

# Effects of Collective Promotion on the Attainment of Goals of Basic Education in English-Speaking Primary Schools in Cameroon

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**Abstract:** This study aims at investigating the effects of collective promotion on the attainment of literacy, numeracy, and essential life skills by primary school pupils and also to find out if the policy of collective promotion meets its objective of minimization of wastage in basic education. The study used written tests for pupils in the final class (Level II, class 6) to collect data in some selected English-speaking primary schools in Meme Division of Cameroon. Descriptive statistics and a one way ANOVA were used for analyzing data. The results revealed that the policy of collective promotion negatively affects the attainment of literacy, numeracy, and essential life skills of pupils in Kumba, Meme Division. Teachers who assisted in the study through personal communication with the researcher argued that collective promotion in basic education does not achieve its objective of minimizing wastage of educational resources; neither does it positively improve the literacy, numeracy, and essential life skills of pupils. This study recommends that the policy of collective promotion can be revisited and that focus be placed not only on minimizing wastage of resources but also on investing on quality education system so as to equip the would-be leaders of tomorrow with skills, knowledge, and attitudes which will make them functional and responsible citizens in their society.

**keywords:** Collective promotion, Goals of basic education (Literacy skills, Numeracy skills, Essential life skills), Minimizing wastage in education, Educational policy analysis

## I . Introduction

There has been a lot of discussion recently on falling standards of education at the basic level in Cameroon; and one cannot set out to attempt to contribute to finding solutions to this problem without thinking of the foundation of education. Children need to be given a good educational foundation at the basic level because it is a crucial stage of life in terms of a child's physical, intellectual, emotional and social development (Scrivastav, 2015). There has been a drop in educational standards at the basic level and collective promotion which is a controversial practice in our primary schools has been considered to be one of the causes. Even though collective promotion may have been looked upon as one of the causes of falling education standards at the basic level,

there are many other factors to be considered such as the impact of students' home and parental educational background and socio-economic status (SES) on achievement (Sirin, 2005); educational systems and focus of learning domains; gender; and learning environments (Gustafsson, Hansen, & Rosen, 2016). However, the main focus of this paper is on collective promotion policy and its effects on the following learning domains: literacy, numeracy, and essential life skills.

The idea of collective promotion was set up in 2005 by the Ministry of Basic Education in Cameroon by decree No: 315/B1/1464/MINEDUB of 21st February, 2006 to lay down the modalities of promotion of pupils of primary education level. It became effective from the 2006/2007 school year. The main objective of this educational policy was to minimize wastage of educational resources caused by high rates

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of repetition, yet it is not known if this policy has a positive or negative impact on the quality of education or on the attainment of skills and competencies for pupils graduating from primary schools.

In the practice of collective promotion, Mihiretie (2011) observed that “children are promoted to the next class in the hope that they will improve next year. They do not improve as expected and parents complain”. It is clear from the above observation by Mihiretie (2011) that learners cannot master the expected literacy skills as stated in the goals of universal basic education, goal 5 which states that all aspects of education be improved and ensured excellence for all, so that recognized and reasonable learning outcomes are achieved, especially in **literacy, numeracy and essential life skills**. Again, the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) adopted in September 2000 at the United Nations millennium declaration has two of the eight goals devoted to education: Goal 2 (to achieve universal primary education) and Goal 3 (to promote gender equality and empower women in education).

### 1. Purpose of the study

The purpose of this study was to investigate the effects of collective promotion on the attainment of literacy, numeracy and essential life skills of primary school pupils in Meme Division of the South West Region of Cameroon. In this light, this study looked at:

- 1) How collective promotion affects the attainment of literacy skills in primary schools in English-speaking primary schools in Meme Division;
- 2) How collective promotion affects the attainment of numeracy skills in English-speaking primary schools in Meme Division;
- 3) How collective promotion affects the attainment of essential life skills in English

speaking primary schools in Meme Division; and

- 4) Does collective promotion actually meet the goals of minimizing wastage in basic education?

