthermore, the questionnaire was pre-tested.

With reference to the reliability of the questionnaire, test-retest reliability method was used. The version of questionnaire produced after pilot testing was administered to five head teachers and five classroom teachers. After one month, these questionnaires were re-administered to the same head teachers and classroom teachers. The results of the first and second administrations were analysed using Pearson Moment Correlation (PPMC) to establish the reliability coefficient. A reliability coefficient of 0.87 was obtained showing the questionnaire is reliable. The strategies used for ensuring the validity and reliability of questionnaire items were employed for the interview guide.

Administration of research instruments

The copies of questionnaire were administered either personally by the researcher or research assistants who are persons knowledgeable in research procedures. Where the researcher used people to assist in the administration of questionnaire, the researcher trained them on the protocol of the study. After obtaining the sample of schools to be involved in the study, a list of these schools

was constituted. The researcher or his assistant then contacted the head teachers. During this first contact, the purpose, procedures and significance of the study as well as the authorization to carry out the study were presented to the head teacher. In each sampled school, the researcher or research assistant administered a copy of the questionnaire randomly to one teacher of each cycle or level. The administration of questionnaire was carried out during break time or after closing time to avoid disturbing school activities. The researcher or his assistants then took appointment with the teachers when to come back for the filled questionnaire copies. The researcher endeavoured to return to the school as per the appointment date to collect completed copies of questionnaire. The administration of instruments took place from November 2016 to April 2017. The return rate was 93.56 % and 415 completely filled questionnaire copies were obtained from 150 head teachers and 265 classroom teachers.

Administration of interview guides

Senior education officials of the External Services and in the Central Service of the Ministry of Basic Education were contacted. The purpose, procedures and the significant of the study as well as the authorization to conduct the study were presented to them. The researcher took appointment with those willing to participate in the interview. During the interviews brief notes were taken or were recorded depending on the opinion of the interviewee. Later on the same day, the brief notes were rewritten in details and the tapes transcribed. 25 interviewees comprising senior education officials from Central and External Services of MINEDUB and parents participated in the study. The senior education officials encompassed three senior officials working in the Central Service, three Divisional Delegates, five Regional Pedagogic Inspectors and seven subdivisional inspectors of Basic Education and seven parents.

Method of data analysis

Using content analysis technique, information from interview transcripts was assembled, coded and sorted into categories or themes. Qualitative data from opened ended questionnaire item was analysed by content analysis wherein responses were grouped into subcategories from which themes or categories were formed. Response categories were tallied and frequency distribution constructed.

Statistical Package for the Social Sciences (SPSS) version 20 for windows software was used to analyse the quantitative data collected. The responses for each closed ended questionnaire item were coded and entered into a data form and analysed using descriptive statistics (mean, standard deviation and variance).

Ethical issues relating to consent of participants, anonymity and confidentiality, avoiding harm on the participants and violation of privacy were addressed. The purpose, nature and procedures of the study were explained to all participants. Before the administration of any instrument, the participants were informed that they were free to refuse to participate or discuss any issue as well as free to withdraw at any point in time. During the administration of questionnaire and interviews, respondents were assured that there will be anonymity and confidentiality of their responses. At the beginning of each interview, the consent of each interviewee was sort to either accept or refuse the interview. Also, the interviewee had the option to choose between taking down notes and recording the interview.

Findings

Teachers and head teachers were asked if they or their schools have a copy of 2006 MINEDUB text on automatic promotion of pupils in Cameroon primary schools. Majority of respondents (56.6%) do not have a copy of the text

whereas less than 40% of respondents have this text. Slightly more head teachers than teachers agree that they have a copy of the text. Majority of respondents who indicated that they do not have a copy of the 2006 MINEDUB text on automatic promotion are teachers. Also, more than half of the head teachers do not have this text. Just slightly more than half of the respondents (51.6%) affirm that their schools have a copy of the text. A significant number of respondents (170) reported that a copy of the text on automatic class promotion of pupils is not found in their schools whereas 31 respondents could not indicate whether their school is having this text or not.

Data relating to compliance with the administrative prescriptions of the policy of automatic class promotion are presented in Table 1 wherein none of the items records a mean greater than 3.5 which is the cut-off point. This implies that teachers and head-teachers do not comply with the administrative prescriptions of the policy of automatic class promotion. Descriptive statistics relating to complying with pedagogic prescription of the policy of automatic class promotion is presented in Table 2. From Table 2, the overall weighted mean of items relating to pedagogic prescriptions is 3.97 greater than 3.50 (cut-off point). Therefore, teachers and head-teachers comply with the pedagogic prescriptions of the policy of automatic class promotion.

