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## **Determinants of Policy Efficiency of the Free Primary Education in Beni City, Democratic Republic of Congo**

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# Determinants of Policy Efficiency of the Free Primary Education in Beni City, Democratic Republic of Congo

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## Abstract

The study examined the determinants of policy efficiency of free primary education in Beni City. A mixed-methods research design was employed across 94 public schools. The study employed stratified random sampling to select 308 respondents from a target population of 1,491 individuals across 94 public schools in Beni City. Data was collected through questionnaires, interviews, and document analysis, with both descriptive and inferential statistics applied using SPSS software. The findings revealed that the combined influence of legal frameworks, financial resources, monitoring systems, and security structures explained 62.8% of the variation in policy efficiency, demonstrating the multidimensional nature of implementation challenges. Regression analysis indicated that financial resources exerted the strongest influence ( $\beta = 0.322$ ,  $p = 0.000$ ), followed by security structures ( $\beta = 0.307$ ,  $p = 0.000$ ), legal frameworks ( $\beta = 0.237$ ,  $p = 0.000$ ), and monitoring systems ( $\beta = 0.086$ ,  $p = 0.035$ ). Respondents identified significant inadequacies across all four determinants, with particular concerns regarding insufficient budget allocations, weak legal enforcement mechanisms, and ineffective monitoring frameworks. The study concludes that legal frameworks, financial resources, monitoring systems, and security structures are all positively and significantly related to policy efficiency of free primary education in Beni City, with these four variables collectively explaining the majority of factors influencing successful policy implementation in this conflict-affected region of the Democratic Republic of Congo. The study recommends comprehensive reforms including strengthening legal frameworks through detailed legislation, substantially increasing financial allocations with improved disbursement mechanisms, redesigning monitoring systems with clear oversight and accountability structures, and enhancing security measures tailored to educational contexts. By addressing these interconnected factors, policymakers can improve implementation efficiency and achieve equitable access to quality education for all children in Beni City and similar contexts within the DRC.

**Keywords:** *Legal frameworks, financials resources, monitoring systems, security, free primary education, Beni city, Democratic Republic of Congo*

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## 1.0 Background of the Study

The 19th century witnessed significant advancements in the field of basic education, with the establishment of municipal primary schools, the implementation of compulsory education, and a focus on expanding educational opportunities to all citizens (Hörner & Döbert, 2007). This commitment to free and compulsory basic education was enshrined in the 1919 Constitution and reinforced by international agreements such as the Universal Declaration of Human Rights and the International Covenant on Economic, Social, and Cultural Rights (United Nations, 1948; Council of Europe, 1966). Driven by these policies and advocated by international organizations, ministries of education in various countries have reported steady increases in net primary school enrollment rates, averaging 86% for developing countries and reaching over 90% in some nations (Council of Europe, 1966). However, despite these efforts, only a few regions, such as Eastern Europe, Central Asia, Latin America, the Caribbean, and East Asia and the Pacific, are expected to meet the global development goal of achieving universal primary education by 2015 (Council of Europe, 1966; Hörner & Döbert, 2007).

Research from multiple continents reveals that the effectiveness of free education policies depends on a complex interplay of governance, financial, and socio-cultural factors. Studies demonstrate that successful implementation requires robust governance structures and stakeholder engagement (Rizvi & Lingard, 2010), adequate financial resources and proper fund management (Tilak, 2007), strong monitoring and accountability systems (Ganimian, 2016), and community support alongside consideration of socioeconomic factors (Bonai, 2016). In Africa, countries like Kenya, Malawi, Uganda, Cameroon, and Tanzania achieved dramatic enrollment increases after abolishing school fees (Wambugu & Mokoena, 2013; Kilichu ntua, 2014; Abuya et al., 2015), with Malawi seeing 51% enrollment growth and Uganda experiencing 70% increases (Kilichu ntua, 2014). However, these programs faced significant sustainability challenges including declining government funds, rising poverty levels, poor financial management of teacher salaries, inadequate infrastructure, overcrowded classrooms, and high dropout rates (Wambugu & Mokoena, 2013; Cockburn & Kabubo-Mariara, 2010; Kilichu ntua, 2014), with Kenya specifically experiencing teacher shortages that required military intervention for training (Killingray & Plavt, 2012). These global experiences collectively highlight that while free education policies can rapidly expand access, their long-term success requires comprehensive approaches addressing funding mechanisms, resource allocation, teacher training, infrastructure development, and ongoing monitoring to ensure both equity and quality in educational delivery.

In the Democratic Republic of Congo, the policy of free primary education is likely to face significant challenges due to governance issues, political instability, and economic constraints, as World Bank (2024) data indicates that 97% of 10-year-olds in DRC currently struggle with basic reading comprehension. Similar challenges have been documented in other African nations, with Abuya et al. (2015) finding that Kenya's free primary education implementation was hampered by inadequate infrastructure, insufficient teacher training, and resource constraints, while Datzberger (2018) documented how Uganda's free primary education program faced issues of overcrowding, teacher absenteeism, and quality concerns despite increased enrollment. While the DRC's gradual

introduction of free education, starting with the first five years of primary school nationwide, aimed to address the issue of school fees posing a barrier to enrollment (De Herdt & Munongo, 2012), the implementation challenges related to governance, political stability, and economic resources are likely to affect the successful realization of equitable access to comprehensive, free, and quality primary education for all children in the DRC's conflict-affected regions as reported from other African contexts (Kenya: Abuya et al., 2015; Uganda: Datzberger, 2018).