### 2. A Brief Background of Collective Promotion

The background of collective promotion can be traced from the objectives of the Universal Basic Education. The Universal Basic Education (UBE) programme is an educational programme aimed at eradicating illiteracy, ignorance and poverty. It is in compliance with the Declaration of the World Conference on Education for All (WCEFA) which took place in Jomtien, Thailand in 1990. It clearly states in Article 1 that every person – child, youth and adult, shall be able to benefit from educational opportunities designed to meet their basic needs. This declaration was reaffirmed at the World Summit for Children in 1990, which stated that all children should have access to basic education by the year 2000. In a bid to achieve education goals, the Dakar World Education Forum was held as a follow-up meeting to the WCEFA where a new set of goals was set to be attained by 2015. Some of the goals included:

- 1) Expanding and improving comprehensive early childhood care and education, especially for the most vulnerable and disadvantaged children.
- 2) Ensuring that by 2015 all children, with special emphasis on girls, children in difficult circumstances and from ethnic minorities have access to and complete free and compulsory primary education of good quality.
- 3) Ensuring that the learning needs of all young people and adults are met through equitable access to appropriate learning and life skills programmes.
- 4) Achieving 50% improvement in levels of

adult literacy by 2015 especially for women, and equitable access to basic and continuing education for all adults, eliminating gender disparities in primary and secondary education by 2015, and achieving gender equality in education by 2015, with a focus on ensuring full and equal access for girls.

- 5) Improving all aspects of the quality of education and ensuring excellence for all, so that recognized and reasonable learning outcomes are achieved, especially in literacy, numeracy and essential life skills.

## II. Review of Concepts

### 1. The Concept of Collective Promotion in Cameroon

The “Universalisation of Primary Education” or “Education for All” is a major policy option in the educational system of Cameroon. The 1996 constitution provides that “Primary Education shall be Compulsory”. On the eve of 11th of February, 2000 the President of the Republic of Cameroon reiterated this policy and declared primary education “Obligatory” and “Free”. In spite of these good intentions there is hardly any instrument that compels parents to respect these declarations. The Cameroon system of education is currently in a phase of profound reform at the level of primary education. Among the reform objectives is the desire to ameliorate the efficiency of the system through an improvement of internal output; that is, increasing the rate of promotion to superior classes; reducing the rates of repeating classes, the reduction in the gap that exists between urban and rural schools in terms of performance and competencies development in the learning domains of literacy, numeracy, and essential life skills.

It was observed that the rate of repetition in Cameroon English-Speaking primary schools

was high (40 %) despite the efforts of the New Pedagogic Approach (NPA) applied since 2000 (UNICEF, 2001). The then Minister of Basic Education came up with the policy of collective promotion to curb the high rates of failure and repeating in primary schools. The main rationale of collective promotion was that an efficient education system should enable learners graduate within the time frame prescribed, if not there will be wastage in educational resources and increase in the rate of drop-out.

Therefore, the concept of collective promotion in Cameroon came into existence by ORDER No 315/B1/1464/MINEDUB of 21 February 2006 of the Ministry of Basic Education (MINEDUC, 2006) to lay down the modalities of promotion of pupils in Primary Education level, which became effective from the 2006/2007 school year. In the general provisions of the order, the educational system is organized in two sub systems, one Anglophone sub-system and one Francophone sub-system, in accordance with the national option of biculturalism. The primary education cycle of the Anglophone sub-system, as well as that of the Francophone sub-system, each have six-year duration and three levels.

Thus, the policy of collective promotion structured primary education cycle into three levels which are made-up of a total of six classes:

- Level I of the Anglophone subsystem includes classes 1 and 2
- Level II of the Anglophone subsystem includes classes 3 and 4
- Level III of the Anglophone subsystem includes classes 5 and 6.

It is worth noting that a Level is the knowledge set to be acquired in two years of schooling. Teaching and learning methods according to the policy should be active, adapted to the diversity of pupils and take into consideration the learning pace of every learner. Programmes taught aim at identifying competences pupils should master at each

level, while assessment should measure pupil's learning progression, checking acquisition and determining the level of mastery of competences. A pupil who passes his/her assessment at the end of one level is admitted to the next level while promotion is collective from one class to the other within a level.

According to the policy of collective promotion, a learner can repeat a level, but not a class. Learners are being "pushed" from class one to two, from class three to four, and from class five to six. As a result of this practice the promotion criteria is dropped to avoid overcrowded classrooms. The problem with the practice of collective promotion is that there is a possibility that there are some learners who have not mastered the basic skills of a particular class before being automatically promoted to the next class within a level.

