

AN OVERVIEW OF EDUCATION PROVISION IN ZAMBIA

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Abstract

The purpose of this paper is to present a synopsis of the development and state of the education system in Zambia by revisiting its genesis and discussing its evolution from independence in 1964 up to 2021, from early children through to the tertiary level. The paper used desk research to provide a critical review. It examines the structural alternatives over the years, the major players in the education system, the challenges faced in the education system, and current trends in education. It ends with the conclusion that the education system in Zambia has made progress over the years especially in the areas of quality assurance at different levels. However, recurring challenges continue to devil the system as piecemeal measures have often proven unsuccessful in resolving the challenges.

Keywords: Education system, entrepreneurship education, teacher education, quality assurance, and quality of education.

1.0 INTRODUCTION AND BACKGROUND

This paper is a theoretical discussion that chronicles the development and current status of the education system in Zambia. It covers several themes ranging from the structure of the education system, the major policies, levels of education provision, providers of education, major stakeholders in education, and challenges encountered in educational provision at all levels. However, the focus of the article is on three aspects namely the major stakeholders in education, the levels of education provision and the attendant challenges.

In this discussion of education in Zambia in its historical and current situation, the authors would like, from the onset, to place their discussion in a sociology of education theoretical perspective. To adequately understand the importance of education in Zambia, the authors placed the discussion in theoretical and global perspectives. Since the 1970s, sociologists of education have employed John Meyer's theoretical approach in understanding the development of mass systems of (public)

education throughout the world, whether it be in developed or developing countries. He discusses education or mass schooling from what he calls the institutional theory (Bills, 2004) and Meyer (1977). The institution of education has emerged as one of the most important social institutions in our modern societies. It matters little which government or country one considers - Russia in the north or New Zealand in the south, Japan in the east or the USA in the west -one finds people of all backgrounds, all aspiring to go to school. Even with widespread mixed feelings about the performance of education institutions, and declining confidence in schools because of the growing armies of the unemployed and underemployed, many people worldwide still want their children to go to school (Chakulimba, 2001). The demand and trust in education seem not to be abating over the past decades or from the 20th century to date.

Applying the institutional theory or institutional theoretical approach, Meyer (quoted in Sadovnik & Caughlan, 2016: 14) has argued that:

...schools are global institutions and have developed similarly throughout the world since the 19th century. ... that all over the world mass systems of public education have developed, giving access to more and more people. At the institutional level, schools develop formal and informal rituals and processes that legitimize their existence and functions in society.

Contrary to the thinking of most people, and the views of parents and the policymakers in this country, including some sociologists of education such as Bill (2004), Meyer (1977) is of the view that the expansion of education globally is not necessarily propelled by the labour market or economic factor, but it is because of mere belief in education in a democratic civil society which has contributed to this massive mass education. Although Meyer and colleagues believe that national differences are important, they stress the commonalities among educational institutions and the worldwide belief that mass schooling is important. Further, Baker (2014) has shown that besides shaping individuals, education is also reshaping economic, political, and religious or on a local and global scale.

Using the same institutional theory in comparing the world educational systems, Baker and LeTendre (2005) have stated that there is a set of essential beliefs in the world which have contributed to the development of mass schooling or education. As we examine education systems and our education system in Zambia, we may identify a number of these beliefs which we may, wrongly or rightly, connect to the mass development of education. Among these are: (1) countries should spend money on schooling or education because schools impart standard values in the children, making them responsible citizens who will defend those standard values (Durkheim, 1956: 195); (2) skills, knowledge and “values” which are learned in schools are for the benefit of individuals and society;(3) the individual’s social, economic, or racial, cultural, religious, gender or ethnic status should not impinge on his/her access to education; (4) education is the great equaliser; (5) education contributes to occupational success and mobility, that is, education is connected with job opportunities; (6) educated people are more productive than the uneducated; (7) educated people are more tolerant, accommodating and accepting than those who have not been to school. People believe that education has many functions, prominent

among which is to serve an individual's social and economic well-being and enhance the quality of life.

The level of confidence that people have in schools is quite high the world over. In Zambia for, example, the past two to four decades have witnessed a growing interest, trust and demand for formal education at preschool, primary, secondary and tertiary levels. Concerning this, in his graduation address of April 1988, the Vice-chancellor of the University of Zambia stated:

The demand for higher education has increased tremendously recently. The number of applications received from school leavers for admission to the University this year is of the order of 11,000 and 41% of these or about 4,500 seek admission to science-based programmes (p.3).

Now that education has been cast in theoretical and world-wide perspectives, the authors turn to the discussion of education in Zambia in its current situation. The purpose of education, according to the *Zambian Education Curriculum Framework* (2013), is to foster the overall development of every person and to advance the social and economic well-being of society.

