



**POLICY BIEF ON THE STATUS OF EDUCATION IN ZAMBIA REPORT: A SPECIAL FOCUS ON
QUALITY OF EDUCATION**

BASED ON SUMMARY RESEACH FINDINGS

© January 2017

Baptist Fellowship Building
Corner of Makishi and Great East Road
P.O Box 30744, Lusaka, Zambia
Tel: +211226422/226490
Email: zanec@zamtel.zm
Website: www.zanec.org.zm

Supported by: British Council - Zambia Accountability Programme (ZAP)

WHO WE ARE AND WHAT WE STAND FOR

The Zambia National Education Coalition (ZANEC) is a Coalition of non-state actors working in the Education and Skills Sector. It is a recognized institution advocating for improved quality and access to education by all citizens. The organisation is involved in research and capacity enhancement on different aspects of education system in Zambia.

Vision

“A sustainable and inclusive education system that responds to national aspirations and fosters an environment for self-fulfillment”

Mission

“ZANEC is a coalition of education organisations promoting quality and inclusive education for all, through influencing of policy, building consensus, holding duty bearers accountable and strengthening the capacities of stakeholders in the education sector”

Values

a) **Universal Right to Quality Education:** Education is a right to every child, youth and adult regardless of gender, geographic divide, social and economic status.

b) **Equity and Inclusiveness:** Education should be equitably accessible and relevant to all. “No one should be left behind” disabled, girls, women, poor and rural communities.

c) **Non-partisanship:** Non-alignment to any political party and Voice without “fear or favour”.

d) **Transparency and Accountability:** Promoting and acting with the utmost integrity and responsible to the vision and mission of the organization.

e) **Volunteerism:** Selflessness and passion for reason for existence

f) **Value for Money:** Cost effectiveness with high sense of result orientation

1.0 INTRODUCTION

The education sector has experienced increased investment in infrastructure development involving both new constructions and upgrading of existing infrastructure. The infrastructure development programme has been impressive registering a 1% increase in the provision of new infrastructure at primary school level to about 4 % at secondary school level during the period of the National Implementation Framework (NIF III) from 2011 to 2015. Similarly, more emphasis was also placed on the training and deployment of teachers, leading to a marked increase especially in teachers attending in-service training. These policies brought about some major increases particularly in school enrollments at all levels. However, despite the sustained growth in enrolments, the education system continues to face numerous quality challenges. The quality of education in Zambia has been compromised by various factors at all levels of the education system. It is against this background that this policy brief provides a neutral summary of the status of education with special reference to the quality of education before making specific policy recommendations.

2.0 CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK FOR QUALITY

The quality of the Zambian education system is currently monitored using proxy inputs and output indicators namely pupil teacher ratio, pupil classroom ratio, textbook pupil ratio, quality of teachers, pass rates and learning achievement levels. This conceptual view of quality education has remained inadequate as it leaves out key elements. The failure of the input and outputs model has led to a shift in focus towards the inclusion of genuine education outcomes, which although more complex and abstract, measure permanent changes relating to positive behavior, high productivity, and other qualities. Specifically, Zambia has recently adopted the UNESCO educational quality framework as part of the *Standards and Evaluation Guidelines* launched in 2015. This model is based on the *input-process-output* view and posits education as a human right by emphasizing the needs and priorities of the learners, their families and communities. The framework focuses on learner characteristics categorized in three pillars. First, it focusses on **learner characteristics** namely aptitudes, perseverance, school readiness, prior knowledge and barriers to learning. Second, it focuses on quality elements relating to **enabling inputs** namely teaching and learning process, class size, teaching and learning materials, physical infrastructure, human resources and school governance. Third, the framework also monitors quality in terms of **outcomes** relating to literacy, numeracy and life skills; creative and emotional skills; values and social benefits. However, the challenge is that Zambia has not yet operationalized this framework in its plans and quality monitoring tools.

3.0 SUBSECTOR PERFORMANCE OF THE EDUCATION SECTOR

3.1 Early Childhood Education (ECE)

The ECE enrolments in public, community and private schools doubled during the period 2014 to 2015 from 70,773 learners to 143,810 learners representing a 103% increase. In proportional terms, the number of Grade 1 entrants with ECE experience increased from 15.4% in 2014 to 24.4% in 2015 against the 2015 target of 26%. The quality of ECE on the other hand is determined by the availability of appropriate infrastructure, water and sanitation, play grounds, furniture, equipment and materials. To this effect, the study findings show that most infrastructure especially in ECE centers annexed to primary schools is inappropriate for the children. Similarly, majority of centers have few clean and safe running water points, high toilet to child ratios, few designated hand washing facilities, no sandpits and few playgrounds painted in appropriate colors. Most ECE centers do not have age appropriate basic furniture

such as tables, chairs and carpets. Most ECE centers also do not have age appropriate in-door and outdoor play equipment and toys; books and print materials; and first aid box. Similarly, majority of the ECE centers have first aid boxes and indoor play materials but without outdoor play equipment such as swings and see-saws due to lack of playgrounds. These deficiencies impact negatively on quality of ECE centers.

