

## **Place-Based Education: Meaning, Benefits and Prospects for Learners in Rural Zambia**

by

Margaret Mwale-Mkandawire

*The University of Zambia*

### **Abstract**

*This article discusses the concept of place-based education by outlining its meaning, benefits, and prospects for learners that live in rural and remote areas of Zambia. The study used a descriptive research design, and the data was collected through in-depth interviews and a questionnaire. Interviews were held with in-service rural teachers and the questionnaire was also administered to the same teachers. Using the theory of critical pedagogy of place, this paper suggests how best the place-based learning can be organized to benefit some of the people especially the females living in the rural parts of Zambia. Place-based education in this study was construed as a form of education that takes place anywhere and therefore, the school's geographical location is one context for learning to take place. The study revealed that despite the proliferation of place-based education venues, learners' productivity is hampered when they are out of school. For example, girls and boys in Grade 9 are less productive in the Zambian Communities when they drop-out of School. This is because the skills they acquired for the nine years they spend in the education system are less meaningful. Respondents noted that offering education in the local context encourages real educational achievements for many learners. For example, learners can develop holistically and contribute to social matters meaningfully. Respondents observed that place-based learning can take place from anywhere and by anyone. The study recommended that to help learners fit in the society meaningfully, teachers and communities needs to create place-based educational opportunities for learners in many areas and these should be different from one another.*

**Key Words:** *Place-based, Rural Areas, Education, Development*

### **Introduction**

Zambia, like several developing countries, has faced challenges of increasing educational quality, access, and relevance (Suresh & Kumaravelu, 2017). Developing countries pay little attention to alternative forms of education that could prove beneficial in supplementing the existing

mainstream forms of education and these are currently inadequate in Zambia (Mambwe, 2019). The current study investigated place-based education for female rural learners as an alternative to meaningful and real learning for all female learners in rural Zambia. The choice for women was motivated by the fact that, women in rural parts of Zambia are generally marginalized in education and the alternative for them is place-based or continuing form of education.

### **Meaning of Place-based Education**

Place-based education (PBE) also known as pedagogy of place or place-based learning, or experiential education is a philosophy of education that seeks to help communities through employing students and school staff in solving community problems (Sobel, 2005). Place-based education differs from conventional text and classroom-based education in the sense that, it understands students' local communities as one of the primary resources for learning. Thus, place-based education promotes learning that is rooted in what is local by looking at the unique history, environment, culture, economy, literature, and art of a particular place where learners live (Smith & Sobel 2010).

To locate the origins of place-base education, some scholars looked to the work of David Sobel and his early attempts to define explicitly the parameters for a place-based approach to teaching and learning (Smith & Sobel 2010). The literature review segment has explained the scope and parameters of place-based education and how it applies to rural areas of Zambia. An equally likely candidate was John Elder of Middlebury College. Middlebury Vermont was home to one of the oldest environmental studies programmes in the United States of America and had collaboration in the early 1990s with the Massachusetts-based Orion Society, the first named place-based literature programme was born. It is important to mentioned that David Orr's seminal contribution in Ecological Literacy pointed to yet another foundational source. However, years before the contributions of prominent place-based proponents such as Orr, Sobel, or Elder, other initiatives, such as Georgia's Foxfire Fund, exemplified place-based ideals in practice (Smith & Sobel 2010).

Place-based education, which was a contemporary educational term, referred to those forms of pedagogy that were meant to connect learning to the local ecological, cultural, and historical contexts in which schooling itself takes place (Smith & Sobel 2010). As a formalized named pedagogy, place-based education represented a relatively new field of exploration. Thus,

this study investigated how it could be applied to the Zambian rural context as well as showing its benefits to females in these areas.

### **Statement of the Problem**

Learners in rural schools have different educational experiences compared to their counterparts in towns and girls are the most affected (Likomeno, 2022). This disadvantage continues even after they complete certain levels of education. For example, girls and boys learning up to Grade 9 are many times less productive in the Zambian Communities when they drop-off from School (Tambulukani, 2004). This is because the skills they acquired for the nine years they had been in school are good but less productive in the society (Brandenburg & Carroll, 1995). There had been growing evidence that offering education in the local context encourages real educational achievements for many learners and learners develop holistically (Likomeno, 2022). Teachers and Communities create place-based opportunities for learners in many areas which are different from each other. This means that place-based learning can take place from anywhere and can also be done by anyone. Learners, especially girls, from rural areas of Zambia, would benefit greatly as they get involved in place-based education. It was not clearly known how place-based education could be conducted given that rural areas have different cultures, opportunities as well as environmental differences. Thus, this study explored the benefits of place-based education in rural areas of Zambia as well as showing how best it could be applied. That was, the study suggested how best the place-based learning could be organized to benefit some of the people especially the females living in the rural parts of Zambia as a developing country.

### **Research Questions**

The main research question was: what are the benefits of place-based education for female learners in rural Zambia?

#### **Specific research questions**

1. How best can place-based education be applicable to the Zambian rural setup?
2. What are the benefits of place-based education to females in rural areas of Zambia?
3. What are the potential challenges in setting up place-based education in the rural parts of Zambia?
4. How can challenges in applying place-based education be addressed in the rural parts of Zambia?

## **Significance of the Study**

The study was important as it provides new knowledge to the existing literature about place-based education in Zambia. Furthermore, the study is important to females in the Zambian rural areas as well as the country at large because it shows how it supplements the formal education. This study had the potential to bridge the gap in education that had been there between parroting education and the type of education which would encourage innovation in a developing country like Zambia.

## **Literature Review**

### ***Nature of place-based education as discovered in other studies***

Smith (2002) points out that place-based education is focused on a particular place, it does not look the same when implemented in various locations, however he lists five themes that are consistently found in place-based education. The first was cultural studies, where he suggested that once students learn about the local, teachers can then direct them to the regional, national, or international. The second theme was nature studies, which is the incorporation of the natural world into curriculum. Smith says, “teachers who incorporate the study of the natural world into their curriculum reap the rich benefits of simply getting students outside the classroom and taking advantage of their curiosity” (p. 589). The third theme addressed the real-world problem where students are allowed to identify and solve problems that they are interested in. For example, the students may notice an area of the playground that needs attention, and they would then work in tandem with their teacher to solve that problem. This element of place-based education allows students’ learning to be inquiry-based and student-driven. With teachers positioned more as co-learners than instructors, “place-based education changes the power relationship between teachers and students” (Smith, 2002, p. 31). The fourth theme is internships and entrepreneurial opportunities, which illustrates how connecting students with community members can have benefits that extend beyond the classroom. For example, after doing a school project with a community business, the student may feel especially invested in that company and continue doing work with them outside of school or throughout the summer break. The fifth and final theme Smith posits is induction into community processes, which suggests that students are given the opportunity to see how a community works and how they can be positively involved in making a community run.