The main objective of collective promotion is to minimize wastage of educational resources caused by repetition. Some studies (Amin, 1999; UNICEF, 2001) revealed high repetition and failure rates (more than 40%) at the level of primary schools in Cameroon. These high failure rates indicate inefficiency in terms of cost and wastage. For the reason of cost and wastage, therefore, collective promotion is not based on performance or skills acquisition but rather it is a policy upon which children change from an inferior class to a superior class (as seen in the above structure of primary education cycle in Cameroon) irrespective of the child's performance in the various learning domains and skills development.

## **2. Collective promotion and the attainment of the goals of primary education**

### **1) Literacy Skills**

Literature on literacy skills acquisition has demonstrated strong effects of SES, particularly parental education, on a child's reading skills and academic achievements (Davis-Kean, 2005;

Myrberg & Rosen, 2009, etc). Therefore, the development of literacy skills does not begin in school but in the home environment. The U.S. National Early Literacy Panel (2008) identified six variables as being important precursors and predictors of reading and literacy skills, which includes: alphabet knowledge; phonological awareness; ability to write letters in isolation or write one's name; phonological memory; and rapid automatized naming of letters, digits, objects, and colors.

### **2) Numeracy Skills**

Early numeracy skills (also referred to as quantitative literacy, mathematical literacy, or science and mathematics education) are more difficult to define than reading or literacy skills. According to Gustafsson, Hansen, & Rosen (2016), there is consensus that number skills form an important aspect of numeracy although a broader perspective of the nature of numeracy or other examples of competencies associated with numeracy such as classification of objects and shapes, estimating, measuring, reproducing number patterns, reasoning, and problem solving which are numeracy skills for science and mathematical education for basic education in Cameroon.

### **3) Essential Life Skills**

Education is considered as the construction of knowledge as well as competency and development. Education is to provide opportunities for students to think while they are solving problems, analyzing and synthesizing their knowledge at every level (Sootipan, 2010). Essential life skills are the competencies that learners need to transform their society and shape the future for better lives. These competencies according to the OECD Learning Compass 2030 are known as "transformative competencies" and are identified as creating new value, reconciling tensions and dilemmas, and taking

responsibility (OECD, 2018).

Essential life skills development is a major concern in learner's learning process today. Teachers in basic education are expected to incorporate in the curriculum pedagogical approaches and instruction activities that give pupils the opportunity to apply their learning to real-life situations and challenges, to help them develop new thinking, insights, and problem solving ideas. Thus, in developing these essential life competencies, learners should be able to create new value, ask questions, collaborate with others in team work and "think out of the box" (Bentley, 2017; OECD, 2018).

Essential life skills are expected to be integrated through learner's learning process and encompass the transmission of knowledge, skills, attitudes, values system on themselves and others, self defence and self management. Like the OECD transformative competencies for 2030, essential life skills are competencies that are expected to be used throughout a lifetime, they are transferable, and can be used across a wide range of different contexts and situations in life (Grayling, 2017). Therefore, essential life skills become a necessity for learners to process in order to adjust themselves efficiently while dealing with emotional control, interacting with others and to become productive and real-life problem solvers in their communities.

#### 4) Minimizing Wastage

Minimizing wastage in educational resources is one of the main objectives of collective promotion policy. According to Mihiretie (2011), automatic promotion lowers academic standards and expectations, compromises educational quality and creates an additional problem to teachers in handling students who do not have the requisite knowledge and skills. In addition, Dereje (2005) states that "some students continue to repeat in the same class albeit the automatic promotion policy". This creates a

series of problems for the teacher to identify the learning needs of students who repeated from those coming in new into the class.

A refreshingly different view is presented by Fonkeng (2011), who carried out research on the topic "Strategies to Reduce Repetition in Cameroon Schools". He stated that repeating a class increases private and public costs of education shouldered by individual parents and the state. It also leads to large classes with attendant problems of assessment and supervision of students; more facilities are needed by the construction and equipping of new classrooms, training and recruiting more teachers as well as providing additional didactic materials. Repeating a class also delays the socio-economic integration of youth in the productive system of a nation and consequently, slows down economic and social development". Similarly, Schiefelbein and Wolff (1992) estimate that ten million repeaters each year in ten South American countries cost these countries about one billion dollars annually. Gomes-Neto and Hanushek (1994) estimate that the average cost of grade retention as a strategy for raising test scores by one point was about one-fourth to one-third of the average student cost in Brazil's rural northeast region. From this perspective, grade retention is very costly for countries with grade retention rates at or above 20 percent (e.g. Brazil, Nepal, and Cameroon). Hence, according to the above researchers, automatic or collective promotion minimizes wastage of resources.