Thus, policy efficiency of free primary education can be evaluated through access to education, quality of education, equity in education, and learning outcomes. Studies in Africa have shown varying levels of success in these dimensions, with countries like Malawi and Uganda recording significant increases in access through enrollment rates of 51% and 70% respectively after implementing free primary education policies (Kilichuntara, 2014). However, maintaining quality has remained a persistent challenge, with many countries struggling with declining government funds, poor financial management of teacher salaries, inadequate infrastructure, and overcrowded classrooms (Wambugu & Mokoena, 2013; Cockburn & Kabubo-Mariara, 2010). The equity dimension has been particularly challenging in the DRC context, where despite constitutional guarantees of free education, socioeconomic disparities continue to affect access and outcomes. Learning outcomes remain a critical concern, as evidenced by the fact that 97% of 10-year-olds in the DRC are considered poor learners, unable to read and comprehend simple texts (World Bank, 2024). These challenges are further amplified in conflict-affected regions like Beni city, where security concerns compound the difficulties in delivering effective free primary education (Al-Makura, 2021).

This study investigated the key determinants of free primary education in the Democratic Republic of Congo, with a specific focus on the town of Beni, which provides a cosmopolitan population sample, and an ideal study sample for the country, considering its geographical location and the representativeness of various ethnographic and mixed economic class clusters of the population in the region. The study examines the influence of legal frameworks (constitutional provisions, supporting legislation, regulations, and contracts), financial resources (budget allocations, funding sources, disbursement mechanisms, and resource management systems), monitoring systems (oversight frameworks, data collection tools, reporting and feedback loops, and evaluation processes), and security structures (crime prevention measures, conflict management approaches, safety protocols, and risk mitigation strategies) on the policy efficiency of free primary education. By concentrating on these key constructs, the study aims to provide insights into enhancing the successful implementation of the free primary education policy, taking into account the unique circumstances of Beni and the broader context of the Democratic Republic of Congo.

### **1.1 Statement of the Problem**

The policy efficiency of free primary education policy in the Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC) faces significant challenges, particularly in conflict-affected regions like Beni city. Despite constitutional guarantees and policy implementation since 2020, evidence suggests substantial gaps between policy intentions and outcomes. World Bank (2024) data indicates that 4 million children remain out of school in the DRC, where 36

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million people (46% of the total population) are under the age of 14. More critically, 97% of 10-year-olds are considered poor learners, unable to read and comprehend simple texts, highlighting severe deficiencies in educational quality and policy efficiency. In Beni city, the policy's implementation faces specific challenges that undermine its policy efficiency. School administrators report persistent issues including inadequate teaching staff, insufficient learning materials, and poor sanitation facilities (Vivuya, 2021). Teacher strikes over unpaid salaries have disrupted learning continuity, while parent organizations have resorted to implementing informal fees to compensate for systemic failures in teacher support. These circumstances have led some parents, despite financial hardship, to choose private schools over free public education - a direct contradiction of the policy's goal of ensuring accessible education for all.

The situation is further complicated by ongoing security challenges that have devastated educational infrastructure and hindered student enrollment (Vivuya, 2021). The study has been inspired by United Nations' Sustainable Development Goal 4, which aims to ensure inclusive and equitable quality education and promote lifelong learning opportunities for all (United Nations, 2015). To understand the compounded issues that are affecting the free education policy in the Democratic Republic of Congo, the issues that affect the policy efficiency of the free primary education policy in Beni City needs to be underscored, especially during this period of conflict in the country to make an attempt of safeguarding the progress in policy development in free primary education. This therefore justified the need for comprehensive research examining how legal frameworkss, financial resources, security structures, and security structures affect policy policy efficiency.

## 1.2 Research Objectives

- i. To examine the effect of legal frameworks on free primary education in Beni city, Democratic Republic of Congo
- ii. To assess the effect of financials resources on free primary education in Beni city, Democratic Republic of Congo.
- iii. To determine the effect of monitoring systems on free primary education Beni city, D R C
- iv. To investigate the effect of the security on free primary education Beni city, Democratic Republic of Congo

## 2.0 Literature Review

The literature review was conducted in sections including theoretical review, empirical review, and conceptual framework.

### 2.1 Theoretical Review

The theoretical review included systems theory, institutional theory, musgrave's theory of public expenditures, and contingency theory.

#### 2.1.1 Systems Theory

The theory was developed by David Easton in 1953, describing the political system as a structured framework through which public policy emerges in response to external demands (Easton, 1953). The theory states that a political system consists of interrelated

institutions and processes that function to allocate values authoritatively within a society (Anderson, 1997). It assumes that public policy operates as a continuous cycle of inputs (demands and support), processes (government decision-making), outputs (laws and regulations), and feedback mechanisms that shape future policy adjustments (Birkland, 2015). According to Easton, public support is crucial for the legitimacy of policies, as compliance with laws, tax obligations, and political participation reinforce state authority (Rabin, 2003). The theory is specifically chosen to explain the monitoring systems variable because effective monitoring represents the critical feedback mechanism in Easton's policy cycle. In free primary education implementation in Beni City, monitoring systems function as the essential bridge between policy outputs (educational services delivered) and feedback inputs (information about implementation effectiveness) that inform future policy adjustments. The theory's core emphasis on interconnectedness and feedback loops directly corresponds to how monitoring systems operate in educational policy implementation.

### **2.1.2 Institutional Theory**

The theory was developed by John Meyer and Brian Rowan in 1977, building on earlier foundational work by Philip Selznick (1949) and James March and Johan Olsen (1984). The theory states that institutions consist of formal rules, norms, and social structures that influence how organizations operate and make decisions (Meyer & Rowan, 1977). It assumes that organizations conform to institutional pressures for legitimacy, meaning that policies and procedures are often shaped by societal expectations rather than purely economic or efficiency-driven motives (Scott, 2008). The theory distinguishes between formal structures such as rules, laws, and policies, and informal structures including norms, cultural practices, and traditions that guide decision-making and organizational survival (DiMaggio & Powell, 1983). The theory is selected to explain the legal frameworks variable because it provides the most comprehensive framework for understanding how both formal and informal institutional arrangements shape educational policy implementation. In the DRC context, this theoretical perspective is particularly valuable because formal legal frameworks often interact with traditional governance structures and cultural practices in determining actual implementation outcomes.