Table 1. Means, standard deviation and variance of items relating to the administrative prescription of the policy of automatic class promotion

SN	Items	N	Mean	Std. Deviation	Variance
1	In your school parents are consulted when deciding to promote their children who failed at the end of the school year but will be promoted.	410	3.37	1.36953	1.876
2	You have been recommending pupils of classes 1, 3 5 who failed at the end of the school year to be promoted.	413	3.15	1.35101	1.825

3	In your school pupils in class 1, 3 and 5 who failed at the end of the school year are promoted.	414	3.14	1.36822	1.872
Total			9.66	4.08876	5.573
Average			3.22	1.36292	1.8577

Table 2. Means, standard deviation and variance of items relating to the pedagogic prescriptions of the policy of automatic class promotion

SN	Items	N	Mean	Std. Deviation	Variance
1	You frequently use active teaching methods (CBA, NPA, etc) to teach	411	4.49	.66750	.446
2	Immediately after each sequence test, you provide feedback to the pupils.	411	4.37	.78716	.620
3	Your assessment results enable you to adapt your teaching to specific needs of the pupils.	405	4.33	.75068	.564
4	You select instructional strategies based on pupils different abilities	409	4.30	.82547	.681
5	You carry out re-teaching with pupils who failed sequence test.	399	3.70	1.07543	1.157
6	You provide remedial classes outside regular school hours (morning, evening, week-end, holiday classes) to pupils who failed but were promoted.	409	3.41	1.2277	1.507
7	You organise individualized teaching for pupils who failed but were automatically promoted or pupils with low learning achievement.	412	3.16	1.28502	1.651
Total			27.76	6.61896	6.626
Average			3.97	0.94556	0.94657

For each item, Minimum = 1 and Maximum =5

In terms of complying with both the administrative act of automatically promoting pupils in Cameroon primary schools and pedagogic practices to supplement and complement this act, the overall weighted mean for all items related to administrative and pedagogic prescriptions is 3.74 slightly above the cut-off point of 3.50. This implies that based on teachers and head teachers' responses and perceptions, they fairly comply with the policy of automatic promotion of pupils in Cameroon primary schools.

Table 3. Cross-tabulation table of implementation of policy of automatic promotion in primary schools by background indicators

Background indicators	Categories	Response Options			n-responses	χ^2 -test
		Disagree	Uncertain	Agree		
Region	South West	21.8%(437)	8.4%(167)	69.8%(1396)	2000	$\chi^2=0.02$ P=0.879
	North West	18.8%(405)	10.8%(233)	70.3%(1512)	2150	
Location	Urban	17.0%(78)	7.6%(35)	75.4%(347)	460	$\chi^2=0.34$ P=0.844
	Semi-urban	20.8%(179)	9.9%(85)	69.3%(596)	860	
	Rural	20.7%(585)	9.9%(280)	69.4%(1965)	2830	
Gender	Male	20.0%(407)	10.5%(215)	69.5%(141)	2040	$\chi^2=0.14$ P=0.705
	Female	20.6%(435)	8.8%(185)	70.6%(1490)	2110	
Function	Classroom Teacher	20.8%(495)	9.0%(215)	70.2%(1670)	2380	$\chi^2=0.01$ P=0.933
	Head Teacher	19.6%(347)	10.5%(185)	69.9%(1238)	1770	
Your highest professional qualification	Grade III	30.0%(9)	13.3%(4)	56.7%(17)	30	$\chi^2=1.34$ P=0.511
	Grade II	20.9%(23)	13.6%(15)	65.5%(72)	110	
	Grade I	20.1%(801)	9.4%(375)	70.5%(2804)	3980	
Highest academic qualification	FSLC	21.1%(19)	14.4%(13)	64.4%(58)	90	$\chi^2=0.73$ P=0.865
	GCE O Level or its Eq.	22.1%(311)	9.9%(140)	68.0%(959)	1410	
	GCE A Level or its Eq.	19.2%(471)	9.2%(225)	71.6%(1754)	2450	
	First Degree or its eq.	17.8%(32)	9.4%(17)	72.8%(131)	180	
Number of years as classroom teacher	(1 to 10) years	20.0%(477)	9.4%(224)	70.7%(1689)	2390	$\chi^2=0.04$ P=0.981
	(11 to 20) years	20.3%(211)	9.6%(100)	70.1%(729)	1040	
	21+ years	21.4%(154)	10.6%(76)	68.1%(490)	720	
Longevity as Head teacher	(1 to 10) years	19.9%(327)	10.4%(170)	69.7%(1143)	1640	$\chi^2=0.27$ P=0.874
	(11 to 20) years	17.6%(65)	10.5%(39)	71.9%(266)	370	
	21+ years	21.4%(15)	12.9%(9)	65.7%(46)	70	
You have a copy of the 2006 MINEDUB text on the promotion of pupils	Yes	17.1%(282)	8.7%(144)	74.2%(1224)	1650	$\chi^2=4.89$ P=0.796
	No	22.1%(520)	10.6%(249)	67.3%(1581)	2350	
School has a copy of the 2006 MINEDUB text on the promotion of pupils in Cameroon primary schools	Yes	17.1%(365)	9.0%(192)	74.0%(1583)	2140	$\chi^2=5.89$ P=0.499
	No	23.3%(396)	10.5%(179)	66.2%(1125)	1700	