1.1 OVERVIEW OF THE STRUCTURE OF FORMAL EDUCATION SYSTEM IN ZAMBIA

Under the 1976 policy document titled "The Educational Reforms" the school system was restructured as follows: Basic education (Grades 1-9) and secondary school (Grades 10-12). This structure has been changed several times since then. Currently, the Zambian education system is designed to provide seven years of primary education, five years of secondary education (two years junior secondary and three years senior secondary) and four years of university education (7-5-4 structure). Primary school runs from Grade one to Grade seven and is divided into Lower Basic (Grades 1-4), and Upper Basic from Grades 5-7. At the end of the seventh year of Primary school, the Zambia Primary Education Examination is taken and the results are used to determine placement into Junior Secondary School. To progress to high school, pupils have to take and pass a competitive national examination known as the Junior Secondary School Leaving Examination (JSSLE) which pupils complete at the end of Grade 9. Similarly, nationally held competitive examinations are used to determine progression from secondary school to tertiary education at both college and university levels (Manchishi, 2013; MoE, 2010).

During the period ranging from 1991-2011, the structure was changed from 7-2-3 to 9-3 which was 9 years of universal basic education (broken into 7 years of primary and two years of junior secondary), and three years of senior secondary education. During this era, the nomenclature was changed from secondary school to high school, a change that most grant-aided schools resisted as it did not add any value or introduce any real change into the system. The structure again reverted to the 7-2-3 system towards the end of 2011. From 2011 up to date, the 7-2-3 system has been maintained. This structure represents 7 years of primary education, 2 years of junior secondary and 3 years of senior secondary (MoE, 1992).

2.0 **METHODOLOGY**

This paper was anchored on desk research. It relied on data collected and published by others. The authors first identified the topic of discussion, with its attendant purpose. The authors consulted a variety of sources that would provide relevant information. This data was then analysed to decipher themes relevant to the topic. These sources included academic theses and dissertations, websites, government reports, reports by UN agencies and other organisations, surveys, academic journals, newspapers and books and covered the period 1964 to 2021.

3.0 **FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION**

3.1 **Levels of Education Provision in Zambia**

This section discusses in greater depth the different levels of the above structure of the education system in Zambia. These are early childhood education, primary education, junior and senior secondary education, and vocational and tertiary education.

3.1.1 **Preschool/Early Childhood Education**

In its current policy document on Education, *Educating Our Future: National Policy on Education*, the MoE has defined Early Childhood Education (ECE) as ‘an organised form of educational provision for children between the ages of 2 and 6’ (MoE, 1996: p. 8). In Zambia, presently only a small minority of Zambia's children are able to profit from education at this level mainly because there are relatively few early childhood centres (ECC). The majority of these ECEs are privately owned and operated. Additionally, most of them are found in urban areas or along the line of rail where the population is large. This is to ensure economic viability. However, in 2013, the Ministry of Education (MoE) took a significant step forward by recruiting 1,000 Early Childhood Education (ECE) teachers, showcasing the government's dedication to foundational learning. Subsequently, in 2014, the Ministry initiated the annexation of ECE centres to primary schools, leading to the incorporation of 1,526 ECE centres. This expansion has notably benefited 70,000 children, positively influencing school readiness and early learning outcomes across the country. The enrolment ages range from two to five years.

Early childhood education aims at preparing the child for formal education, providing education through play, creating interaction among peers and helping children learn how to work and experience personal enjoyment in learning at an early age. The benefits of ECE are many and varied. The MoE (1996) has listed amongst others, the following benefits of early childhood education for the child:

- a) It supplements the extensive learning that occurs in a child's home and within the home environment
- b) It prepares the child for life at school.
- c) It promotes early experiences in the development of a child's social, physical, mental and emotional capacities.
- d) It prepares children to adapt to the more formal learning atmosphere of the basic school
- e) It helps to build up children's reading culture and to compensate for the disadvantages they may bring from homes where there may be very few reading, writing or other education-related materials.

To sum up, ECE is part of child-rearing experiences provided naturally for all children. The issue currently being debated in the field of education is not whether or not ECE opportunities have to be provided, but rather how best these opportunities can be provided.

3.1.2 Primary School Education

Primary education currently is the formal education which is provided from Grade 1 to Grade 7 in both private and public schools. Officially, a child is supposed to start Grade 1 at the age of 7 and exit Grade 7 at the age of 13. But there are several instances now when children are starting primary school at the age of 6 and in some cases at the age of 5.