### **2.1.3 Musgrave's Theory of Public Expenditures**

Richard Musgrave developed this theory in 1959, outlining the fundamental roles of public expenditures in an economy through three primary functions: allocation, distribution, and stabilization (Musgrave, 1959). The allocation function refers to the government's role in providing public goods and services that the private sector may underproduce, such as infrastructure, education, and healthcare (Musgrave, 1989). The distribution function addresses income and wealth inequalities through government intervention via taxation and welfare programs to promote social equity (Rosen & Gayer, 2014). The stabilization function highlights public expenditures' role in managing economic fluctuations, ensuring price stability, reducing unemployment, and fostering economic growth (Stiglitz, 2015). The theory assumes that market failures necessitate government intervention, as the private sector alone cannot efficiently provide essential services or correct income disparities (Oates, 1972). Musgrave's theory is selected to explain the financial resources variable because free primary education policy perfectly embodies all three functions of public expenditure that the theory describes. This comprehensive theoretical framework explains

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why financial resources are critical for policy efficiency and how different types of financial interventions serve distinct but complementary purposes. Government funding becomes necessary to achieve optimal educational outcomes that private markets cannot deliver.

#### **2.1.4 Contingency Theory**

Contingency theory was developed by Lawrence and Lorsch in 1967, building on earlier organizational research. The theory states that there is no universal best way to manage organizations, as their structures and practices should align with external and internal environmental factors (Lawrence & Lorsch, 1967). It assumes that organizational efficiency is influenced by contingency factors such as size, technology, strategy, and environmental conditions, requiring adaptive management approaches rather than standardized solutions (Donaldson, 2001). Unlike classical management theories that advocate for fixed organizational models, contingency theory emphasizes flexibility, asserting that organizational success depends on the ability to adapt to changing circumstances (Fiedler, 1964). The theory suggests that leadership styles should vary based on situational demands, as management approaches that prove effective in one context may be ineffective in different circumstances (Otley, 2016). The theory explains how security structures influence policy efficiency through multiple adaptive mechanisms.

#### **2.2 Empirical Review**

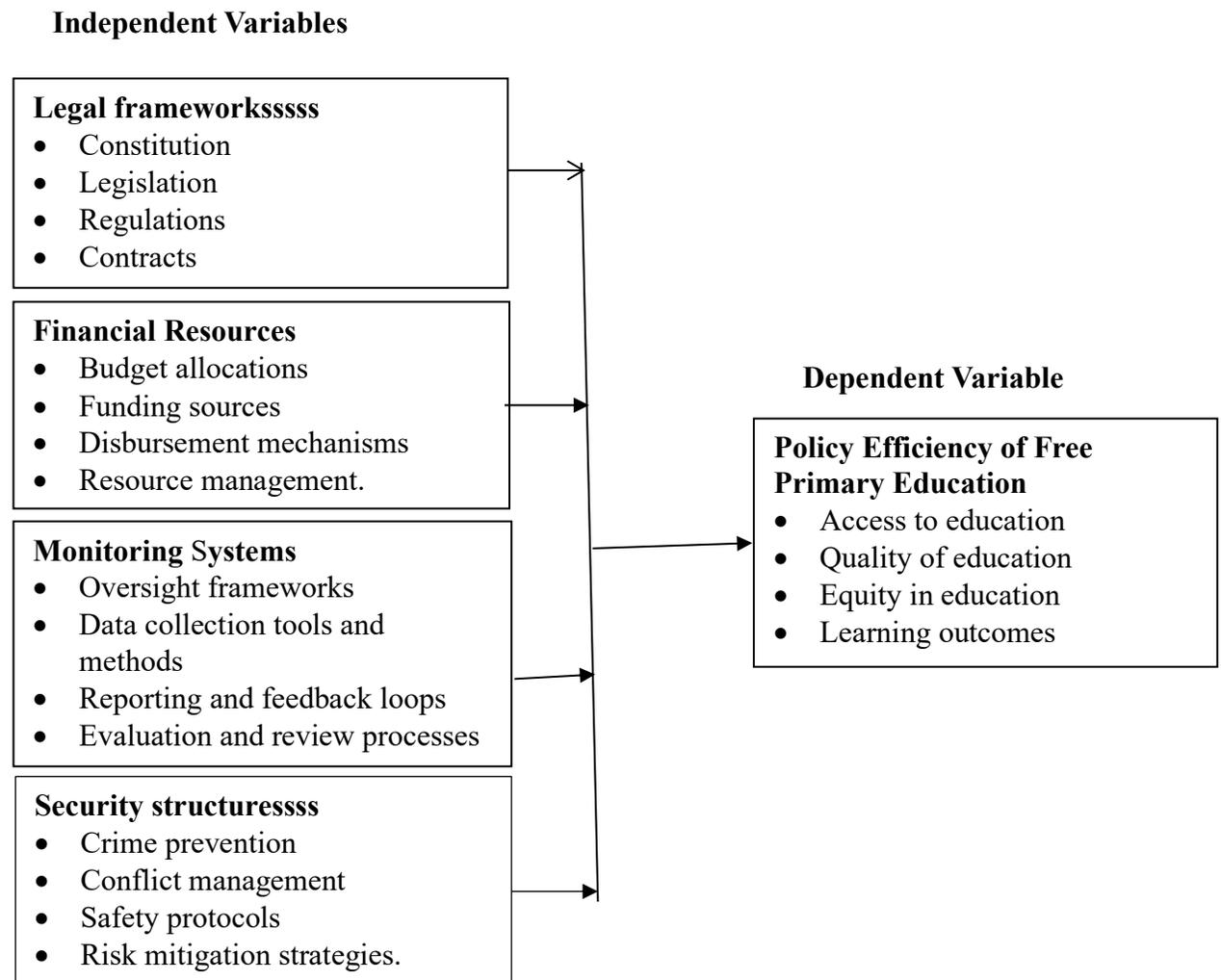
The legal frameworks governing free primary education significantly impact policy efficiency through constitutional provisions, legislative mechanisms, regulatory oversight, and contractual arrangements. Kodila-Tedika and Otchia's (2022) research in the DRC demonstrates how legal and institutional structures directly influence enrollment outcomes, with their difference-in-differences analysis revealing that policy efficiency varied considerably across different school management types. Their findings highlight that Catholic conventional schools achieved greater efficiency in implementing free primary education due to stronger institutional frameworks that facilitated better resource management, teacher deployment, and service delivery, underscoring how legal structures that clearly define operational parameters and accountability mechanisms can enhance policy efficiency in education delivery systems.