Table 3 shows that the perceived level of implementation of the policy

of automatic promotion in primary schools under study is homogenous across region, location, gender, highest academic and professional qualifications, longevity of service and having a copy of the text. Where the level of implementation differs, this difference is not significant because all p-values are greater than 0.05. In the same light, Table 4 shows that the level of implementation of the policy of automatic promotion in primary schools under study is homogenous across Divisions and Subdivisions. The observed difference is not significant because the p-value (0.517) is greater than 0.05. Comparing the level of implementation of the policy of automatic class promotion by teachers with that of head teachers, it is observed that the level of implementation by head teachers ($M = 3.33$) is higher than the level of implementation by teachers ($M = 3.02$).

Comparing the level of implementation of the policy of automatic class promotion by the various school locations, it is observed that the level of implementation of the policy of automatic promotion is more in schools located in urban areas than those in rural areas as shown in Table 5. Data relating to the verification of the significant difference in the level of implementation of the policy of automatic class promotion by location of schools is presented in Table 6. The p-value (0.625) is greater than 0.05 implying that there is no significant difference amongst the degrees of compliance with the prescriptions for the effective implementation of the policy of automatic class promotion in urban, semi-urban and rural primary schools.

Table 4. Cross-tabulation table of implementation of policy of automatic promotion in primary schools by division and subdivision

Division	Subivision	Response Options			Total
		Disagree	Uncertain	Agree	
LEBIALEM	Alou	72	21	237	330
		21.8%	6.4%	71.8%	
FAKO	West Coast	49	12	159	220
		22.3%	5.5%	72.3%	

MANYU	Akwaya	93	40	237	370
		25.1%	10.8%	64.1%	
MEME	Kumba I	35	11	344	390
		9.0%	2.8%	88.2%	
NDIAN	Toko	68	36	156	260
		26.2%	13.8%	60.0%	
KUPE MUANENGUBA	Tombel	120	47	263	430
		27.9%	10.9%	61.2%	
MOMO	Mbengwi	76	41	273	390
		19.5%	10.5%	70.0%	
BUI	Kumbo	50	32	188	270
		18.5%	11.9%	69.6%	
DONGA & MANTUM	Ndu	31	32	177	240
		12.9%	13.3%	73.8%	
MEZAM	Bamenda II	58	25	147	230
		25.2%	10.9%	63.9%	
BOYO	Belo	25	22	203	250
		10.0%	8.8%	81.2%	
NGOKETUNJIA	Balikumbat	85	24	241	350
		24.3%	6.9%	68.9%	
MENCHUM	Wum	80	57	283	420
		19.0%	13.6%	67.4%	
Total		842	400	2908	4150

$\chi^2=8.17$; $df=12$; $P=0.517$

Table 5. Level of implementation of the policy of automatic class promotion by location

	N	Mean	Std. Deviation	Std. Error	Minimum	Maximum
Urban	46	3.3261	1.35079	.19916	1.00	5.00
Semi-Urban	86	3.1512	1.37642	.14842	1.00	5.00
Rural	281	3.1174	1.34579	.08028	1.00	5.00
Total	413	3.1477	1.35101	.06648	1.00	5.00

Table 6. Verification of the significance difference in the level of implementation of the policy of automatic class promotion by location

	Sum of Squares	Df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
Between Groups	1.722	2	.861	.471	.625

Within Groups	750.268	410	1.830		
Total	751.990	412			

P- value = 0.625; df= 412

As regards the effective implementation of the policy of automatic class promotion in Cameroon primary schools, during interview when interviewees were asked to score in percentage the level of effective implementation of the policy of automatic promotion in Cameroon primary schools, the lowest score was 30% and the highest 70% giving an average of 50%. Also, during interview all the parents declared that their consents have never been requested when deciding to promotion their children who failed at the end of school year.