As practitioners and scholars discuss place-based education's merit, defining what it is proves challenging. However, it must be said that place-based education is an educational method in which teachers, schools and community members design curricula that utilize local cultural and natural resources. The curricula may be derived with an ecological, cultural, or economic lens. The academic focus and depth of project and the degree to which administrators and community members collaborate on curriculum development varies greatly and this study, these differences will be highlighted. According to Haas and Nachtigal (Haas & Nachtigal, 1998), the common motivation is for students to meet academic and developmental goals while helping them to acquire personal and professional skills that will help them to be contributing citizens. Place-based curricula also tend to include service-learning projects in their community or culminate in presentation (that is, constructing a map, website, trail, brochure, radio show, drama production), positively affecting students' commitment to their work, understanding of the content and retention of what they have learned (Woodhouse and Knapp, 2002; Haas & Nachtigal, 1998).

### ***Benefits of place-based education***

The benefits that educators experience due to place-based education often include increased enthusiasm and commitment to teaching, more opportunities to explore new subject matter, and frequent opportunities to use innovative teaching in the classroom (Lieberman and Hoody, 1998). Through place-based education and "by promoting a pedagogy for student engagement in community life, place-based educators embrace aims beyond preparing students for market competition" (Gruenewald, 2003, p. 7). Passionate and enthusiastic teachers are the answer to educational reform and through use of non-traditional models of education it is possible for both students and teachers to be excited about learning.

### ***How place-based education could be implemented***

In discussing the benefits of place-based education, it is important to note that it should not serve as the only way of learning, but instead be used to complement learning in other areas. Thus, this study will also show how best place-based education can be implemented. As a group of education researchers point out, "although the 'local' may be an appropriate point of entry into a study of regional, national, and global issues, we contend that students can also learn much

about themselves and their world by studying other cultures, places, and times” (McInerney et.al, 2011).

While place-based education has several positive elements to offer, as educators it is essential to use place-based curriculum in a careful and critical manner. As McInerney et.al mention, a critical approach to place-based education “encourages young people to connect local issues to global environmental, financial and social concerns, such as climate change, water scarcity, poverty and trade.” Place based education has numerous benefits to offer as outlined below in the review of literature as well as shown according to the Zambian context., however it’s important not to ignore the advantages that come along with exploring topics that occur outside of our own communities as well.

Another way of implementing place-based education can be seen from the way Sobel defined it. He defined Place-based education, as “the process of using the local community and environment as a starting point to teach concepts in language arts, mathematics, social studies, science, and other subjects across the curriculum” (Sobel, 2005). Place-based education encourages educators to incorporate places into the ways that curriculum is developed, such that students can pursue the kind of social action that improves the social and ecological life of places, near and far, now and in the future. In this case, place-based education could be implemented by incorporating places into the curriculum. Therefore, this research showed how place-based education could be realized in rural areas of Zambia by considering the views of teachers as shown in the methodology of this study.

### ***The challenges of place-based education***

Concerning the challenges of place-based education, most studies have concentrated much on the challenges of implementing place-based education in urban areas leaving out the challenges that exist in its implementation in the rural areas.

Most place-based education initiatives to date have been in rural settings (Russell-2006) because as McInerney and colleagues point out, “it is easy to feel a strong sense of attachment to an aesthetically pleasing landscape, that is, a pristine stream, a beautiful valley, or a leafy-green suburb. Much less so to a squalid, unsafe, environmentally degraded place or one that is fractured by social, economic, and racial divides” (2011, p. 10). Many children, especially in urban areas, suffer from what Louv (2008) calls nature-deficit disorder. Nature-deficit disorder is not a medical diagnosis, but instead a term that refers to the fact that people, especially children, are

spending significantly less time outdoors; “Nature deficit disorder describes the human costs of alienation from nature, among them: diminished use of the senses, attention difficulties, and higher rates of physical and emotional illnesses” (Louv, 2008, p. 36). Additionally, Louv suggests that this leads to numerous negative outcomes for children and adults, such as obesity, anxiety, attention-deficit disorder, and depression. Researchers at Indiana University found that neighborhoods with higher greenness, regardless of neighborhood density, were associated with slower increases in children’s body mass over a two-year period (Bell et.al, 2008).

There are several reasons for the decline of time spent in nature, including decreased green space and the increased prevalence of technology. Most children today spend most of their playtime inside; these children often choose to spend their time on the computer, watching television, or playing video games (Clements, 2004; Karsten, 2005). Karsten also uses the term “backseat generation” to describe how children are transported around in vehicles to and from school and to their various activities. For some children, their journey to and from an organized activity may be the most they connect with the outside world in each day. It has been suggested that this decrease in the time spent outside has been accompanied with increased adult supervision and a decrease in the agency children feel (Karsten, 2005). Parental fears are cited as a large cause of nature-deficit disorder; Louv proposes that the media has scared children out of nature and led to the “stranger danger” felt today.

Nature-deficit disorder is an issue that has roots other than just the school setting, however, some educators believe can help reduce nature-deficit disorder in our students by executing some tasks in some order.

## **Theoretical Framework**

### ***The theory of critical pedagogy of place***

Place-based education and critical pedagogy are combined to form the critical pedagogy of place. Critical pedagogy encourages students to think critically about their situation and ask questions about the material they are presented (Freire, 1970). Freire compares the traditional form of education to a banking model, which suggests that teachers ‘deposit’ information into students. The banking model of education “treats students as objects of assistance,” whereas, “problem-posing education makes them critical thinkers” (p. 83). The intersection of place-based education and critical pedagogy is the theory of critical pedagogy of place, which is quite like place-based education. Gruenewald (2003) noted that critical pedagogy often ignores the fact that education

is rooted in the places we live and therefore a critical pedagogy of place challenges all educators to reflect on the relationship between the education they pursue and the kind of places we inhabit and leave behind for future generation.