Similarly, Jeje (2015) did a research on the topic "Examining the Effect of Automatic Promotion on Students' Learning Achievements in Uganda's Primary Education". This study employed a difference-in-difference analysis technique to estimate the average treatment effect of automatic promotion on students' cognitive learning outcomes in Uganda's primary education. The study employed two non-experimental (pooled cross-sections) data sets. The first is the National Assessment of Progress in Education (NAPE) for the years

2004 and 2010. NAPE is managed and administered for and on behalf of the MoES by a semi-autonomous institution called Uganda National Examination Board (UNEB). The assessment was first conducted in 1999 and has continued to be conducted every year at randomly selected schools and pupils in primary education. It consisted of learning achievements in literacy (English) and numeracy (Mathematics) and covariates related to schools, teachers and students. The assessment was conducted in primary three (P3) and primary six (P6) to ascertain the level of students' learning outcomes at lower primary and upper primary respectively, and to monitor changes in the achievement levels over time, thus allowing for any necessary remedial measures to be implemented. The two grades (P3 & P6) were considered during this policy evaluation in order to estimate its impact on learning. Furthermore, it is evident in the excerpt by the Bueng Primary School which states that "one of the specific goals of primary educational science area is to extend opportunities for pupils to develop their potential by providing activities to develop their life skills and overcome their immunity against social problems" (BuengKan Primary Education Service Area, 2013). Thus, this study seeks to find out how the policy of collective promotion impacts the achievement of Basic Education goals in some selected English primary schools in Meme Division of Cameroon, thereby, minimizing wastage and cost in the public and private finance of education.

### III. Methods

#### 1. Study context and selection of schools

The South West Region is very large and has many primary practicing schools. It has educational establishments ranging from pre-nursery to universities and with higher education and professional schools. The availability of many schools and population makes it appropriate for the study because valid information will be obtained from pupils and teachers. This study was carried out in selected primary schools in Meme Division of the South West Region, specifically in Kumba. The study was conducted in four primary schools: Government Primary School (G.P.S) Group 1 Kumba-Mbeng, Government Primary School (G.P.S) Group 3 Kumba-Mbeng, Omega Nursery and Primary School (O.N.P.S) Kumba, and Diligent Bilingual Primary School (D.B.P.S) Kumba. The sample size comprised of 173 pupils from the above mentioned four schools and 10 teachers, who assisted in administering the tests to the pupils in their classrooms, as illustrated on Table 1.

#### 2. Data collection

The sample was appropriate for the study because the 173 pupils were in the final year of their primary education (Level III, class 6), who have gone through the complete policy of collective promotion and will soon graduate. Therefore the researcher needed to test their competencies in literacy, numeracy and

**Table 1.** Accessible Population

	School	Staff	Pupils population
Kumba:	Public School (G.P.S) Group 1	03	50
Kumba:	Public School (G.P.S) Group 3	03	59
Kumba:	Lay Private School (O.N.P.S)	02	39
Kumba:	Lay Private School (D.B.P.S)	02	25
	TOTAL	10	173

essential life skills attained in primary education. Thus, a purposive sampling technique was appropriate to ensure that the class selected would give meaningful and useful information in relation to the problem in question - the impact of collective promotion on the pupils' literacy, numeracy and essential life skills.

### 3. Instruments for data collection

Three tests which consisted of items relating to literacy, numeracy and essential life skills were used for the study. The pupils wrote a test on English language which consisted of grammar, vocabulary, and reading comprehension which was used to assess their level of literacy skills. They also wrote a test on Mathematics paper 1 and 2 to enable the researcher evaluate their numeracy skills. Lastly, the pupils wrote a general paper which consisted of History, Environmental Education, Moral Education, Citizenship, etc, to test their knowledge in essential life skills. The test items were past questions of Common Entrance and First School Leaving Certificate examinations which were tested with some pupils during their mock examinations. After assisting the researcher to administer the tests to the pupils, the teachers were asked to give their opinions (in a personal communication) about the literacy, numeracy and essential life skills of their pupils and also asked if collective promotion actually minimizes wastage in primary education. Reliability and validity of the tests were assured since they were past questions of previous Common Entrance and First School Leaving Certificate examinations.