Thematic analysis of opened ended questionnaire items shows that the respondents made over 247 negative comments about the policy of automatic class promotion. These negative comments in different shades cut across more than thirty (30) subthemes. This establishes that a large number of teachers and head teachers have negative attitude towards the policy of automatic class promotion. During interview some educational officials indicated that negative attitude of teachers towards the policy of automatic class promotion constitutes a hindrance to the effective implementation of the policy. Also, it was observed that a respondent strongly agrees that in her school pupils of classes 1, 3 and 5 who failed at the end of the school year are promoted but strongly disagree that she has been recommending pupils of classes 1, 3 and 5 who failed at the end of school year to be promoted and finally commented that automatic class promotion policy is not a good policy. Furthermore, majority of teachers who strongly agree that they have been recommending pupils in classes 1, 3, and 5 who failed to be promoted commented that it is not a good practice. This implies that alt-

though some head teachers and teachers are implementing the policy of automatic class promotion, they are doing against their will. They may be implementing for fear of sanctions or just merely implementing it.

The major findings of this study are as follows:

- Head teachers and teachers do not comply with the administrative prescription of the policy of automatic class promotion whereas they comply with the pedagogic prescriptions. Therefore, the implementation of the policy of automatic class promotion in Cameroon primary schools is fairly effective.
- Head teachers comply with the prescriptions for the effective implementation of the policy of automatic class promotion more than teachers.
- The policy of automatic class promotion is implemented more in schools located in urban areas than those in rural areas.
- Many head teachers and teachers have negative attitudes towards the policy of automatic class promotion.

Discussion

In this study the concept of effective implementation of the policy of automatic class promotion was conceptualized in terms of head teachers and teachers complying with both administrative and pedagogic prescriptions of the policy of automatic class promotion as per the 2006 MINEDUB text on the promotion of pupils in Cameroon primary schools. This study reveals that the implementation of the policy of automatic promotion in Cameroon primary schools is fairly effective. That is, head teachers and teachers barely comply with the prescriptions for the implementation of the policy of automatic class promotion. This finding is consistent with those of Ochieng (2012) and Dereje (2003) studies. Ochieng studies found out that the implementation of the no forced class repetition policy as directed by the Ministry of Education of Kenya

in the 2009 was not complied with in all the schools. Meanwhile, Dereje (2003) study reveals that automatic promotion is ill practiced in the first cycle of primary schools of West Gojjam Zone in Amahara Regional state of Ethiopia wherein with the introduction of automatic promotion there are still repeaters in grades 1 to 3. This study also shows that head teachers and teachers comply with the items relating to pedagogic practices to supplement and complement the implementation of automatic class promotion policy. This encompasses: frequent use active teaching methods to teach; use of assessment results to enable teachers adapt their teaching to specific needs of the pupils; selecting instructional strategies based on pupils' different abilities and carrying out re-teaching with pupils who failed sequence test. All these pedagogic practices have weighted means greater than 3.50. The finding that pedagogic prescriptions for the implementation of the policy of automatic class promotion are compiled with is inconsistent with those of Dereje (2003) wherein these pedagogic practices to supplement the practice of automatic class promotion are not properly implemented. Cameroon primary school head teachers and teachers effectively use these pedagogic strategies probably because for more than a decade, the Ministry of Basic Education has been carrying out seminars and training workshops on the use of new pedagogic approaches (NPA), competence-based teaching and new vision of evaluations. In this regard it is likely that they are aware of the importance of these approaches to effective teaching learning process.

Another support to the finding that the implementation of the policy of automatic class promotion is fairly effective in Cameroon primary schools is provided by Omuria (2010) study which amongst others reported that the policy of automatic promotion is grossly violated by teachers and parents. Respondents' comments on the open ended questionnaire items suggest that the Ministry of Basic Education should strictly enforce the implementation of the policy of

automatic class promotion in Cameroon primary schools through strict and intensified supervision at all levels. This in line with the view of Businge⁵⁾ that Uganda was massively losing billions of money through repetition of classes by pupils because of the Ministry of Education failures to strictly enforce automatic promotion policy.