Immediately after independence, Zambia experienced an unprecedented expansion of both primary and secondary education. Many new primary schools were built in different districts across the country in 1965. This expansion was so vast that, nearly 1 000 additional teachers were required to teach in primary schools at the beginning of the 1966 academic year. Furthermore, the number of primary schools rose from 2 500 in 1976 to 2 825 by 1982 (Mwanakatwe, 2013).

3.1.3 Junior Secondary School

In the decade 1964 -1974 Zambia achieved the highest expansion in the secondary school sub-sector in Africa. This was a response to the tenets of the Human Capital theory that urged that an educated citizen was necessary for increased productivity and economic growth and development. Junior secondary education which runs for two years from grade 8 to 9 is aimed at producing learners equipped with basic competencies in life skills. These include communication skills, mathematical skills, scientific and technological skills, and information and communications skills. From 2013 the curriculum provides for two-tier career pathways, namely the academic or vocational career pathways. The Vocational Career Pathway is tailored for learners with ambitions and interests in technical and practical occupations while the academic career pathway is tailored towards learners with inclinations towards academic progression (MoESTVE, 2013).

3.1.4 Senior Secondary Education

From as early as 1968, the curriculum for secondary school was diversified to include practical subjects such as technical drawing, secretarial practice, typewriting, technology, agricultural science farm practice, etc. (MOESTVE, 2013). Since then, the curriculum for secondary education has undergone many changes while maintaining the core principle of contributing to the social and economic development of the nation and learners' realisation of their academic potential. In recent times, there has been an emphasis on imparting entrepreneurial skills to all learners so that they take up adult roles and contribute positively to the development of the nation (MoESTVE, 2013). The purpose of senior secondary is to adequately prepare learners for tertiary education. Just like at the Junior Secondary School level, the curriculum at the Senior Secondary School provides for the two-tier career pathways, namely the academic or vocational career pathways. As Manchishi (2013, p.2) records 'the long-term policy for [secondary] schools is to have some of them specialised in technology, practical areas, commercial studies while others will continue to offer general academic programmes.'

The duration of the senior secondary school programme which leads to the attainment of the School Certificate or General Certificate of Education is three years from Grade 10 to Grade 12.

Most secondary schools that exist in the different districts were built or opened in 1965. Eighteen co-education secondary schools and three single-sex secondary schools were built in rural areas. For instance, single-sex boarding schools were built at Mbereshi for girls, and Mwense and Kenneth Kaunda for boys. Co-education boarding schools were built at Lundazi, Petauke, Kalabo and Kalomo, to mention but a few. In addition, six secondary day schools were built in urban centres on the Copperbelt and in Lusaka (Mwanakatwe, 2013). Currently, girls' technical schools have been built in nearly every province and a lot of secondary schools, both day and boarding have been built across the country.

3.1.5 Vocational and Technical Education

Since the establishment of education in Zambia, in Northern Rhodesia during the colonial period under missionary education, mission schools offered technical education at the basic level. The idea of missionaries offering technical education was to prepare the labour force at the lower level to help them construct the houses and schools at the mission stations and also to prepare the few young people to be self-sufficient. So mission schools at mission stations offered basic carpentry, brick laying, joinery, building and basic agricultural knowledge. Each missionary school at the primary and secondary levels introduced technical education, which were called Jeans Schools.

After independence, in the sixties and seventies, all secondary schools had technical drawing and wood work workshops while others had metal work workshops which have continued, up to this time. Unfortunately, though the government established technical schools at lower and higher levels, which trained artisans and lower-level technicians at ZAST and NORTEC, the popularity of these institutions has not been high. This is because students who went and still go to these colleges were considered to be of low cognitive calibre compared to those who pursued academic and higher technical programmes. Ever since the introduction of technical and vocational training in this country, skills training has not enjoyed high respect in society. Men and women trained in technical education have not been treated with the same respect as those with general and academic education. Similarly, qualifications for trade schools were lower than for those in academic education, poor pay, and bad working conditions.

In the first few years of independence, the government increased the provision of general and academic education to fill in the positions left by colonial masters. Very little attention was given to the provision of skilled workers for the industry. Such great attention to academic education was because Zambians felt that they were for a long time excluded from positions of power, wealth and prestige by colonial masters by denying them academic education. (Hoppers, 1985).

However, the provision of training under TEVETA is anchored on the following two fundamental principles:

a. Implementation of a technical and vocational training process influenced by demand. This is aimed at preparing trainees for formal employment through formal institutions of learning under formal training. This is the type of training that takes place in formal technical and vocational training institutions, such as those registered under TEVETA, which may be government or privately owned, offering traditional technical and vocational skills for which there is certification. The participants are being prepared to work mainly in the formal employment sector.

b. The second concern is the provision of systems for sustainable delivery of training and offering of services for entrepreneurship and informal sector training. Informal sector training is the kind of training mainly offered through traditional apprenticeships and non-formal training establishments where learning is not purposefully organized. Learning may be by observing in an informal setting, and not certified in many cases, and if it is certified, it is by a certificate of attendance. In this situation, the participants are usually not highly educated and the trainers may also be of lower education attainment. But the purpose is to produce learners who can be self-employed or join a skill-driven employment competently.