Monitoring systems and public policy are critical components in the effective management and improvement of educational systems, ensuring that public policies are implemented correctly, resources are utilized efficiently, and educational outcomes are achieved. Javed et al. (2021) emphasize the importance of monitoring and evaluation practices in elementary schools, highlighting their role in enhancing school performance despite existing gaps, while Mahnaz et al. (2023) show that implementing Monitoring Systems Evaluation Assistants (MEAs) significantly improves teacher attendance and punctuality, crucial for maintaining a stable teaching environment. Beluhu (2020) underscores the value of participatory monitoring and evaluation frameworks in ensuring the success and sustainability of educational projects by involving the community in the oversight process, and Madden, Green, and Grant (2020) illustrate the positive impact of structured and monitored coaching programs on student engagement and hope.

Security structures in educational settings require careful balance between safety measures and creating conducive learning environments. King and Bracy (2019) discuss the negative psychological and environmental impacts of harsh school security measures in the U.S., suggesting that while intended to enhance safety, these measures can often create a counterproductive atmosphere of fear; conversely, proactive and relationship-based approaches, such as threat assessment and restorative practices, show promise in fostering a more supportive school climate. The research indicates that public policy must balance immediate security needs with long-term developmental strategies to ensure both safety and educational efficiency, promoting a secure environment that supports learning and growth.

### 2.3 Conceptual Framework

Figure 1 presents a conceptual framework that reveal the relationship between independent variables and dependent variable diagrammatically.



**Figure 1: Conceptual Framework**

### 3.0 Research Methodology

The study employed a convergent parallel mixed-methods research design to comprehensively investigate the determinants of policy efficiency of free primary education in Beni City, Democratic Republic of Congo. The quantitative component utilized a descriptive survey design while the qualitative component employed a phenomenological approach to explore stakeholder experiences. Using stratified random sampling and Yamane's formula ( $n = N/(1 + N(e)^2)$ ), the study selected 342 respondents from a target population of 1,491 stakeholders across 94 public schools, including 20 school headmasters, 234 teachers, 41 administrative staff, and 47 parent representatives. Data collection involved semi-structured interviews with headmasters and structured questionnaires administered to other stakeholders, with all instruments pilot-tested and achieving Cronbach's alpha reliability coefficients ranging from 0.714 to 0.869. Quantitative data was analyzed using SPSS version 26 for descriptive statistics, correlation analysis, and multiple regression analysis ( $Y = \beta_0 + \beta_1X_1 + \beta_2X_2 + \beta_3X_3 + \beta_4X_4 + \epsilon$ ), while qualitative data underwent thematic analysis following Braun and Clarke's six-phase approach. Ethical considerations included obtaining institutional approvals, informed consent, maintaining confidentiality, and ensuring participant safety given the conflict-affected context of Beni City.

### 4.0 Research Findings

The research findings were systematically organized and presented in distinct sections to enhance clarity and coherence. Each section is examined and discussed in depth to provide a comprehensive understanding of the results in relation to the study objectives.

#### 4.1 Response Rate

The sample size for this study consisted of 20 school headmasters, 234 teachers, 41 school coordination administrative staff and 47 parent representatives on boards of management. Out of the total sample size of 342, the study received 308 responses that were properly completed, representing an overall response rate of 90.06%. The analysis and inferences were based on these 308 responses. The summary of the response rate is presented in Table 1.

**Table 1: Response Rate**

Category	Sample Size	Response	Percent
School headmasters	20	17	85.00
Teachers	234	210	89.74
School's coordination administrative staff	41	38	92.68
Parent representatives on boards of management	47	43	91.49
<b>Total</b>	<b>342</b>	<b>308</b>	<b>90.06</b>

Table 1 reveals a high response rate across all respondent categories. School coordination administrative staff demonstrated the highest participation rate at 92.68%, with 38 out of 41 sampled individuals responding. Parent representatives on boards of management

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showed a strong response rate of 91.49%, with 43 out of 47 completing questionnaires. Teachers, who constituted the largest respondent group, achieved an 89.74% response rate with 210 out of 234 participants completing the survey. School headmasters had the lowest, though still substantial, participation rate at 85.00%, with 17 out of 20 targeted administrators responding. The overall response rate of 90.06% reflects a high level of participation, which enhances the reliability of the survey results and increases confidence in the findings. This, in turn, strengthens the impact of the study, as stakeholders are more likely to view its conclusions as credible. The high response rate also suggests that the research topic is relevant to education stakeholders in Beni City and that they were willing to contribute to a better understanding of the factors influencing the policy efficiency of free primary education.