### 4. Administration of Instruments

After obtaining authorization to conduct research in the selected schools, the researcher personally administered the tests to the pupils. She used the face-to-face method, otherwise known as on-the-spot method of

administration of the tests for pupils with the help of 10 teachers of the selected classes. The tests for the pupils were administered in their classrooms and at the end of it the scripts were collected by the researcher. The researcher used the 10 teachers who assisted in administering the tests to their pupils to mark and score the tests of the 173 pupils. This is because they have had experience in teaching final year pupils (level III, classes 5 and 6) and in marking the Common Entrance and First School Leaving Certificate Examinations. In doing all of these, the following were ensured: high response rate; accurate sampling; the availability of the researcher and teachers to read out instructions to the pupils to ensure that relevant data was collected.

### 5. Data Analysis

Descriptive and inferential statistics were obtained using the Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS version 22.0). The use of tables containing frequencies of the various weighted responses, percentages, measures of central tendencies (mean), dispersion (standard deviation) and *t*-statistics (ANOVA) for items concerning literacy, numeracy, and life skills were provided according to the objectives.

### 6. Demographic Characteristics of Participants

The sample of this study was made up of 173 pupils of Level III (class 6) from four different primary schools in Kumba 1 municipality (see Table 1). A total of 173 class six pupils of Level III wrote tests on English Language (literacy) Mathematics (numeracy) and General Paper which comprised of History and Environmental Sciences (life skills). As presented on Table 2 below, Government Primary School Group 3 had the highest number of pupils (59) with a percentage of 34.10%; Government Primary School Group 1 with a population of 50 (28.09%); Omega

Nursery and Primary School with a population of 39 (22%) and Diligent Bilingual Primary School with a population of 25 (14%). Concerning the ages, 5 pupils were 8 years old, 26 were 9 years old, 48 were 10 years old, 27 were 11 years old, 16 were 12 years old and 4 were 13 years old. With regards to gender, 100 pupils were females and 73 were males. Ten teachers, who assisted in administering the tests to pupils had personal communication with the researcher to give their opinion on the policy of collective promotion; 7 of the teachers were female and 3 male. The 10 teachers were all holders of the Teacher's Grade One Certificate (CAPIEMP).

#### IV. Findings

The results of the literacy, numeracy, and life skills tests are presented in Table 3 below. The table shows that 173 pupils in class six (Level III) took the test on literacy (English

language) with a mean score of 7.63, standard deviation of 4.779. The minimum score was 0 while the maximum score was 18. On numeracy (mathematics), 173 pupils in class 6 (Level III) wrote the test and the mean score was 3.99 and a standard deviation of 4.875. The minimum score was 0 while the maximum score was 20. On life skills (general knowledge paper), 173 pupils wrote the test and had a mean score of 3.40 and standard deviation of 4.751. From the table, we can see that the average mean score for literacy skills, numeracy skills, and essential life skills of the 4 schools combined is 2.31 and the standard deviation is 1.117. The general statistics of the results of the three tests administered shows that literacy has the highest mean value of 7.63 and the lowest was life skills with a mean of 3.40. These results indicate that the 173 pupils who take part in the study performed far better in the literacy test than in the numeracy and life skills tests.

To find out if collective promotion has an

**Table 2.** Demographic characteristics of the survey respondents

Variable	Frequency	Percent	
1. Schools	GPS 1	50	28.90 %
	GPS 3	59	34.10 %
	DILIGENT	25	14.45 %
	OMEGA	39	22.54 %
	<b>Total</b>	<b>173</b>	<b>100.00 %</b>
2. Pupil's Age	8 years	5	3.97 %
	9 years	26	20.63 %
	10 years	48	38.10 %
	11 years	27	21.43 %
	12 years	16	12.70 %
	13 years	4	3.17 %
3. Pupil's Gender	Male	73	42.20 %
	Female	100	57.80 %
	<b>Total</b>	<b>173</b>	<b>100.00 %</b>
4. Teacher's Gender	Male	3	30.00 %
	Female	7	70.00 %
	<b>Total</b>	<b>10</b>	<b>100.00 %</b>



**Table 3.** Means and standard deviations of the 3 variables in the study

	<i>N</i>	Mean	Std. Deviation	Minimum	Maximum
Literacy	173	7.63	4.779	0	18
Numeracy	173	3.99	4.875	0	20
Life Skills	173	3.40	4.751	0	16
School	173	2.31	1.117	1	4

impact on the attainment of literacy skills, numeracy skills, and essential life skills in primary schools in Meme Division of the South West Region of Cameroon an ANOVA was done to test if the variations in mean scores are significant between the various schools. The ANOVA results are presented on Table 4 below. The table explains the differences in literacy, numeracy and life skills within the four schools based on the various objectives.