3.2 Primary Education

Overall enrolments at primary school level reached 3,215,723 by 2015, representing 93% of the children of school going age. However, the 2015 enrolments represent a reduction in the number of pupils at primary school level from the 2014 enrolment figure of 3,691,486. Apart from increased investment in infrastructure, the growth in primary school enrolments is attributed to contributions by education providers such as community schools, Grant Aided institutions and the private sector.

In terms of quality, the key indicators used to measure quality at primary school level are examination pass rates, survival rate to Grade 5, the pupil/book ratio, pupil/classroom ratio, contact hours and learning achievement levels. Examinations pass-rates to Grade 8 show that in 2015, about 310,230 candidates who sat for the Grade 7 Examination progressed to Grade 8 representing a progression rate of 90.05%. This progression rate is 0.03% higher than the one recorded in 2014. Similarly, survival rate to Grade 5 increased from 70.7% in 2014 to 81.2% in 2015 representing an increase of 9.5 percentage points. The research also shows that the pupil/book ratios for both English and Mathematics was at 4:1 in 2015. While the book ratios for Zambian Languages and Life Skills was 5:1 and 7:1 respectively.

The pupil teacher ratio reduced to 42.7 in 2015 from 55.3 in 2014 against the set target ratio of 40. While, the pupil classroom ratio increased from 36.9 to 41.8 in 2015. This increase is attributed to the upgrading of 220 primary schools to secondary schools. In terms of scheduled contact time, 2015 figures show that learners in Grades 1-4 spend only 3.9 hours in the classroom, while learners in Grades 5-7 spend 5.3 hours per day. Contact time is further reduced by time loss due to premature closures, learner or teacher absenteeism and time allocated to sporting activities. Similarly, the 2014 learning achievement survey shows an overall decline in learner mean performance from the 2012 Survey. The score for numeracy was the highest at 35.5% followed by Reading in Zambian Languages at 35.2%, Life Skills 34.6% and Reading in English at 32.1%. The assessment conducted by DFID in 2014 at Grade 2 level revealed that pupils could recognise a few words but had problems in stringing words from a passage into a logical sentence. The study found out that on average, Grade 2 pupils could only identify about 13.3 numbers in a minute.

ZANEC is also concerned that the Ministry is still lagging behind in the implementation of the new curriculum due to problems relating to the policy on the procurement and delivery of teaching and learning materials. In addition, the orientation of teachers on the new curriculum as well as the recruitment of teachers for newly introduced subjects such as ICT has not yet been completed to date. While the new curriculum framework is not yet distributed to all the schools especially community and grant aided schools.

3.3 Secondary Education

Zambia has a serious shortage of secondary school places making education at this level more costly compared to primary schooling. The available secondary schools can accommodate only about 30% of pupils at lower primary school level. This is despite the annual increase of 431 classrooms from 2014 to 2015. Equally, the pupil classroom ratio increased at Grades 8-9 and Grades 10-12 from 52 in 2014 to 47 in 2015. While the pupils / textbook ratio for English, Life skills, mathematics and Zambia language was

4, 24, 6 and 9 respectively. In terms of pass rates, a total of 278,184 candidates representing 50.81% sat for Grade 9 examinations in 2015 of which 48.21% managed to get their certificates, 46.55% obtained statements and 5.24% failed. At Grade 12 level, examination candidates increased from 119, 862 to 128,527 from 2014 to 2015 representing a 7% increase. Examination candidates who got full certificates increased from 66, 971 to 125,686 representing 88% increase. However, the percentage pass rates reduced from 58.1% to 55.9% in 2014 and 2015 respectively. While, scheduled contact hours at junior secondary level averaged only 4.2 hours per day, while at senior secondary level it was 6.2 hours per day.

3.4 Youth, Adult Literacy and Tertiary Education

The notable achievement by the Ministry in promoting the quality of youth and adult literacy is the investment in teaching and learning materials. In 2015, the Ministry developed and distributed adult literacy teaching and learning materials, established literacy centres, trained facilitators, and established tele-centres for ICT and life skills. In addition, the Ministry trained 491 facilitators in youth and adult literacy techniques out of the targeted number of 800 teachers. The quality of education in tertiary institutions show that although the current student / lecturer ratio stands at 18:1 which is acceptable, the quality of tertiary education has remained low. This is mainly due to among others, the low qualifications of some lecturers, less stringent admission requirements, over-enrolment, inadequate faculty, low curriculum relevance and the over-emphasis on theory at the expense of practice.