In recent times, there has been renewed interest in technical and vocational training. Successive governments have demonstrated renewed interest in technical and vocational training, with the building of skills training centres in some districts across the country, coupled with the new interest in science and technology, leading to the Science, Technology, English, Maths (STEM) schools, which have been introduced as technical secondary schools. There has been renewed emphasis on the vocationalisation of the school curriculum that had earlier been prioritised under the 1977 Educational Reforms already discussed in this paper. This was in response to the worsening problem of unemployed school leavers and grade 9 drop outs. For most graduates of the primary and secondary school system, education seemed to have become a meaningless endeavour that bore no tangible economic fruits. The relevance of the education that was being offered came under intense scrutiny.

3.1.6 College Education

In Zambia, the discussion of college education is essentially at two levels, colleges affiliated with TEVET, the government organ that runs vocational and technical institutes under the Ministry of Science and Technology and Colleges of Education run by the MoE. Kalimaposo (2010) has detailed the development of teacher education in Zambia which initially was being offered by various missionary societies before the government stepped in after independence (Mwanakatwe, 2013). The massive expansion at the primary and secondary levels brought out the need for more teachers. This prompted the MoE to venture into alternative teacher education curricula to train teachers.

From 1964 to date, teacher education in Zambia has gone through many changes. The key ones are discussed in this section. To align the new primary school curriculum with the teacher education curriculum, the Zambian Primary Course was developed for teachers and introduced in 1967. The introduction of ZPC brought about drastic changes in both teacher and primary school education. In tandem with the new school structure, the teachers' educational curriculum was equally restructured. One of the key focuses was on the use of English as a medium of instruction. Through the 1966 Education Act, Zambia adopted English as the official medium of instruction.

The ZPC was replaced by what was known as the Zambia Basic Education Course (ZBEC). From 1975 to 1997, the Zambia Basic Education Course (ZBEC) was offered with an emphasis on Science, Mathematics, Technology, Political Education and Production Units. English remained the medium of instruction. Later in 1997, the Field-Based Teacher Training Approach (FIBATTA) for primary school teachers was introduced. Its major focus was addressing the shortage of trained teachers in the country. Barely three months after it was launched, was FIBATTA discontinued. It was replaced by the Zambia Teacher Education Reform Programme (ZATERP) which ran for three years, from 1997 to 2000 (Kalimaposo, 2010). From January 2000 to 2007, the programme was offered in all existing ten colleges and was renamed the Zambia Teacher Education Course (ZATEC) in 2008/2000, upon which it was transformed into a three-year diploma offered in all colleges including the private colleges affiliated to the University of Zambia and other universities. It was for primary school teachers and was structured as follows: first-year was college-based while the second year was school-based. The programme was donor-supported (DANIDA). When the donors pulled out, the programme was discontinued.

In place of ZATEC, the *Teacher Qualification Reforms of 2020* introduced a Diploma programme in Education for Primary School Teachers. This is the current teacher qualification being offered in colleges of education. It is of three years duration and affiliated to the University of Zambia and other universities, both public and private.

Chakulimba (1986) has recorded that prior to the liberalisation of the training of secondary school teachers in the 1990s, the country had only ten colleges of education for primary education; – Mufulira, Mansa, Chipata, Solwezi, David Livingstone, Macolm Moffat, Kasama, Kitwe, Mongu and Charles Lwanga; one Special Education Teacher Training College and one In-Service Primary Teachers College, three secondary teachers' training colleges (Nkrumah, the Technical Vocational Teacher's College (TVTC), and the Copperbelt Secondary Teachers' College (COSETCO)) and the School of Education of the University of Zambia.'

More colleges were established in the 1990s and enrolments in the new as well as the existing colleges increased tremendously. More recently, private colleges, most of which are affiliated with various universities, have started offering teacher education programmes. More than 20 colleges affiliated with the University of Zambia offer diploma programmes for secondary and primary school teachers (AUCE, 2015).

One of the major changes in the training of primary school teachers was the introduction of a degree programme at the University of Zambia in 1995. The aim was to enhance primary education and improve the status and prestige of primary school educators. The three colleges of education (TVTC, Nkrumah and COSETCO) train junior secondary school teachers, and the University of Zambia trains both junior and senior secondary school teachers. In 2005, the entry requirement for all colleges of education and universities was five 'O' levels inclusive of the English language. The colleges and universities are now competing for the best performers in the secondary school examinations.