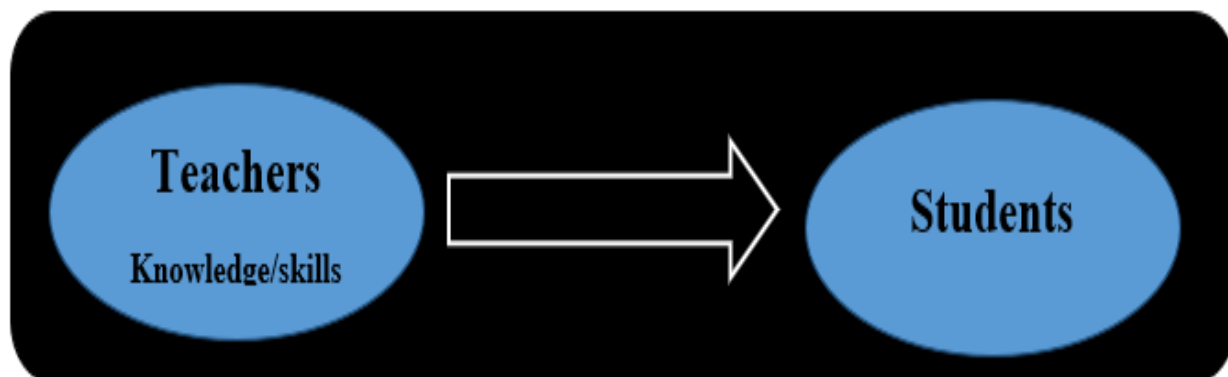
### ***The attachment theory***

Attachment theory is focused on the relationship and bond between people, particular long-term relationships, including those between parents and children and between romantic partners as well as places. Sense of place comprises the set of all meanings affixed to and all personal or group attachments or bonds formed to a given place (Brandenburg and Carroll, 1995). It thus encapsulates the cognitive and affective human relationships to place, and enrichment of student's and teacher's senses of place constitutes an authentic learning outcome of place-based teaching.

### ***Place-based education, theoretical model***

In the traditional learning model, as exemplified by Socrates, teachers are the holders of knowledge and skills which are passed on to their students. In today's world, with knowledge and skills constantly evolving, students need to learn both content and process skills, including the skills and commitment to be lifelong learners. To be lifelong learners, students need to be grounded in inquiry, which is about process or "how to think. The two models below show that in the traditional type of education, teachers are the holders of knowledge while in place-based education, everyone is a learner and holder of knowledge that lasts.

**Figure 1: The Traditional Learning Model**

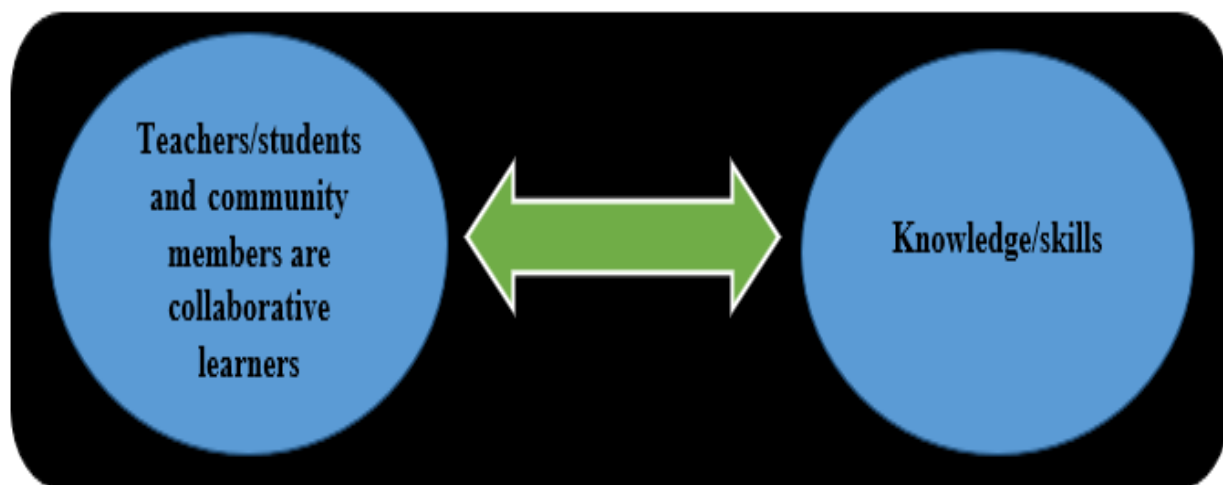


Source: Lieberman et.al (1998).



In the traditional learning model, the students are the recipients of knowledge as well as skill from teacher and they are not given the chance to think critically on how to solve community problems or how to apply what they learn. Thus, knowledge as well as skill according to the model above flows from left (teachers) to the right (students). This model of education is what some scholars such as Freire (1970) called the banking concept of education. In this form of education, the teachers are all knowing, and they are the reservoir of knowledge. Learners serve as the bank where to deposit the knowledge by the teacher. Freire contrasted this form of education to liberatory education that is related to place-based education.

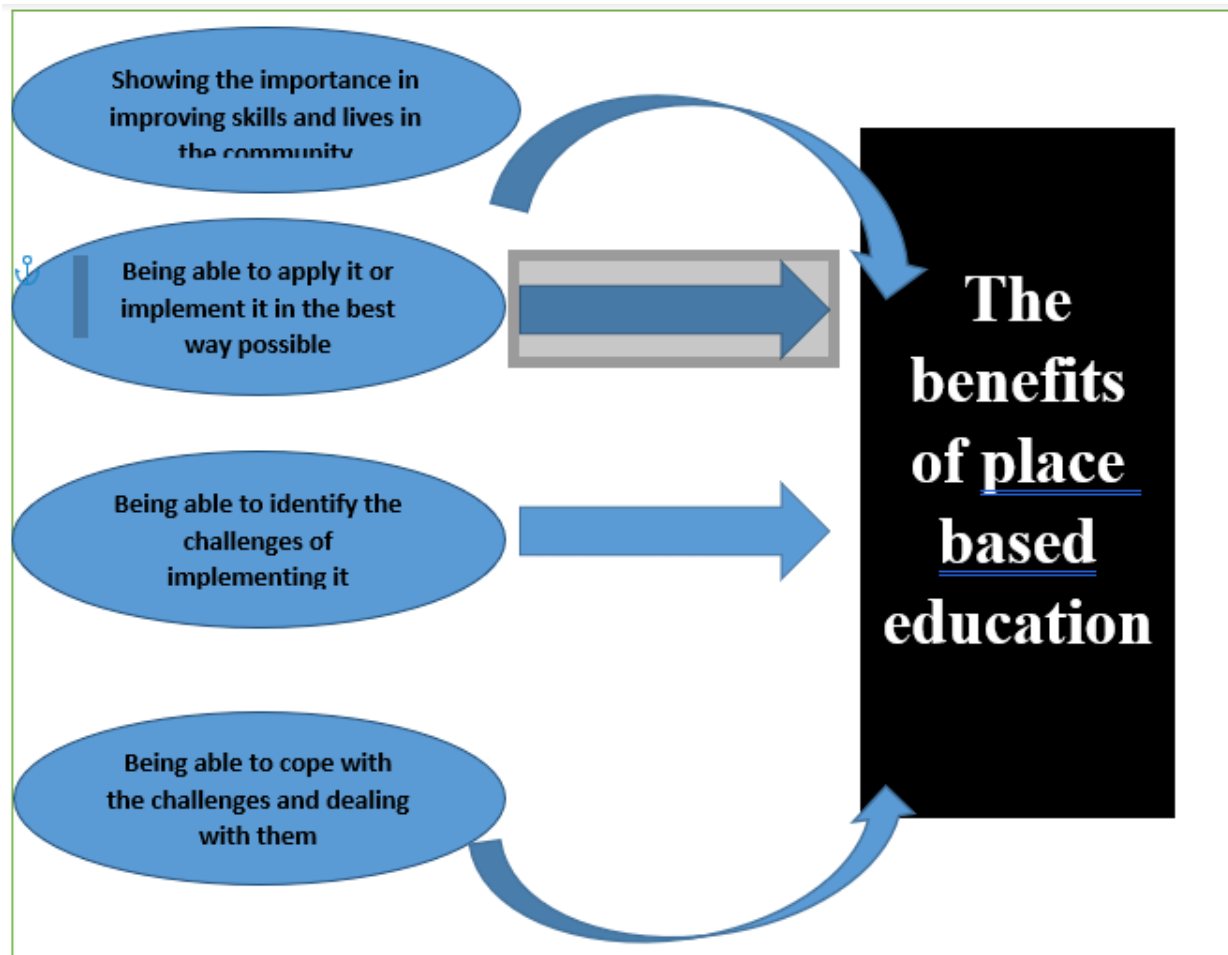
**Figure 2: Place Based Learning Model**