As shown on the Table above the literacy rate is significantly different between the four schools under consideration as confirmed by the *P*-value of 0.000. Thus, the mean rank literacy levels of the four schools (67.69, 70.48, 107.48, and 123.87) are significantly different. Therefore, the type of school that a student attends greatly influences the literacy rate of the child. It means that the literacy level of a child in a government school is very different from those in private schools. This difference could be associated with the technique of

teaching or evaluation of the pupils. Hence, collective promotion influences the attainment of literacy skills in primary schools in Meme. Further, to determine the impact of collective promotion on the attainment of numeracy skills of the 173 final year pupils from the test scores between the four different schools, the mean rank numeracy levels (59.77, 68.64, 95.80, and 144.04) are significantly different, as shown by a *P*-value of 0.000; indicating that numeracy skills is different between the various schools, especially between the two government schools and the 2 private schools. Finally, to find out the effects of collective promotion on the attainment of life skills amongst the schools that participated in the study, the mean rank life skills levels between the four schools are (64.65, 82.10, 93.26, and 119.05) significantly different with a *P*-value of 0.000. As indicated by the *P*-value, there is a significant difference in the life skills of pupils between the schools.

The overall ANOVA analysis reveals that all

**Table 4.** ANOVA on Literacy, Numeracy, and Life Skills within the Schools

		Sum of Squares	<i>df</i>	Mean Square	<i>F</i>	Sig.
Literacy	Between Groups	913.381	3	304.460	17.068	0.000
	Within Groups	3014.562	169	17.838		
	<b>Total</b>	<b>3927.942</b>	<b>172</b>			
Numeracy	Between Groups	2236.138	3	745.379	68.015	0.000
	Within Groups	1852.076	169	10.959		
	<b>Total</b>	<b>4088.214</b>	<b>172</b>			
Life Skills	Between Groups	742.188	3	247.396	13.317	0.000
	Within Groups	3139.488	169	18.577		
	<b>Total</b>	<b>3881.676</b>	<b>172</b>			

the three measures, literacy, numeracy and life skills are significantly different in all the four schools. If the four schools were not significantly different, then it will mean that the four schools are homogenous and the attributes of literacy, numeracy and life skills are the same irrespective of the school. The significant differences in mean rank literacy, numeracy, and life skills levels between the four schools can also be attributed to the pedagogical approaches used by the teachers, teacher quality and effectiveness, focus on teaching-learning domains, home environment, and many other factors. The private schools perform better than the public schools because of the above mentioned reasons. It may also be that the private schools follow the complete automatic promotion package as was originally conceived from the beginning, during the pilot experiment. That is, they use the New Pedagogic Approach, the mastery learning approach, remedial teaching as well as automatic promotion.

To find out if collective promotion is meeting its objectives of minimizing wastage of educational resources in basic education, 10 teachers were chosen from the four schools for personal communication to give their opinion about collective promotion and if they think the policy is meeting its objectives of minimizing wastage. Although not initially intended as part of the methodology of the study, the researcher thought it necessary to get opinion of some teachers who helped in administering the tests to pupils in their schools whether automatic promotion actually achieves its objective of minimizing wastage and also if it affects the literacy, numeracy and essential life skills of pupils.

A total of 8 out of the 10 teachers were of the opinion that collective promotion does not minimize wastage in resources. According to them, it rather compounds it. They equally opined that automatic promotion negatively affects the literacy, numeracy and essential life skills of pupils. For example one of the teachers said:

“Collective promotion is the worst kind of promotion. I have 50 pupils in this class, only 15 of them can read. Some of them are worse than class one pupils. You will see from the test you have given them. If they were allowed to repeat in each class, it would have been better. I don't know what the Government is thinking.”

Some teachers who voiced out their opinion said that automatic promotion negatively affects the literacy skills of pupils. Another teacher stated that:

“It is a very bad strategy. When a child is promoted to the next class without them acquiring the necessary skills, it becomes a problem because they cannot meet up with the demands of the next class. The teacher of that class has to bring the pupil up to the standard of that class. This is very difficult.”