Our discussion shows that the reforms were focused on the primary education sector. Apart from ZATEC which attempted to introduce reflective pedagogy, all the other

reforms focused on training (teaching skills) instead of focusing on teacher education (professional teacher development). It is in this vain that the authors are proposing in this paper, a teacher educational curriculum which will prepare a teacher who is an innovator, problem solver and critical thinker.

3.1.7 University Education

As of 2022, there were 52 private universities and 9 public universities in Zambia (Higher Education Authority, 2023) (For further information on university education in Zambia, refer to the Higher Education Authority 2022 annual report titled *‘The State of Higher Education in Zambia; Curricula in Higher Education.’*). It is worth noting that public universities in Zambia have faced a lot of turbulence caused by student riots and industrial action by academic staff throughout their existence (Ndulo, 2019), although it must be acknowledged that in recent times, the situation is changing for the better.

3.2 MAJOR POLICIES IN THE ZAMBIAN EDUCATION SYSTEM: 1964-2021

Since independence successive Zambian governments have made significant strides in developing the education sector. In archiving this, various policies have been implemented. The development of education in Zambia is anchored on the Education Act of 2011 and can be linked to numerous policy pronouncements. Since independence, Zambia has had three major educational policy documents, namely; the *Educational Reforms Proposals and Recommendations* of 1977, *Focus on Learning* of 1992 and *Educating our Future* of 1996. These are the focus of this section.

3.2.1 The Education Act of 1966

The Education Act of 1966, 2011 and 2016, as a piece of legislation, stipulates the circumstances under which education is to be provided to Zambians. Among the significant provisions of the law is that every child be given the opportunity to an education. The Education Act guarantees that no child may be refused admission to any school or hostel on the grounds of his or her race or religion. Further, among other things, the Education Act provides for learner’s rights and responsibilities as well as teachers’ rights and responsibilities. In line with the Act, Zambian education policies firmly reject discrimination against children by the education system. This commitment is expressed in many policies, including the *‘Educating our Future: National Policy on Education* (GRZ/MoE, 1996) which includes as one of its guiding principles, the acceptance and value of ‘all persons based on their worth and dignity, irrespective of gender, religion, ethnic origin, or any other discriminatory characteristic.

Increasingly, children with disabilities are protected from discrimination by a host of policies and programmes which include the *‘Educating our Future: National Policy on Education* (GRZ/MoE, 1996) which commits the MoE to provide equality of educational opportunity for children with special educational needs by ensuring the identification and enrolment of children with disabilities, as far as possible, into mainstream schools as well as through the provision of appropriate curricula, infrastructure and teachers trained in special education.

3.2.2 Educational Reforms of 1977

By 1975, it became clear that the education system was too academic and that it was not practical enough to meet the country’s challenges. There was, therefore, a need to

reform it. Hence, the national debate took place between 1975 and 1977 and culminated in a policy document titled *The Educational Reform* (Manchishi, 2013). The most important feature or thesis of this policy was that of ‘Study and work, and work and Study’ (Chakulimba, 1986). This had two ideas: a). Learners/pupils should contribute to the economic development of the country; thus the introduction of production units in learning institutions. b). Workers should improve on their skills or qualifications; this was balanced on the idea that educated workers are more productive than non-educated ones.

The *Educational Reforms Policy of 1977* further emphasized education as a vehicle for individual and national development. This was in tandem with the new school structure mentioned earlier, which was premised on the conviction that basic education had higher rates of social return. This entailed that if quality primary/basic education was provided, it would not only benefit the majority of the population but, it would also contribute to the development of the nation (GRZ/MoE, 1977)

Focus on Learning: Strategies for the Development of School Education in Zambia (1992)
In 1992 as a response to the 1990 Jomtiem Conference on Education for All (EFA), the MoE produced a policy document, *Focus on Learning*. The policy focused on primary education. It emphasized the need for the mobilization of resources for the development of schools. Firstly, through this policy, education was viewed as a vehicle for fostering to the fullest possible extent the development of every individual for their fulfilment while being a significant member of the Zambian community. Secondly, *Focus on Learning* emphasized the provision of compulsory quality seven-year primary education. Thirdly, it sought to improve teacher training both in terms of content and access (Manchishi, 2013; GRZ/MoE, 1992).