Source: Lieberman et.al (1998).

In the place-based learning model, teachers, students as well as community members are regarded to be constant learners and they can share the knowledge about their places as well as solve problems skillfully together. In this partnership, teachers may become learners and learners may become teachers and therefore, knowledge is shared in either direction without malice, fear, or biases.

**Figure 3: Conceptual Framework**



**Figure 2.4.1: The conceptual framework for place-based education for rural Zambia.**

***The dependent variable***

The dependent variable that was being investigated in this study was the benefits of place-based education. It is called dependent variable because its outcome or success may depend on other independent variable such as skills of teachers, attitude to place-based education and area. All these variables have a bearing on place-based education.

***The independent variable***

The independent variables in this study included: 1) Showing the importance in improving skills and lives in the community, 2) Being able to apply PBE or implement it in the best way possible,

3) Being able to identify the challenges of implementing PBE and 4) Being able to cope with the challenges of implementing PBE and dealing with them. It's only then that the benefits of place-based education can be realized. For instance, if the challenges to place-based education implementation are not identified and coped with, the benefits of place-based education cannot be realized. Thus, the dependent variable as mentioned above depends on these four variables.

## **Methodology**

### ***The Research Design***

This was a descriptive research design based on the views of in-service teachers about place-based education in rural schools. The descriptive research design was necessary because of the nature of the study. For instance, in the literature review, it was noted that the benefits of place-based education could be overshadowed by colonial education, where there is therefore, an exploratory method or investigative was used. The study also needed to describe how place-based education could be implemented in the rural areas of Zambia.

### ***Data Collection Methods***

The present study used the interview and the questionnaire to collect data from respondents. The way the interview and the questionnaire were used in this study along with the target respondents are described in detail.

### ***In-depth Interviews***

Face-to-face field interviews with three head teachers from rural schools and selected in-service teachers were held. The respondents were informed and knowledgeable about place-based education and the contribution of this model of education in uplifting the lives of citizens. The In-depth interview was important as it helped to collect first-hand information and supplement the data collected through the questionnaire. The interviews allowed the researcher to probe for responses by following up on the verbal cues from the respondent. This allowed for more data collection and greater clarity on issues raised.

## **Questionnaires**

A closed ended questionnaire was administered to 100 in-service teachers that were serving in rural schools of Zambia. This questionnaire had several questions centered around place-based education and how learners that left school benefited or survived in the society. Most of the research participants that responded to the questionnaire were registered students at the University of Zambia.

## ***Sampling Procedure***

A convenient purposive sampling method was used by the researcher to select the sample from all rural schools of Zambia and registered undergraduate students at the University of Zambia. The convenient sampling was necessary in engaging teachers in the rural schools of Zambia for them to reflect on place-based education and how it occurred in their respective communities. The selected research participants were considered a representative of the entire population of teachers from rural areas.

## ***Data Processing and Analysis***

The qualitative data from interviews was analysed thematically by categorizing related themes together. The data was presented in narrative and paraphrase form. The quantitative data collected from the questionnaire was analyzed using the Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS) and Microsoft Excel. The findings were presented in tables, pie charts, bar charts and graphs according to the need.

## ***Ethical Consideration***

The study ensured that the anonymity and confidentiality of participants was kept and ensured that all information collected was kept in privacy and remains a private property. The publishing of research findings was done in such a way that respondents views were anonymous.

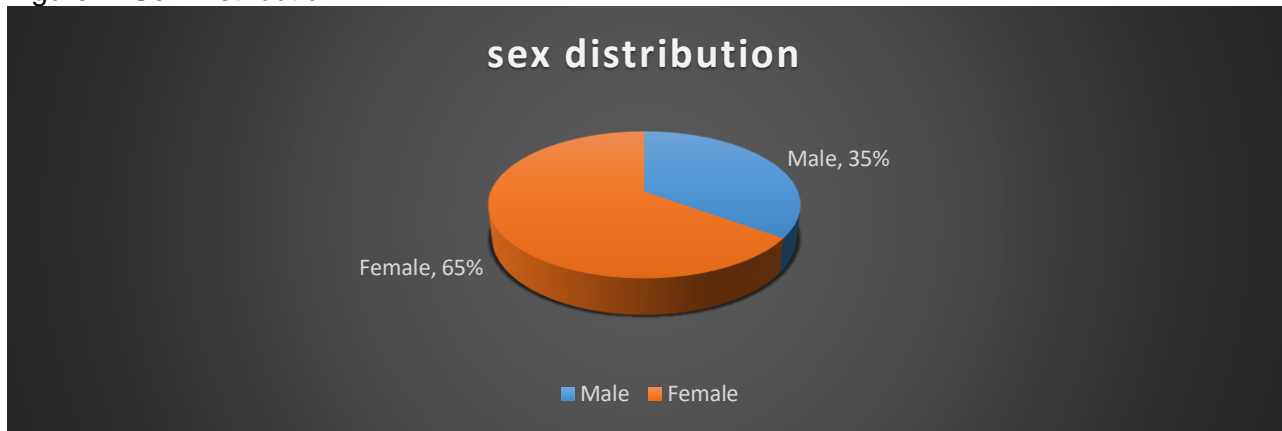
## **The Presentation of findings**

The findings presented in this chapter followed the specific research questions of the study. The questions were framed as main themes which contained other sub themes generated based on the data. The research questions that the study sought to address were as follows; (i) How best can place-based education be applicable to the Zambian rural setup? (ii) What are the benefits of

place-based education to females in rural areas of Zambia? (iii) What are the potential challenges in setting up place-based education in the rural parts of Zambia? (iv) How can the challenges in applying place-based education be addressed in the rural parts of Zambia?