#### 4.2 Descriptive Statistics

The descriptive statistics present an overview of respondents' perceptions across legal frameworks, financial resources, monitoring systems, security structures, and policy efficiency of free primary education, based on agreement levels, mean scores, and standard deviations.

##### Descriptive Statistics of Legal frameworks

The first objective of the study was to examine the effect of legal frameworks on free primary education in Beni city, Democratic Republic of Congo. Table 2 presents the descriptive statistics on legal frameworks.

**Table 2: Descriptive Statistics of Legal frameworks**

	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Neutral	Agree	Strongly Agree	Mean	Standard Deviation
The constitution of the Democratic Republic of Congo explicitly guarantees the right to free primary education.	24.70%	57.70%	5.50%	9.60%	2.40%	2.07	0.95
The constitutional provisions for free primary education are comprehensive and clearly articulated.	36.40%	44.00%	4.50%	8.90%	6.20%	2.04	1.15
There is specific legislation that outlines the implementation of the free primary education policy.	26.10%	49.50%	8.90%	10.70%	4.80%	2.19	1.09
The existing legislation provides a strong legal basis for enforcing the free primary education policy.	21.60%	51.20%	5.20%	19.60%	2.40%	2.30	1.09
There are clear and detailed regulations governing the operation of free primary schools.	31.30%	52.20%	2.10%	6.20%	8.20%	2.08	1.15
The regulations for free primary education are consistently applied across all schools in Beni city.	16.20%	64.30%	3.80%	10.30%	5.50%	2.25	1.02
Contracts with education service providers (e.g., textbook suppliers, construction firms) are legally sound and enforceable.	29.90%	48.80%	6.50%	11.00%	3.80%	2.10	1.07
There are standardized contract templates for engaging teachers and other staff in free primary schools.	35.40%	46.70%	2.40%	11.70%	3.80%	2.02	1.09
<b>Average</b>						<b>2.13</b>	<b>1.08</b>

The descriptive statistics on legal frameworks reveal widespread perceived inadequacies with an overall mean score of 2.13, indicating significant challenges across all legal dimensions. The majority of respondents disagreed that the DRC constitution explicitly guarantees free primary education (82.4%, mean = 2.07), that constitutional provisions are comprehensive and clearly articulated (80.4%, mean = 2.04), that specific implementing legislation exists (75.6%, mean = 2.19), and that existing legislation provides strong enforcement basis (72.8%, mean = 2.30). Additionally, 83.5% disagreed about clear operational regulations (mean = 2.08), 80.5% disagreed about consistent regulatory application across schools (mean = 2.25), 78.7% disagreed about legally sound service provider contracts (mean = 2.10), and 82.1% disagreed about standardized teacher contract templates (mean = 2.02). These findings suggest the policy lacks fundamental legal protection, clear implementation guidelines, enforcement mechanisms, and standardized procedures, potentially undermining sustained implementation in Beni City.

### Descriptive Statistics of Financial Resources

The second objective of the study was to assess the effect of financial resources on free primary education in Beni city, Democratic Republic of Congo. Table 3 presents the descriptive statistics on financial resources.

**Table 3: Descriptive Statistics of Financial Resources**

	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Neutral	Agree	Strongly Agree	Mean	Standard Deviation
The government's budget allocation for free primary education is sufficient to meet the policy's objectives.	25.80%	55.70%	7.20%	8.90%	2.40%	2.07	0.95
The budget for free primary education is based on accurate assessment of school needs	27.80%	52.20%	5.20%	7.20%	7.60%	2.14	1.13
The budget for free primary education is based on accurate assessment of student population	34.40%	45.70%	5.80%	12.40%	1.70%	2.01	1.03
External funding sources (e.g., donors, NGOs) are effectively integrated into the free education funding strategy.	13.40%	64.90%	5.50%	10.70%	5.50%	2.30	1.01
The mechanisms for disbursing funds to schools are efficient	38.80%	49.80%	0.00%	9.30%	2.10%	1.86	0.96
There are clear procedures for the distribution of funds from central authorities to local schools.	25.10%	56.70%	5.20%	11.00%	2.10%	2.08	0.96
The mechanisms for disbursing funds to schools are timely	20.30%	60.10%	4.10%	10.70%	4.80%	2.20	1.03
There are robust oversight mechanisms to ensure proper utilization of funds allocated for free primary education.	17.20%	59.50%	5.20%	11.30%	6.90%	2.31	1.10
<b>Average</b>						<b>2.12</b>	<b>1.02</b>

The descriptive statistics on financial resources reveal widespread perceived inadequacies with an overall mean score of 2.12, indicating significant challenges across all financial dimensions. The majority of respondents disagreed that government budget allocation is sufficient to meet policy objectives (81.5%, mean = 2.07), that budgets are based on accurate assessment of school needs (80.0%, mean = 2.14) and student population (80.1%, mean = 2.01), and that external funding sources are effectively integrated (78.3%, mean =

2.30). The most critical concern was fund disbursement efficiency, with 88.6% disagreeing that mechanisms are efficient (mean = 1.86), while 81.8% disagreed about clear distribution procedures (mean = 2.08), 80.4% disagreed about timely disbursement (mean = 2.20), and 76.7% disagreed about robust oversight mechanisms (mean = 2.31). These findings suggest that schools struggle with insufficient budget allocations, misaligned resource allocation, poor donor coordination, inefficient and delayed disbursement processes, lack of transparency in fund distribution, and weak financial accountability systems, potentially compromising educational quality and sustainability in Beni City.

### Descriptive Statistics of Monitoring Systems

The third objective of the study was to determine the effect of monitoring systems on free primary education in Beni city, Democratic Republic of Congo. Table 4 presents the descriptive statistics on monitoring systems.