3.2.3 Educating Our Future (1996)

In 1996, the MoE came up with another policy document - *Educating Our Future: National Policy on Education* whose focus was on liberalization, decentralization, equality, equity and partnership in education. It stresses the importance of education for all children in primary, secondary and tertiary educational institutions (GRZ/MoE, 1996). The document in addition provided some guidelines for teacher development and also addressed issues of access to education. Under the 1996 policy document, many policy initiatives were enforced. These included the Programme for the Advancement of Girls Education (PAGE) in 1994 and the Re-entry policy of 1997 that allowed girls who got pregnant to get back to school. Both of these policies were introduced to address gender inequalities in education, particularly at the primary and secondary school levels. During the period 1991-2011, Education management boards were introduced across the education spectrum ranging from primary to college levels.

After *Educating our Future: National Policy on Education*, many policy pronouncements and documents have guided the delivery of education in Zambia. These include the introduction of entrepreneurship education in 2013 and the raising of qualifications expected of trainee teachers and teacher educators. This included *Teacher Qualification Reforms* that brought about the introduction of a Diploma in Education for Primary School Teachers. In place of ZATEC, a diploma primary teacher’s programme was launched. This is the current teacher qualification being offered in colleges of education. It is of three years duration and affiliated to the University of Zambia.

Another policy implemented was the Free Primary Education policy introduced in 2002 and re-emphasized in 2021, leading to increased enrolment in primary and secondary schools. In between, in 2013 the curriculum was revised. The 2013 curriculum follows a two-tier system of academic and vocational training (GRZ/MoESTVT, 2013). This represents a turn-around back to what was in place during the post-colonial period from 1964 to the early 1990s. With the re-pronounced free education at the Primary and Secondary education levels, there are now more and more children attending schools, especially day schools, while the CDF bursaries for those going to boarding schools are increasing access the children to secondary education, and giving hope to the reduction in child marriages, and reduction in illiteracy. However, this may pose a challenge as we shall see under the challenges section.

Further policy changes relate to the introduction of quality assurance in the tertiary sector. Over the years the universities, especially the old public universities have had their internal quality assurance mechanisms, but now the government has created two agencies overseeing the quality of education at the tertiary level, the Zambia Qualifications Authority (ZAQA) and the Higher Education Authority (HEA) instituted in 2013 and 2015 respectively. Additionally, in 2006 the Ministry of Education through the Examinations Council of Zambia introduced the school-based assessment policy that was part of the examinations reforms.

3.3 PROVIDERS OF EDUCATION IN ZAMBIA

The history of education in this country has shown that many providers of education are involved in the Zambian education system, from early education to university education. Whatever the level, the MoE is responsible for providing education to its citizens and has direct responsibility for the employment of teachers for government schools, distribution of teaching and learning resources, and implementation of education policies. The liberalization of education provision which started in the late 1980s has facilitated fundamental changes in the education system and the introduction of partnerships with religious organizations, private organisations, international organisations, communities, local governments, and individuals.

A brief outlook of these education providers is important because how much education is provided, to whom it is provided, at what level and what quality of education is provided, are all influenced directly or indirectly by the philosophies, ideologies, beliefs, vision for the country of the providers or by economic, political or racial motives (Chakulimba, 2006). It should be noted that all learners regardless of their socio-economic background should be facilitated in the attainment of the highest standards of learning through the quality teaching/learning process.

The Government through the MoE is by far the biggest provider and custodian of education in Zambia. As earlier alluded to, the government is not able to provide quality education to each child. This is attributed to the continued economic challenges. This has created the need for other stakeholders to join the government in the provision of education. Since 1991 when education provision was liberalised, the Government of the Republic of Zambia invited partnerships to supplement its efforts in the provision of education. Churches, communities, Non-governmental organisations (NGOs) and

individuals mobilized themselves and came up with community schools in response to the government's invitation.

The status of education in Zambia today cannot be complete without looking at the phenomenon of the community schools which began to emerge around 1995 run by church organisations, Non-Governmental Organisations (NGOs) and communities to provide education to children that for some reason or another are not able to access education in government or private schools. ZCSS (2004:1) defines a community school as "a school established by the community, in the community and run by the community." The church organisations and Non-Governmental Organisations (NGOs) support some community schools in terms of providing educational materials, infrastructure, food supplements, second-hand clothing and radios. In addition to providing education, the Zambia Open Community Schools (ZOCS), a community-based NGO whose mission is to enable some of Zambia's most needy children to access basic quality education, is the key player concerning community schools. ZOCS has also been working with communities to construct permanent school buildings by mobilizing their community to provide the physical labour, whilst the NGO sources the funds to construct permanent buildings (Hamaimbo, 2006). This phenomenon has now become part of the Zambian education system and is catering to as many children as possible. Since then these community schools have been in existence up to this day and they have been supplementing the government's efforts in the provision of education to the citizens of Zambia (Mwansa, 2006). Hamaimbo (2006) has stated that ZOCS' goals are designed to provide education to those children excluded from government schools. The involvement of communities in education provision is a good initiative because it has and continues to enable vulnerable children access education.'