### Background Information

Figure 4: Sex Distribution



Source: Field work 2017

Figure 4 above showed the distribution of respondents by their sex. It showed that 35% of the respondents were male and 65% were females.

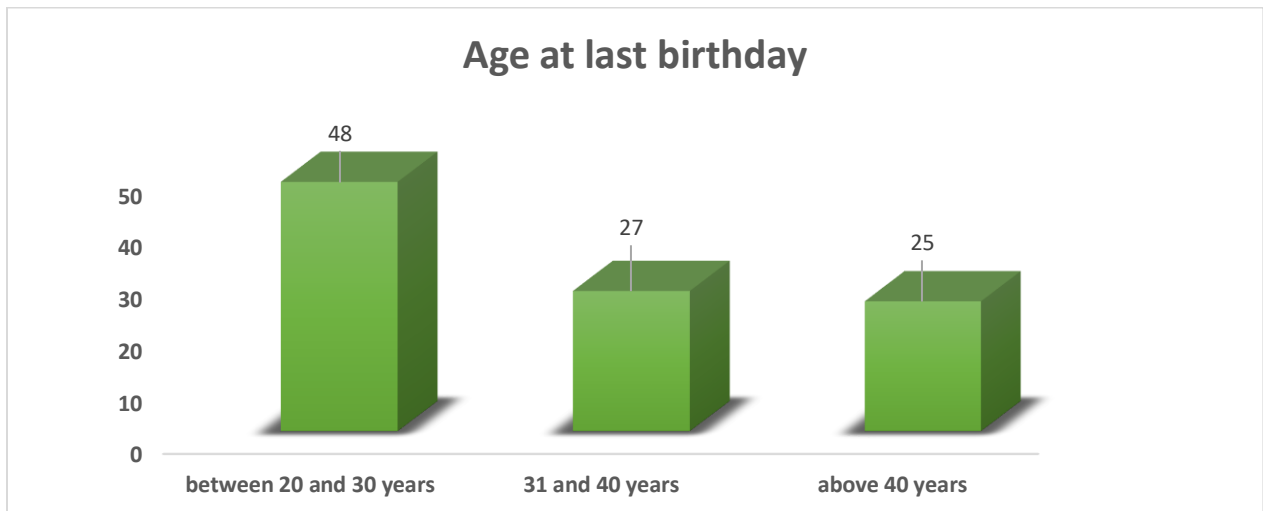
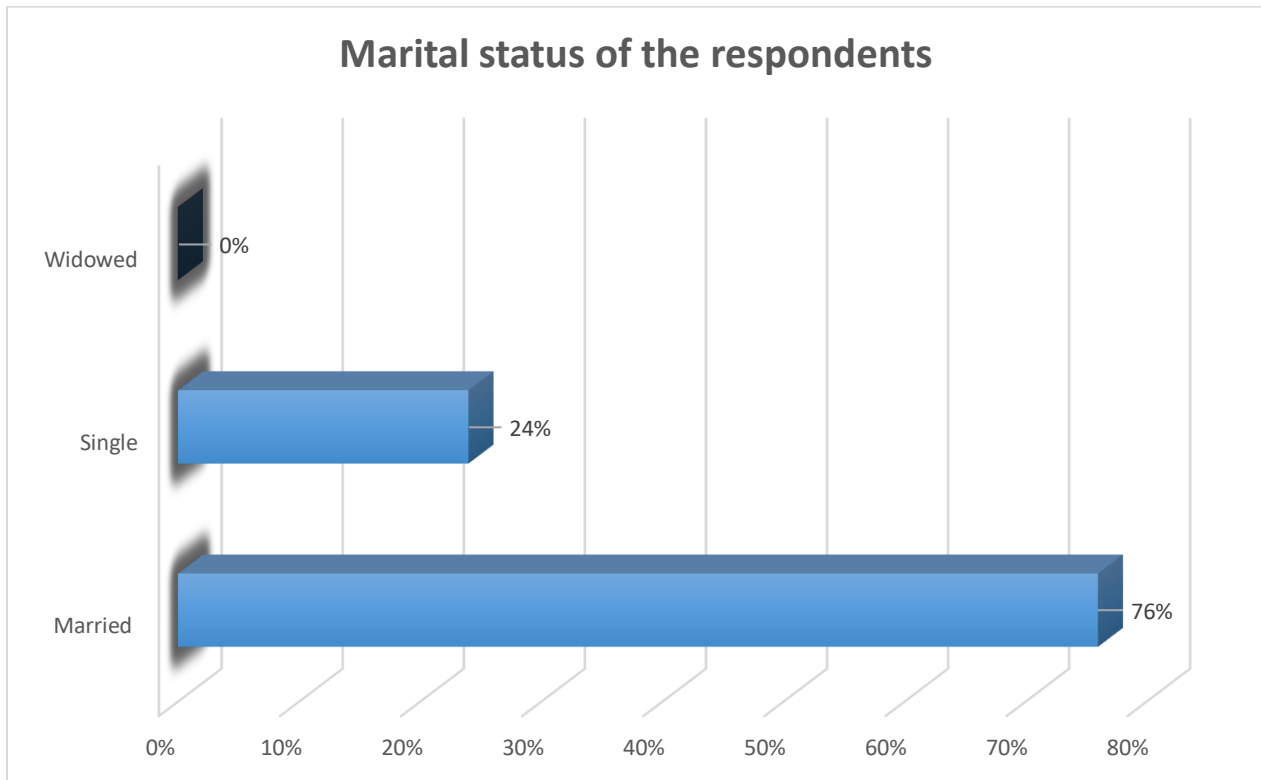


Figure 5: Age at Last Birthday

Figure 5 shows the percentage distribution of respondents at last birthday. It was discovered that the majority (48/100) of the respondents were between 20 and 30 years, 27 out of 100 respondents were aged 31 and 40 years and 25 out of 100 respondents were aged above 40 years. Thus, the minority were aged above 40 years.