**Table 4: Descriptive Statistics of Monitoring Systems**

	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Neutral	Agree	Strongly Agree	Mean	Standard Deviation
There is a comprehensive oversight framework for monitoring systems the implementation of free primary education.	14.40%	63.90%	3.10%	13.10%	5.50%	2.31	1.05
The oversight framework clearly defines roles and responsibilities for monitoring systems at different administrative levels.	27.50%	42.60%	5.80%	18.20%	5.80%	2.32	1.22
Standardized data collection tools are used to gather information on the performance of free primary schools.	15.50%	55.70%	7.60%	12.00%	9.30%	2.44	1.17
The data collection methods for monitoring systems free primary education are reliable and consistently applied.	22.70%	58.40%	5.50%	7.90%	5.50%	2.15	1.04
There are established channels for reporting monitoring systems results to relevant educational authorities.	31.60%	48.50%	2.40%	10.70%	6.90%	2.13	1.17
Feedback mechanisms exist to ensure that monitoring systems findings inform policy improvements and decision-making.	34.70%	41.90%	4.50%	9.30%	9.60%	2.17	1.27
Regular evaluations are conducted to assess the overall policy efficiency of the free primary education policy.	14.80%	60.50%	3.80%	10.30%	10.70%	2.42	1.18
The evaluation process involves a systematic review of all aspects of the free primary education system.	27.10%	51.50%	3.10%	14.10%	4.10%	2.16	1.10
<b>Average</b>						<b>2.26</b>	<b>1.15</b>

The descriptive statistics on monitoring systems reveal widespread perceived inadequacies with an overall mean score of 2.26, indicating significant challenges across all monitoring dimensions. The majority of respondents disagreed that there is a comprehensive oversight framework for monitoring implementation (78.3%, mean = 2.31), that the framework clearly defines roles and responsibilities at different administrative levels (70.1%, mean =

2.32), that standardized data collection tools are used (71.2%, mean = 2.44), and that data collection methods are reliable and consistently applied (81.1%, mean = 2.15). Additionally, 80.1% disagreed about established reporting channels (mean = 2.13), 76.6% disagreed about feedback mechanisms linking monitoring findings to policy improvements (mean = 2.17), 75.3% disagreed about regular policy evaluations (mean = 2.42), and 78.6% disagreed about systematic review processes (mean = 2.16). These findings suggest that the monitoring system lacks comprehensive oversight frameworks, clear role definitions, standardized data collection tools, reliable methodologies, effective reporting channels, feedback mechanisms, and regular holistic evaluations, potentially limiting the ability to track progress, ensure accountability, and facilitate evidence-based improvements in Beni City.

### Descriptive Statistics of Security structures

The fourth objective of the study was to investigate the effect of security structures on free primary education in Beni city, Democratic Republic of Congo. Table 5 presents the descriptive statistics on security structures.

**Table 5: Descriptive Statistics of Security structures**

	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Neutral	Agree	Strongly Agree	Mean	Standard Deviation
There are effective crime prevention measures in place to protect free primary schools in Beni city.	41.90%	33.00%	7.90%	12.00%	5.20%	2.05	1.20
Local law enforcement actively supports the security of free primary schools and their students.	10.30%	67.00%	3.80%	8.60%	10.30%	2.42	1.12
There are established protocols for managing conflicts that may arise in or around free primary schools.	22.30%	63.20%	5.80%	7.20%	1.40%	2.02	0.83
School administrators are trained in conflict resolution techniques relevant to the educational environment.	20.60%	58.10%	11.00%	6.90%	3.40%	2.14	0.94
All free primary schools have clearly defined safety protocols for various emergency situations.	34.70%	48.10%	5.20%	10.00%	2.10%	1.97	0.99
Safety drills are regularly conducted in free primary schools to prepare for potential security incidents.	17.50%	60.10%	7.60%	9.60%	5.20%	2.25	1.02
There is a comprehensive risk assessment process to identify potential security threats to free primary education.	24.40%	53.60%	10.00%	8.90%	3.10%	2.13	0.98
Schools have implemented specific strategies to mitigate identified security risks in the delivery of free primary education.	24.70%	51.50%	7.90%	11.00%	4.80%	2.20	1.08
<b>Average</b>						<b>2.15</b>	<b>1.02</b>

The descriptive statistics on security structures reveal widespread perceived inadequacies with an overall mean score of 2.15, indicating significant challenges across all security dimensions. The majority of respondents disagreed that there are effective crime prevention measures in place (74.9%, mean = 2.05), that local law enforcement actively supports school security (77.3%, mean = 2.42), that established conflict management protocols exist (85.5%, mean = 2.02), and that school administrators are trained in conflict resolution (78.7%, mean = 2.14). Emergency preparedness also showed critical gaps, with 82.8%

disagreeing about clearly defined safety protocols (mean = 1.97), 77.6% disagreeing about regular safety drills (mean = 2.25), 78.0% disagreeing about comprehensive risk assessment processes (mean = 2.13), and 76.2% disagreeing about specific risk mitigation strategies (mean = 2.20). These findings suggest that schools in Beni City lack adequate crime prevention measures, law enforcement support, conflict management protocols, administrator training, emergency preparedness procedures, safety drills, risk assessment processes, and mitigation strategies, potentially leaving educational institutions vulnerable to security threats and compromising the safety of students and staff in this conflict-affected region.

### Descriptive Statistics of Policy Efficiency of Free Primary Education

The dependent variable of the study was the policy efficiency of free primary education in Beni city, Democratic Republic of Congo. Table 6 presents the descriptive statistics on this variable.