In addition, various churches run schools. These include the Catholic Church, the Salvation Army, the Seventh Day Adventist Church, The Christian Missions in Many Lands (CMML), the United Church of Zambia (UCZ), Pilgrim Wesleyan Church, Reformed Church in Zambia, Brethren in Christ, Anglican Church, Evangelical Church of Zambia, etc., all of which are represented by their Education Secretaries in what is known as Forum for Education Secretaries for Grant-Aided Schools.

Higher education is run by various other ministries besides the MoE such as the Ministry of Science and Technology, Ministry of Health, Ministry of Tourism, and Ministry of Community Development and Social Welfare. Together with the private sector, these ministries offer certificates, diplomas and degrees in a variety of disciplines.

3.4 MAJOR PLAYERS IN THE EDUCATION SECTOR

One important feature of the education system, which needs to be considered in this chapter is the number of stakeholders, who have played a great role in the implementation of different programmes and activities in the system. Over the years, the Zambian education system especially at the primary level has benefited from the involvement of various international and local organisations. These have contributed through the funding of various programmes in the education sector. These organisations include governmental bilateral organisations such as the Canadian International Development Agency (CIDA), the Danish International Development (DANIDA), the Finnish International Development Agency (FINIDA), the Swedish International Development Cooperation Agency (SIDA), the Norwegian Agency for

Development Cooperation (NORAD), the Japanese International Cooperation Agency (JICA), the Department for International Development (DFID), the World Bank and the Netherlands Development Organisation (SNV). Other players are international non-government organizations such as OXFAM, Project Concern International (PCI), World Vision International (WVI) and Plan International. Other players are United Nations (UN) agencies like the United Nations Education, Scientific and Cultural Organisation (UNESCO), and the United Nations Children's Emergency Fund (UNICEF).

In the 1980s and 90s especially, CIDA, DANIDA, FINIDA, SIDA, SNV, JICA, DFID, OXFAM and the World Bank had come together to fund various aspects of the primary, and later basic subsector of the education system. This funding was operationalized through implementation projects in the Ministry of Education. These projects included ZEPIU for infrastructure development, book production, and CPD. These projects contributed immensely to the advancement of the education sector, especially in terms of classroom infrastructure, learning and teaching materials. The World Bank and FINNIDA concentrated on classroom infrastructure in secondary schools and colleges of education respectively. UNESCO. UNICEF. On its part, World Vision International has over the years supported community schools in most parts of Zambia particularly in Lusaka, Northern and Southern Provinces through the provision of educational materials, second-hand clothing and sports equipment such as footballs to many communities schools in the above-cited provinces. Similarly, Project Concern International (PCI) has supported community schools in the form of food supplements. It provides a soya mealie meal which is used to prepare porridge for the children to facilitate their learning process. Plan International also provides education through community schools by constructing permanent structures used as classrooms.

Further, many local NGOs have been active in providing assorted educational support. The Forum for the Advancement of Women's Education in Zambia (FAWEZA), now known as CAMFED, has for many years now been spearheading the advancement of girls' education through the Programme for the Advancement of Girl Child Education (PAGE) implemented in 1994 across the Republic of Zambia. Similarly, different churches, predominantly the Catholic Church, the United Church of Zambia, the Seventh Day Adventist Church, and other religious groups have been prominent in advocating for and promoting girls' education throughout the country.

3.5 CHALLENGES IN THE ZAMBIAN EDUCATION SECTOR

In the process of providing education contentious issues usually arise relating amongst others to the relevance, adequacy and quality of education that is provided. Numerous Zambian scholars have identified and discussed a plethora of challenges confronting the education system in Zambia. The most common challenge that refuses to go away is the underfunding of the education sector (Carmody, 2004; Kelly, 1999; Kaluba, 1986) which leads to a horde of related issues such as high teacher-pupil ratio, inadequate classroom space, inadequate desks in school forcing pupils to learn when seated on the floor or when crowded in desks with other pupils, poor infrastructure and poor facilities such as inadequate sanitation facilities and insufficient supplies of clean water in both schools and tertiary institutions of learning, poor working conditions for teachers, lack of and inadequate teaching and learning materials such as textbooks, and extra-curricular equipment/facilities for learners' engagement in extracurricular programmes among others.