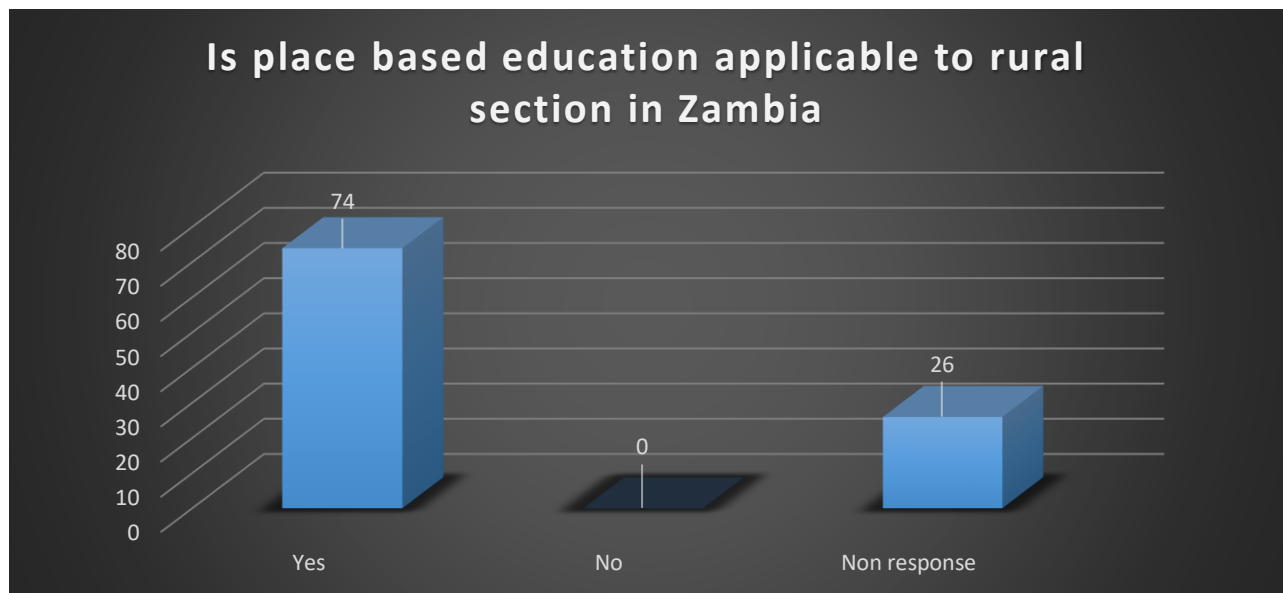


**Figure 6: Marital status of the respondents**

The figure above showed the percentage distribution of respondents by their marital status. It was discovered that 76% of the respondents were married and 24% of the respondents were single. There was no one who was widowed thus showing that most of the respondents were married while the minority were single.

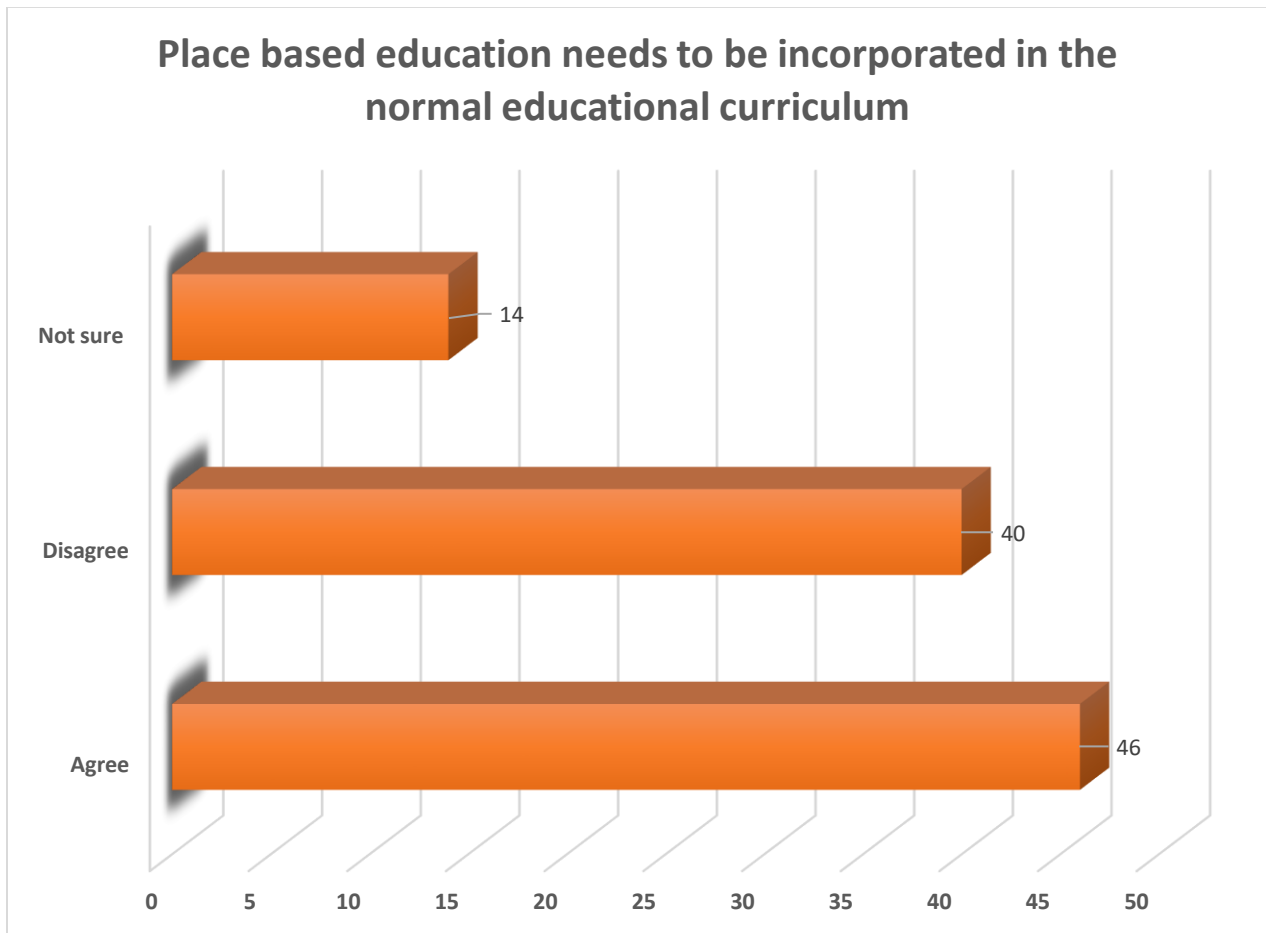
### **Applicability of Place Based Education in Zambia**

The first objective of the study was to find out how best place-based education can be applicable to the Zambian rural setup. This section of the study presented data and analysis on the objective.