In addition, another teacher said that:

“automatic promotion does not minimize wastage at all; it rather postpones it for the future. Pupils repeat classes at later grades and here resources are wasted. How much is the Government even spending on education?”

Thus, many of the teachers (at least 8 out of 10 of them) were of the opinion that collective promotion does not minimize wastage of educational resources. Instead, it moves some pupils from lower to higher classes of primary education who have not attained the necessary literacy, numeracy and essential life skills. Not only does the policy of collective promotion fail to achieve its objective of minimizing wastage in basic education but has also negatively affected the attainment of literacy, numeracy and essential life skills amongst primary school pupils in Meme Division.

## V. Discussion, Conclusion, and Recommendations

The findings of this study indicate that a good number of pupils in Meme Division are lacking in literacy, numeracy, and essential life skills. The findings of this study (as shown by the mean rank scores) were in unison in indicating that collective promotion negatively affects the attainment of literacy, numeracy, and life skills of pupils, especially amongst pupils in public and private schools which indicated significant difference in the mean rank literacy, numeracy, and life skills levels between schools. The educational policy of collective promotion was conceived to be accompanied by the Mastery Learning Approach which required remedial and individualized instruction, alternative learning resources, and the Competence Based and the New Pedagogic Approaches in teaching-learning process. Unfortunately, these components are neglected, hence affecting quality and proper implementation of the policy in some English-speaking primary schools in Cameroon.

Most of the teachers who assisted with the study were of the opinion that automatic promotion does not achieve its objective of minimizing wastage as indicated in their personal communication with the researcher in the form of interviews. To elucidate or support the opinions of the teachers with the literature, Mihiretie (2011) states that automatic promotion lowers academic standards and expectations, compromises educational quality and creates an additional problem to teachers in handling students who do not have the requisite knowledge and skills. He came up with the following observations which are also supported by the findings of this study:

- Firstly, that teachers' classroom management demand becomes difficult when pupils are collectively promoted students.
- Secondly, collective promotion seems to

lower parents and students expectation in school.

- Thirdly, neither collective promotion nor grade reputation addresses satisfactory the problems of low achievers because both results in educational wastage if not accompanied by proper instructional support.
- Finally, developing countries have high repetition rates even in the presence of collective promotion.

From the above findings, it is evident that collective promotion does not really achieve its objectives of minimizing wastage, as developing countries, Cameroon inclusive, still have high repetition rates even in the presence of automatic promotion. This conclusion can be further confirmed by the fact that since collective promotion is practiced only at the level stages, it goes without saying that there is still wastage at the level stages. For example, a child who has been automatically promoted from class 1 to class 2 and who does not make it to class 3 will have to keep on repeating class 2 (Level I) until he/she makes it to class 3 (Level II). Also, Dereje (2005) stated that: "Some pupils continue to repeat in the same class and at the same level albeit the automatic promotion policy. And the number of students in a typical classroom is up to 60 and more which creates a series of problems for the teacher to identify the learning needs of pupils in an overcrowded classroom.

Collective promotion negatively affects literacy skills, numeracy skills, essential life skills of pupils and does not achieve its objective of minimizing wastage of educational resources. This study therefore recommends that the government of Cameroon should revisit and revise the policy of collective promotion applicable to primary education. If collective promotion is to be practiced in Cameroon, then it should be joined with compensatory teaching, new pedagogic approach and competency based approach as was done during the pilot stage of the policy.

Moreover, the priority of the State should not be on minimizing wastage of educational resources, but rather on investing in quality educational systems so as to equip the would-be leaders of tomorrow with transformative competencies, skills, knowledge, ideas, attitudes, and values which will make them functional and responsible citizens in their society. This can only be possible through quality education. Furthermore, parents and guardians should be encouraged to help their children back at home to ensure efficiency. Pupils who have parental support and assistance at home perform better than those who do not. If repetition has to be checked, the parents and the home learning environments have a great role to play as well, not just the teachers.

Conclusively, the basic education policy of collective promotion is aimed at minimizing wastage of educational resources but if not properly implemented it can lead to further wastage resulting in poor quality of human capital as indicated by the lack of literacy, numeracy, and essential life skills of some pupils who participated in this study. The government should not only be disturbed that pupils are repeating, but they should also ask if pupils are learning what they are suppose to be learning in schools.

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