There is policy-based non-compliance of the policy of automatic class promotion by head teachers and teachers as evidence by their comments on the policy of automatic class promotion. They have negative attitudes towards the policy of automatic class promotion and a lot of misgivings about the policy of automatic class promotion. These misgivings include the policy makes pupils to be lazy; kills the spirit of competition amongst learners; makes pupils to graduate without being able to read and write, etc. This finding is consistent with that of Dawit⁴⁾ study which found out that the practice of automatic promotion creates discontent amongst teachers. This misgiving is probably because of lack of knowledge of empirical evidence on the long term negative effects of class repetition they cherish much against automatic class promotion. As concerns policy-based non-compliance, Coombs (1980) undermines that one may refuse to comply with a policy because of misgivings about the policy itself. He identifies two basic kinds of misgivings about a policy. The first kind involves a situation wherein the target individual disapproves of the objectives of the policy. The second kind is belief-based non-compliance wherein beliefs about the probable effects of the policy prescriptions. Coombs remarked that even policies based upon sound assumptions may fail, if those expected to comply with them cannot be persuaded that the assumptions are correct (Coombs, 1980).

Furthermore, this study shows teachers and head teachers do not effectively carry out remedial classes outside regular school hours (morning, evening, week-end, holidays classes) to pupils who failed but were promoted notwithstanding the pilot project¹⁾ on the use of compensatory teaching to reduce

class repetition in Cameroon primary schools. This finding is consistent with that of Dereje (2003) study in which efforts to arrange programmes that can help low achieving pupils at school level are almost nil. Additionally, this study reveals that differences exist between head teachers and teachers with respect to the level of implementation of the policy of automatic promotion as well as with respect to school location. Head teachers implement the policy of automatic class promotion more than teachers probably because they are accountable for the implementation of government policy in their schools. Also, head teachers are more competent than teachers as evidenced by respondents' profile. All things being equal, head teachers are appointed from a pool of experience teachers. This is in line with Chandarasorn (1983) Integrative and Bureaucratic Process Models which respectively identifies capacity of implementers and implementer's policy acceptance level as factors that influence policy implementation. Also, Political Model of Chandarasorn (1983) identifies knowledge and ability as factors which influence policy implementation. As concerns the level of implementation of the policy of automatic promotion in rural and urban schools, it ties with General Model of Chandarasorn (1983) which stipulates that socio-economic conditions influence policy implementation.

Recommendations

This study has implications for educational practice. Based on the findings it is recommended that:

- The Ministry of Basic Education should ensure strict and regular hierarchical supervision of the implementation of the policy of automatic class promotion in Cameroon primary from national level to local level.

- Supervision of the implementation of the policy of automatic class promotion should be intensified in schools of rural areas.
- Best practices with respect to the effective implementation of the policy of automatic class promotion should be encouraged while non-compliance should be sanctioned.
- The Ministry of Basic Education should ensure that copies of the 2006 text on the promotion of pupils are available in all Cameroon primary schools.
- Teachers and head teachers should comply with both the administrative prescription of automatically promoting pupils of classes 1, 3 and 5 and the pedagogic prescriptions.
- As concerns pedagogic prescription for effective implementation of the policy of automatic class promotion, the government should elaborate official programmes for carrying out remedial or compensatory teaching outside regular school time.
- Head-teachers and teachers should be provided with empirical evidence that the implementation of the policy of automatic promotion with complementary strategies does not compromise the quality of education and that there is no long term benefit of class repetition on academic achievement.

Conclusion

The implementation of the policy of automatic promotion in Cameroon primary schools is fairly effective. If there is strict supervision to ensure teachers and head teachers comply with both the pedagogic and administrative prescriptions of the policy of automatic promotion, the policy will be effectively implemented. Effective implementation of this policy will have a positive impact on solving problems of internal inefficiency and educational wastage. Even the best policy if not effectively implemented its worth will be watered down.

**APPENDIX: QUESTIONNAIRE FOR TEACHERS AND HEAD
TEACHERS**

Teacher's Questionnaire

Questionnaire for Teachers and Head teachers

Instruction: Please indicate your answer either by putting a tick (✓) or by writing in the spaces provided.