**Figure 7: Applying Place-Based Education**

Figure 7 showed the findings to the question about whether place-based education was applicable to the rural areas in Zambia. The findings showed that the majority 74% accepted that it was applicable while 26% of the respondents did not respond to the question. It was also discovered that no one said no to the question showing that all the respondents who responded to the question accepted that place-based education was applicable to the rural areas of the country.



**Figure 8: Incorporating Place-based Education in the Normal Educational Curriculum**

Figure 8 showed the responses to the question where the respondents were asked to say whether they agreed, disagreed or were not sure to the statement about place-based education and how applicable it was. It was discovered as shown in the figure above that most of the respondents 46% agreed, 40% disagreed and 14% of the respondents were not sure whether place-based education needed to be incorporated in the normal education curriculum.



**Table 1: Place-Based Education Enables Pupils to Understand the Skills Needed**

<b>Place based education can enable pupils to understand better the skills that they need to help improve the communities</b>		
<b>Responses</b>	<b>Frequency</b>	<b>Percentage</b>
Agree	100	100%
Disagree	0	0%
Not sure	0	0%
Total	100	100%

Table1 also showed the responses to the statement where respondents were required to state whether they agreed to the statement about place-based education or not. The table showed both frequencies as well as percentage distribution of the responses. It was discovered that place-based education would enable pupils to understand better the skills that they needed to help improve the communities. This is because all the respondents (100%) agreed that place-based education enabled them to understand diverse aspects of the society.

**Table 2 Exposure to the Environment**

<b>Just like children in Urban areas, children in rural areas are not exposed to the environment because they spend their time in their homes</b>		
<b>Responses</b>	<b>Frequency</b>	<b>Percentage</b>
Agree	15	15%
Disagree	85	85%
Not sure	0	0%
Total	100	100%

In order to determine whether place-based education was applicable, a comparison of the exposure of children in urban areas and those in rural areas was made about their exposure to the environment. It was discovered that the majority 85% of the respondents disagreed to the statement that just like children in urban areas, children in rural areas were not exposed to the environment as well. While the minority 15% of the respondents agreed to the statement.

**Table 3: Teaching with Reference to Respective Communities Better than Setting Up Separate Place-Based Education Centers**

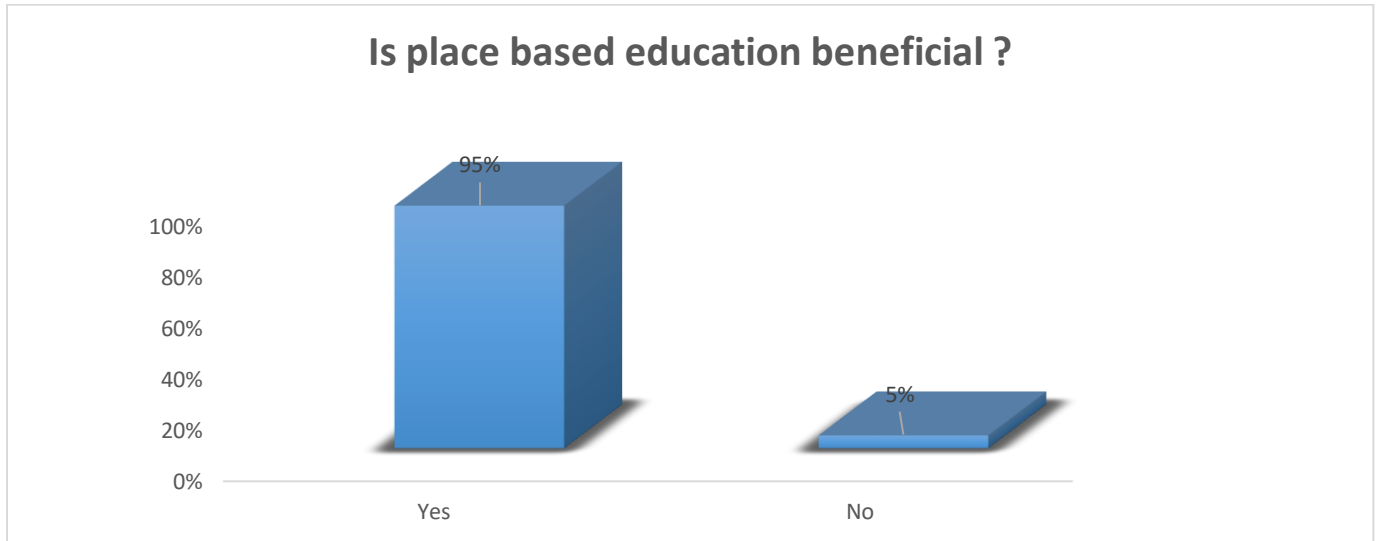
<b>Teaching with reference to the respective communities can be better than trying to setup separate place-based education centers.</b>		
<b>Responses</b>	<b>Frequency</b>	<b>Percentage</b>
Agree	76	76%
Disagree	24	24%
Not sure	0	0%
Total	100	100%

Table 3 showed the findings to the question about whether it was better to teach with reference to respective communities than trying to setup separate place-based education centers. The majority 76% of the respondents agreed to the statement while the minority 24 disagreed. The findings therefore showed that it was better to teach with reference to respective communities than setting a weak place-based education center.

***The Benefits of Place-Based Education to Females in Rural Areas of Zambia***

The second objective was to determine the benefits of place-based education to females in rural areas of Zambia. This section of the study therefore presented the findings about the benefits of place-based education as shown below.

**Figure 9: Benefits of Place-based Education to Females in Rural Areas**



**Source: Field work 2017**

Figure 9 showed the findings to the question about whether place-based education was beneficial in rural areas of the country. The majority 95% of the respondents said that it was indeed beneficial while a minority 5% said it was not.

**Table 4 The benefits of place-based education to learners in rural areas**

The benefits of place-based education on learners in rural areas	
1. It is beneficial because, any place has its own goods and services produced exposing female pupils as well as students to some content they may be familiar with already which leads to greater understanding and production of more goods and services.	2. It helps them develop skills that help them economically better than those who are not exposed to the environment
3. Students connect and create vibrant partnership between schools and communities and students are likely to know how to contribute to the community's vitality.	4. Pupils can easily relate learnt skills to their daily livelihood which helps them understand the benefits of education better than those who are not exposed to place based education.