Gender disparity that favours males is still a major issue of concern in Zambia's education system (Masaiti & Chita, 2014; Mbewe, 2006). While the girls' participation is satisfactory at lower primary levels with their enrolment being almost equal to that of boys, there is cause for grave concern that afterwards the number and proportion of girls attending school and higher institutions fall off sharply (GRZ/MoE, 1992). The underprivileged situation of girls remains a very acute educational problem as many girls at primary quickly lapse back into illiteracy, swelling the already unacceptably large number of female illiterates in the country. This is due to many reasons such as long walking distances to school GRZ/MoE (1996), work overload through domestic chores at home, and cultural beliefs and practices which favour boys against girls. This situation needs to be corrected if girls are to have equality of opportunities to enable them to achieve equal outcomes in education. Oxfam (2005) states that gender discrimination is a major cause of poverty in many poor countries.

Another challenge that has run through the education system in Zambia has been a failure to marry theory with practice (GRZ/MoE, 2001). Efforts represented in key policy documents like the *1977 Educational Reforms* (GRZ/MoE, 1977) through to the *1996 National Policy on Education: Educating our Future* have produced minimal results. However, the 2013 ZECF seems to have attained a level of success not seen before.

Within teacher education, given the many universities and colleges currently churning out teachers, the poor regulatory capacity of authorities (Banja, 2022), means the status of the teaching profession is at risk. The quality of the teachers produced could cause pupils and the public alike to question their qualifications. Banja (2022; 2016), Muzata (2017), Mulenga (2015) and Masaiti and Manchishi (2011) have all bemoaned the poor training standards of teachers at the university level resulting in poorly qualified teachers. Some of the issues of concern have been related to overloading courses with irrelevant content and poorly qualified teacher educators. Furthermore, Banja (2016) has lamented the lack of systematic induction and mentorship for newly qualified teachers.

In addition, there has been volatility in the formulation of education policies, and high turnover of education programmes (Kalimaposo, 2010), poor implementation of these programmes, and mushrooming of unmonitored private schools.

3.6 TRENDS, PROSPECTS AND FUTURE NEEDS

It is the view of the authors that top on the list to rectify the mistakes of the past and improve education delivery in Zambia, authorities must ensure gender equality in education. This view is supported by Manchishi and Hamweete (2018) who have suggested among others, that education for girls be accorded equal status to that of boys; that the quality of primary and secondary school education be improved and further that secondary school education be expanded. In addition, the government has in place special bursary schemes for girls. Some NGOs have also established such bursary schemes (GRZ/MoE, 1992).

In recent years, many players have entered the liberalized education sector and provided education at all levels of our education system. With this development has come controlling agencies which are interested in the quality assurance of educational programmes, at all levels of our education system. At the primary, secondary and college levels, the government has introduced the Teaching Council of Zambia. Over

the years the universities, especially the old universities have had their internal quality assurances, but two agencies have since been created to oversee the quality of education at the tertiary level – Zambia Qualifications Authority (ZAQA) and the Higher Education Authority (HEA).

Another positive development was the upgrading of Chalimbana, Nkrumah and Mukuba colleges of education into universities. In addition, the Posts and Telecommunications College in Ndola was upgraded into a university (ICT University) that trains teachers in ICT. Furthermore, the Robert Makasa University of Technology was built and also trains teachers of ICT to train industrial teachers and will promote the use of technology in teacher education. Together with the University of Zambia, Copperbelt and Mulungushi Universities, this has brought the total number of government universities now offering teacher education programmes at degree level in various fields of specialization to eight.

The experts of education financing, would probably advise the MoE to increase funding to both primary and secondary schools, and to build more schools to reduce on congestion and teacher-pupil ratio if quality of education in government schools has to be improved. Unless measures are taken to improve the quality of education in public schools, the country will be faced with the same problem it faced decades ago when quantitative expansion took place after independence. This is the problem of poor quality education which leads to production of poorly educated citizens who permanently remain disadvantaged in comparison to those who attend grant-aided schools and private schools.

The future in education looks eventful, especially with the coming of the new government in 2021, which has already proposed a lot of policy changes while some, such as free education, have already been implemented. A proposed new curriculum is yet to be implemented. The authors are aware that scholars and other stakeholders have already begun interacting with these changes. For instance, Kapambwe, Bwalya and Chibwili (2024) have discussed the effects of the free education policy on the provision of primary and secondary education in Zambia. This paper, however, did not concern itself with these proposed and in some cases, newly introduced changes.

4.0 CONCLUSIONS AND IMPLICATIONS

It is clear from the foregoing discussion that the Zambian education system has undergone a lot of changes since independence in 1964. There has been non-stop change in the policies and practices governing the delivery of education at all levels of the education spectrum. The major debates have revolved around the skills levels of school graduates that would enable them to increase their worth but also contribute to economic growth and development at the national level. The overall rate of progression in the education system as a whole has been slow but the different policies have over the years facilitated progress in different aspects of the education system. It is therefore critical that a holistic approach to educational reform is taken rather than the gradual piecemeal sectoral approach that has characterized the development of the education system in Zambia.

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