**Table 6: Descriptive Statistics of Policy Efficiency of Free Primary Education**

	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Neutral	Agree	Strongly Agree	Mean	Standard Deviation
The free primary education policy has significantly increased student enrollment rates in Beni city.	4.80%	11.70%	2.40%	66.30%	14.80%	3.75	1.01
All school-age children in Beni city have equal access to free primary education, regardless of their background.	21.60%	48.80%	2.40%	19.60%	7.60%	2.43	1.24
The quality of education provided in free primary schools meets national educational standards.	32.30%	41.20%	5.80%	17.20%	3.40%	2.18	1.16
There are sufficient qualified teachers to maintain an appropriate student-teacher ratio in free primary schools.	12.70%	55.70%	4.10%	24.40%	3.10%	2.49	1.09
The free primary education policy has eliminated gender disparities in access to basic education in Beni city.	24.40%	43.60%	2.10%	22.00%	7.90%	2.45	1.29
Children from marginalized groups have equitable access to free primary education in Beni city.	12.70%	60.10%	3.80%	19.20%	4.10%	2.42	1.06
Students in free primary schools demonstrate improved learning outcomes in standardized assessments.	16.20%	52.90%	4.50%	24.10%	2.40%	2.44	1.09
The free primary education system adequately prepares students for transition to secondary education or vocational training.	22.30%	50.90%	3.10%	15.80%	7.90%	2.36	1.21
<b>Average</b>						<b>2.57</b>	<b>1.14</b>

The descriptive statistics on policy efficiency of free primary education reveal mixed perceptions with an overall mean score of 2.57, showing one clear success but multiple challenges. The policy achieved significant success in enrollment, with 81.1% of respondents agreeing that it significantly increased student enrollment rates (mean = 3.75), representing the most successful aspect of implementation. However, substantial

challenges emerged across other dimensions: 70.4% disagreed about equal access regardless of background (mean = 2.43), 73.5% disagreed that education quality meets national standards (mean = 2.18), 68.4% disagreed about sufficient qualified teachers (mean = 2.49), 68.0% disagreed about elimination of gender disparities (mean = 2.45), and 72.8% disagreed about equitable access for marginalized groups (mean = 2.42). Additionally, 69.1% disagreed about improved learning outcomes in assessments (mean = 2.44), and 73.2% disagreed about adequate preparation for secondary education transition (mean = 2.36). These findings suggest that while the policy successfully expanded access by removing financial barriers, it struggles with educational quality, equity, teacher availability, and meaningful learning outcomes, indicating a need to move beyond access to delivering comprehensive educational benefits.

### 4.3 Correlation Analysis

Correlation analysis examines the association between independent and dependent variables. The correlation results are summarized in Table 7

**Table 7: Correlation Analysis**

		Policy Efficiency of the Free Primary Education	Legal frameworks	Financial Resources	Monitoring Systems	Security structures
Policy Efficiency of the Free Primary Education	Pearson Correlation	1.000				
	Sig. (2-tailed)					
Legal frameworks	Pearson Correlation	.551**	1.000			
	Sig. (2-tailed)	0.000				
Financial Resources	Pearson Correlation	.604**	.360**	1.000		
	Sig. (2-tailed)	0.000	0.000			
Monitoring Systems	Pearson Correlation	.567**	.366**	.429**	1.000	
	Sig. (2-tailed)	0.000	0.000	0.000		
Security structures	Pearson Correlation	.668**	.387**	.454**	.657**	1.000
	Sig. (2-tailed)	0.000	0.000	0.000	0.000	

The study found that legal frameworks was positively and significantly associated with policy efficiency of free primary education ( $r = .551, p = 0.000$ ). This indicates that stronger constitutional provisions, legislation, regulations, and contractual arrangements are linked to more effective implementation of free education in Beni City. Moreover, financial resources were also positively associated with policy efficiency ( $r = .604, p = 0.000$ ), showing that adequate budget allocations, funding sources, disbursement mechanisms, and resource management significantly contribute to better educational outcomes. Additionally,

monitoring systems demonstrated a positive correlation with policy efficiency ( $r = .567, p = 0.000$ ), suggesting that comprehensive oversight frameworks, data collection methods, reporting channels, and evaluation processes enhance policy implementation. Furthermore, security structures exhibited the strongest positive correlation with policy efficiency ( $r = .668, p = 0.000$ ), highlighting that effective crime prevention, conflict management, safety protocols, and risk mitigation strategies are crucial determinants of successful free primary education implementation in Beni City.

#### 4.4 Regression Analysis

The regression analysis determined the best linear combination of independent variables to predict the dependent variable through three key steps: evaluating model fitness, analyzing variance (ANOVA), and interpreting regression coefficients to understand each variable's individual contribution.

**Table 8: Model Fitness**

Model	R	R Square	Adjusted R Square	Std. Error of the Estimate
1	.792a	0.628	0.622	0.1932965

a Predictors: Security structures, Legal frameworks, Financial Resources, Monitoring Systems

The results in Table 8 show that the model yielded an R Square value of 0.628, indicating that 62.8% of the variation in policy efficiency of free primary education in Beni City can be explained by the combined effect of legal frameworks, financial resources, monitoring systems, and security structures. This means that the majority of changes in policy efficiency can be attributed to the influence of these four factors, confirming their central role in determining the success of free primary education implementation. The remaining 37.2% of the variation may be explained by other factors not included in the model, such as teacher quality, parental involvement, or cultural perceptions of education. This level of explanatory power suggests that strengthening these four key areas can lead to substantial improvements in how effectively free primary education policies are implemented in conflict-affected regions like Beni City. The analysis of variance results in the analysis are presented in Table 9.