**Source: Field work 2017**

The respondents in the figure above who said that place-based education was beneficial explained some of the benefits that they thought place-based education had. These findings have been clearly summarized in table 4.3.1 above. The findings showed that place-based education would benefit the learners partly due to the fact that they would grasp the skills easily and develop their own communities better than those who were not exposed to place-based education.

### **The Potential Challenges in Setting up Rural Based Education in the Rural Areas of Zambia**

The third objective was to explore the potential challenges in setting up rural based education in rural areas of Zambia. This section therefore presented the findings to the objective.

**Table 5: Potential challenges in setting up place-based education**

<b>Is it easy to implement place-based education?</b>		
<b>Responses</b>	<b>Frequency</b>	<b>Percentage</b>
Yes	67	67%
No	33	33%
Total	100	100%

**Source: Field work 2017**

Table 5 showed the findings to the question about whether it was easy to implement place-based education in Zambia. It was discovered that 67% said that it was easy while 33% of the respondents said that it was not easy to implement. Thus, core respondents said that it was easy to implement compared to those who said that it was not.

**Table 6: challenges that exist in developing a curriculum that allows place-based education**

Potential challenges that exist in developing a curriculum that allows place-based education	
1. There is lack of infrastructure that can allow place-based education to separate from the traditional education.	2. Political challenge. This challenge comes about because each government comes with its own policies.
3. Human resource and technical knowhow are a challenge	4. It has not been supported by many stakeholders and not much research on the benefits of place-based education.

Table 6 showed a summary of the findings about the challenges that existed in developing a curriculum that allowed place-based education in the country. The respondents thus showed that the challenges included political, economic as well as social challenges. This was because, infrastructure that could allow place-based education would not be affordable, the change in government as well as policies and a lack of human resource to facilitate place-based education and the problem of lack of general acceptance as important.

### **How to Counter the Potential Challenges in Applying Place Based Education**

The fourth objective was to determine how best the potential challenges could be countered. This section of the study showed the findings to the objective.

**Table 7: How The Potential Challenges Could Be Countered**

How the challenges about implementing place-based education be countered	
1. By having people or government which would put the needs of people first.	2. By implementing and modifying the curriculum.



3. By releasing more funds in the district education boards in the rural areas.	4. By sensitizing and revising the curriculum in education to include non-formal education to suit places taking into consideration the enrollment.
5. Government should make sure that more teachers are enrolled so that they are able to try it.	6. Certain schools should be tried as pilot schools and if they succeed, other schools can also be tried.

**Source: Field work 2017**

Table 7 showed the summary to the findings on how the challenges of implementing place-based education could be countered. The findings showed that place-based education model is important in people's communities and that the government should consider supporting this model of education to help community members with life skills. Place-based education could work out well when more funding is given to the district educational officers, enrolling more teachers by the government, sensitizing, and revising the curriculum and certain schools should be tried as pilot schools and when successful, it could be tried to other areas.

### **Discussion of Findings**

On whether place-based education was applicable to Zambia, it was discovered that most teachers said it was practiced in the country. Most teachers noted that it would be easier to incorporate place-based education in the normal curriculum than to set it as a separate entity. This was further supported by Karsten (2005) who noted that place-based education can function well when it is embedded in the formal education sector. About 46% of the teachers who participated in the study said that place-based education needed to be incorporated in the normal education curriculum. This was supported by the critical pedagogy theory of place that encourages students to think critically about their situation and ask questions about the material they are presented (Freire, 1970). According to this theory, this form of education can take place anywhere and may serve different purposes. And 76% of teachers said that teaching with reference to the communities was better than setting up a separate place-based education center. The reason why most teachers felt that it was applicable was that place-based education would

enable pupils to understand better the skills needed to help improve the communities. This was also stated by Sobel (2005) *who noted that place-based education reflected the community ethos*. The other reason why it would be implemented was that the girl child in the rural area was more exposed to the environment that the one in urban areas as shown in table 4.2.2 above.

95% of the teachers who participated in the study felt that place-based education was beneficial to both males and females in rural areas. When they were asked to state the benefits of place-based education, it was found out that place-based education would be beneficial because education would benefit the learners partly because they would grasp the skills easily and develop their own communities better than those who were not exposed to place based education. This agrees with Smith & Sobel (2010) who stated that place-based education benefit communities that they serve.

It was also realized that it was challenging to setup place-based education in the rural parts of the country due to diverse factors. Despite this challenge, some teachers 67% said that it was easy to implement place-based education and 33% of the teachers still felt otherwise that it was not easy. Although there were contradicting views on place-based education, there is a high chance of improving the lives of people in communities. Among the reasons cited that could prove problematic in implementing place-based education include lack of infrastructure and staff that could allow place-based education to take place. Clements (2004) noted that place-based education require diverse resources and efforts from different stakeholders. On challenges of place-based education, some teachers felt that there were diverse ways of addressing the challenging. For example, they suggested some of the ways in which place based education can be implemented and addressed. They reported that if the government could value and priorities place-based education, it might help learners and those out of school fit in diverse situations. Local government authorities require more resources to run and implement place-based education. Funding local educational authorities such as the District Educational Board Secretary (DEBS) may help support local development and enrollment of teachers could also be improved.

## **Conclusion**

The study has shown that place-based education has a critical role to play in improving the lives of people in the communities. It is beneficial to rural residents especially female learners that easily drop out of school. This form of education helps learners grasp the skills easily and develop

their own communities better than those who are not exposed to place-based education. Although place-based education is not easy to set up in rural set up, it is a viable means for imparting social life skills for survival. Most teachers thought that it would be best placed if it was implemented as part of the normal curriculum than setting it as a separate entity. Some of the challenges that the teachers brought out in the study included a lack of infrastructure that could allow place-based education to take place. The teachers also suggested some of the ways in which the challenges of place-based education could be countered. They noted that if the government could fund, build infrastructure, and supply teachers, such education would help flourish members of the community.

### **Recommendations**

The study made the following recommendations.

- i. More research should be done on how place-based education could be incorporated in the education curriculum.
- ii. Pilot implementation should be tried in certain areas so that the benefits of place-based education could be fully comprehended.
- iii. Universities should consider offering courses in place-based education that would enable teachers to implement it in their environments.
- iv. More donors and other stake holders should be engaged to help implement place-based education because it could lead to development.

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