SECTION ONE: BACKGROUND INFORMATION

1. Name of school: _____
2. Location of school: Urban Semi-urban Rural
3. Sub Division: _____
4. Division: _____
5. Region: _____
6. Sex: Male Female
7. (a) Class(es) currently teaching: _____ (b) Enrolment per class: _____
8. Total number of years of service: _____
9. Function: Classroom Teacher Head teacher
10. Total number of years as a classroom teacher: _____
11. Total number of years as a classroom Head teacher: _____
12. Your highest academic qualification:
FSLC GCE 'O' Level or its Equivalent GCE 'A' Level or its Equivalent
First Degree or its Equivalent Master Degree Doctorate
13. Your highest professional qualification: Grade III Grade II Grade I Others ; Specify _____

SECTION TWO: THE IMPLEMENTATION OF POLICY OF AUTOMATIC CLASS PROMOTION POLICY

Please indicate your answer either by putting a tick (✓) or by writing short answers in the spaces provided.

(a) You have a copy of the 2006 MINEDUB text on the promotion of pupils in Cameroon primary school? Yes No

(b) Your school has a copy of the 2006 MINEDUB text on the promotion of pupils in Cameroon primary school? Yes No

Statements related to the implementation of policy of automatic promotion in Cameroon primary schools are given below. Please read each statement carefully and indicate with a tick (✓) whether you strongly Agree (SA), Agree (A), Uncertain (U), Disagree (D), Strongly Disagree (SD) with the statement.

SN	Statement	SA	A	U	D	SD
1.	In your school pupils in class 1, 3 and 5 who failed at the end of the school year are promoted.					
2.	You have been recommending pupils of classes 1, 3, 5 who failed at the end of the school year to be promoted.					
3.	You provide remedial classes outside regular school hours (morning, afternoon, evening, weekend, holiday classes) to pupils who failed but were promoted.					
4.	You organize individualized teaching for pupils who failed but were promoted or pupils with low learning achievement					
5.	You frequently use active teaching methods (CBA, NPA, etc).					
6.	You select instructional strategies based on pupils' different abilities					
7.	Immediately after each sequence test, you provide feedback to the pupils.					
8.	You carry out re-teaching with pupils who fail sequence test.					
9.	Your assessment results enable you to adapt you teaching to the specific needs of the pupils					
10.	In your school parents are consulted when deciding to promote their children failed at					

	the end of the school year but will be promoted.					
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Please, comment on the policy of automatic class promotion in Cameroon primary schools and list 5 suggestions on how the implementation of automatic class promotion policy can be improved in view of enhancing educational efficiency.

APPENDIX: INTERVIEW GUIDE FOR EDUCATION OFFICIALS

- 1) Are teachers and head teachers implementing the policy of automatic class promotion in their schools? Grade the level of effectiveness on a hundred percent.
- 2) What are the challenges teachers and head teachers face in the implementation of the policy of automatic class promotion in their schools?
- 3) Do you organize training workshop for teachers and head teachers on the implementation of the policy of automatic promotion?
- 4) As an educator, what is your opinion about the practice of automatic class promotion policy in Cameroon primary schools as a strategy to enhance educational efficiency?
- 5) What special support do you give to schools for the implementation of the policy of automatic class promotion?

APPENDIX: PARENTS’ INTERVIEW GUIDE

- 1) Do you have a child who repeated or is repeating class one or three or five?

- 2) If yes, are you aware that your child was not supposed to repeat any of these classes according to a text on the promotion of pupils in primary schools?
- 3) If no, were you consulted before taking the decision to promote your child who failed to the next class?
- 4) Will you like to reverse the decision of the school to promote your child even though s/he failed?
- 5) Were you informed about what the school will do to your child who failed but was promoted.
- 6) As a parent, what is your opinion about the practice of asking a child who failed at the end of the school year to be promoted in Cameroon primary schools?

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NOTES

1. Analyse des mesures prises et résultats obtenus pour réduire les doubléments dans les 10 arrondissements du programme d'éducation, Yaoundé : UNICEF, 2001.
2. http://old.achpr.org/english/state_reports/Cameroon/Cameroon_2_report.pdf
3. <http://www.saga.cornell.edu/saga/educconf/fonkeng.pdf>
4. http://home.hiroshima-u.ac.jp/cice/wp-content/uploads/Seminar/HandOut/142_handout.pdf
5. https://www.newvision.co.ug/new_vision/news/1337786/automatic-promotion-quality

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