**Table 9: Analysis of Variance (ANOVA)**

Model		Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
1	Regression	18.011	4	4.503	120.512	.000
	Residual	10.686	286	0.037		b
	Total	28.697	290			

a Dependent Variable: Policy Efficiency of the Free Primary Education

b Predictors: Security structures, Legal frameworks, Financial Resources, Monitoring Systems

The results in Table 9 show that the model is statistically significant, as indicated by the p-value (Sig.) of 0.000. This means that the combined effect of the independent variables-legal frameworks, financial resources, monitoring systems, and security structures-on policy efficiency of free primary education is not due to chance. The F-value of 120.512 is substantially higher than the critical value, confirming that the regression model provides a good fit to the data and that the predictors reliably explain variations in policy efficiency. Therefore, the model is valid for examining how these four key factors influence the implementation of free primary education in Beni City, Democratic Republic of Congo. The regressions of coefficients results are presented in Table 10.

**Table 10: Regressions of Coefficients**

	Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients	t	Sig.
	B	Std. Error	Beta		
(Constant)	0.029	0.108		0.271	0.787
Legal frameworks	0.237	0.036	0.265	6.537	0.000
Financial Resources	0.322	0.045	0.300	7.131	0.000
Monitoring Systems	0.086	0.041	0.104	2.124	0.035
Security structures	0.307	0.043	0.361	7.207	0.000

a Dependent Variable: Policy Efficiency of the Free Primary Education

The regression model is:

$$Y = 0.029 + 0.237X_1 + 0.322X_2 + 0.086X_3 + 0.307X_4$$

Where: Y = Policy Efficiency of Free Primary Education; X<sub>1</sub> = Legal frameworks; X<sub>2</sub> = Financial Resources; X<sub>3</sub> = Monitoring Systems; X<sub>4</sub> = Security structures

The regression model equation  $Y = 0.029 + 0.237X_1 + 0.322X_2 + 0.086X_3 + 0.307X_4$  demonstrates that all four variables contribute significantly to policy efficiency, with financial resources showing the strongest influence, followed by security structures, legal frameworks, and monitoring systems. The constant term of 0.029 with p = 0.787 indicates that when all independent variables are zero, policy efficiency would be minimal, which is theoretically consistent with expectations that effective policy implementation requires the presence of all these foundational elements.

The study found that all four independent variables demonstrated positive and statistically significant relationships with policy efficiency of free primary education. Financial resources showed the strongest influence (B = 0.322, p = 0.000), indicating that a one-unit increase in financial resources leads to a 0.322 unit increase in policy efficiency, which aligns with Cohen et al.'s (2021) research on well-funded programs and student outcomes, and Imbile's (2019) documentation of how insufficient financial resources in the DRC led to poorly paid teachers, overcrowded classrooms with 70-100 students, and inadequate infrastructure. Security structures emerged as the second most influential factor (B = 0.307, p = 0.000), reflecting the unique challenges of implementing free primary education in

conflict-affected regions like Beni City, supporting Al-Makura's (2021) findings on how violent conflicts have devastated educational infrastructure and hindered enrollment in formal education.

Legal frameworks demonstrated a significant positive relationship with policy efficiency ( $B = 0.237$ ,  $p = 0.000$ ), supporting Kodila-Tedika and Otchia's (2022) research which showed that schools with stronger institutional frameworks achieved greater implementation efficiency in the DRC. Monitoring systems, while showing the smallest coefficient among the four variables, maintained statistical significance ( $B = 0.086$ ,  $p = 0.035$ ), consistent with Javed et al.'s (2021) analysis that monitoring systems contribute positively to school performance and Mahnaz et al.'s (2023) findings that implementing Monitoring Evaluation Assistants improved teacher attendance and punctuality. The  $p$ -values of 0.000 for three variables and 0.035 for monitoring systems confirm that these relationships are statistically significant with minimal probability of occurring by chance, establishing all four factors as genuine determinants of policy efficiency in free primary education implementation.

## **5.0 Conclusion**

The study concludes that all four determinants-legal frameworks, financial resources, monitoring systems, and security structures-are positively and significantly related to policy efficiency of free primary education in Beni City, Democratic Republic of Congo. The correlation analysis demonstrated strong positive associations between each independent variable and policy efficiency, with security structures showing the strongest relationship, followed by financial resources, monitoring systems, and legal frameworks. This finding indicates that improvements in any of these four areas will lead to corresponding enhancements in the effectiveness of free primary education implementation. The regression analysis revealed that these four variables collectively explain the majority of factors influencing successful policy implementation, establishing them as critical determinants for achieving educational goals in conflict-affected regions. Legal frameworks provide the constitutional and legislative foundation necessary for policy legitimacy and enforcement mechanisms, while financial resources ensure adequate funding for infrastructure, teacher salaries, and educational materials. Monitoring systems enable continuous oversight and accountability to track progress and identify implementation challenges, and security structures create safe learning environments essential for educational delivery in unstable contexts. The comprehensive nature of these findings demonstrates that successful free primary education policy requires simultaneous attention to institutional, financial, oversight, and safety dimensions rather than focusing on individual components in isolation.

## **6.0 Recommendations**

The study recommends that the government of the Democratic Republic of Congo should implement a comprehensive six-pronged reform strategy to enhance free primary education policy efficiency in Beni City. The government should strengthen legal frameworks through constitutional clarification, detailed legislation, and standardized regulations with stakeholder awareness campaigns. Financial resources should be significantly increased through enhanced budget allocations, streamlined disbursement mechanisms, diversified

donor partnerships, and robust oversight systems. Monitoring systems should be redesigned with structured frameworks, standardized data collection tools, formal reporting channels, and strengthened feedback mechanisms. Security structures should be enhanced through crime prevention measures, conflict management protocols, safety procedures, and systematic risk assessments for conflict-affected areas. A coordinated cross-sectoral approach should integrate education, finance, security, and planning departments while strengthening community engagement with parents, local leaders, and civil society organizations. Finally, the government should prioritize educational quality alongside access through strengthened teacher systems, accelerated infrastructure development, updated curriculum, targeted interventions for marginalized populations, and systematic learning outcome assessments.

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