3.0 ANALYSIS OF BUDGET ALLOCATIONS, RELEASES AND EXPENDITURE

The analysis of the 2016 education budget shows that education was allocated ZMW9, 143 million which represents 17.2 %. Of this allocation, 98.7% of the budget was projected to be funded from domestic revenue, while 1.3% was to be funded by Cooperating Partners. The 2016 allocation represent a 3% reduction in absolute terms from the 2015 allocation. While the intra budget analysis shows that 84% of the 2016 allocation would be spent on administration and management related costs, leaving only 16% for direct service delivery. Management and support services received the highest percentage release in 2015 at 79%, followed by primary education (68%), secondary education (56%), Youth and Adult Literacy (49%) and ECE (9%). The concern here is that the allocation to education is well below the SADC recommended threshold of 2015. Similarly, although government contribution to the ECE budget is expected to constitute 92%, much of the funding in 2015 came from Cooperating Partners, while much of the government component of the budget was not released. This authenticates the shadow hand that Cooperating Partners have in the ECE subsector despite our desire for having a home grown budget.

Overall, the 2015 budget releases represented 65% of the education budget. In terms of expenditure, the Ministry achieved a 100% spending rate across subsectors. On the other hand, allocations to tertiary education show that more funds were allocated to University Education in both 2015 (84%) and 2016 (81%) compared to other programmes. This was followed by the skills development programme which was allocated 11% of the higher education budget in both 2015 and 2016. While Science, technology and innovation was allocated 5% and 6% of the Higher Education budget in 2015 and 2016 budget allocations respectively. Overall, the Higher Education budget constituted 18% of national education budget in 2015 compared to 14% the education budget in 2016. The 2016 Higher Education expenditure against the budget totals stood at 93% for University Education, 51% for Skills Development and another 51% for Science, Technology and Innovation by September 2016.

4.0 CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

In conclusion, Zambia has made steady progress in promoting access and participation at primary school level where nearly all the children are currently enrolled in school due to investment in infrastructure due to the growth of other education providers and the declaration of free primary education. However, the major problem that transcend all education subsectors is the poor quality of education. To this effect, the study recommends the following;

1. Government should not see the annexing of ECE centers to primary schools as an end itself, instead, the annexing of ECE to primary schools should be followed by the construction of age appropriate infrastructure as well as provision of furniture and relevant play materials in line with the Ministry's standards and evaluation guidelines.
2. Although Zambia has introduced one of the most progressive and relevant curriculum that can contribute to the improved quality of education, there is urgent need to increase both investments and efficiency in the implementation of the curriculum especially in the delivery of relevant teaching and learning materials as well as the training and deployment of teachers in the newly introduced subjects such as ICT.
3. Similarly, the Ministry should consider addressing the systemic bottlenecks associated with the practical execution of the book procurement and delivery policy at primary school level in order to enhance the transparency and efficiency of the procurement system.
4. The high teacher attrition rate has continued to undermine the efforts targeted at improving the teacher pupil ratios and therefore, the Ministry must address the underlying causes of the high attrition rate and ensure that the loss of teachers is limited to obvious cases such as retirement.
5. Considering that government investment in infrastructure has for a long time been biased towards the construction of more classrooms at the expense of other equally important infrastructure, there is need for increased investment in teachers' houses as well as in school water and sanitation facilities that are also key in contributing to a child friendly school environment.
6. Since the NIF is the main guiding implementation framework for the Ministry of General Education, the Ministry must ensure that NIF IV, unlike was the case with NIF III, operationalizes the *Standards and Evaluation Guidelines* in order to ensure the implementation of various standards contained in this important document including the UNESCO model for conceptualizing quality of education.
7. The Ministry should devise interventions for strengthening the skills of school managers in monitoring and devising strategies for combating teacher absenteeism which contributes significantly to the reduction of pupil teacher contact hours which consequently leads to poor quality of education.
8. The Ministry must strive towards increasing the scheduled contact hours to the level of other education providers such as private schools and Grant Aided Schools to ensure effective teaching and learning processes in public schools.
9. As the Ministry prioritizes the expansion of the primary and secondary school subsectors, there is need not to lose sight of the need to invest in other equally important subsectors such as the Early Childhood Education, Adult Literacy, tertiary and the TEVET subsectors.

10. The Ministry of General Education together with Civil Society Organizations must continue engaging the Ministry of Finance on the need for the increased budgetary allocation to the education sector to the minimum acceptable SADC thresholds of 20% of the national budget or 6% of GDP and further ensure timely release of the budget allocations.
11. The Ministry of General Education will need to expedite the process of developing the National Implementation Framework (NIF IV) for the period 2017 to 2021 to ensure the smooth implementation of the Ministry's long and medium term education priorities.