



JCTR

**Promotion of Social Justice and
Concerns for the Poor**

Policy Brief on: Accessible and Quality Education
for All

By

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“Education is the most powerful weapon we can use to change the world”

Nelson Mandela

JESUIT CENTRE FOR THEOLOGICAL REFLECTION

Promoting Faith and Justice

Summary

Economic, Social and Cultural Rights are vital for dignity of human life. These rights are incorporated into the Universal Declaration of Human Rights (1948) to which Zambia is committed by its constitution. Education, as one of these rights, is not only essential for nurturing personal and intellectual character but also for the country as a whole, in developing its political, social and economic landscape. Ultimately a well-educated population can only make Zambia a more prosperous country.

In order to promote social justice - in this case the access to quality education for all - JCTR applies the Church Social Teaching (CST). This is a framework of social wisdom which guides us on how to live out our faith according to the word of God.

From a Church Social Teaching perspective, education is key to the promotion of the fullness of life, both in terms of encouraging participation in wider society and creating solidarity amongst people. Extending education to some of the poorest in Zambia, is a demonstration of a commitment to an additional CST principle: 'options for the poor and vulnerable'; a group of people that is often overlooked and unspoken for in relation to educational opportunities.

“Education is not only a human right, but it is also an essential tool for individuals to break the poverty cycle” (UNICEF)

Education in Zambia has gone through a number of significant legal and institutional reforms since independence in 1964. The main objectives were to develop an education system that belonged to and was relevant to Zambia. This was the start of National Development Plans in relation to education. Some of the elementary reforms included revising the structure of

education, increasing enrollment, expanding facilities and providing more comprehensive training of teachers.

Undoubtedly these have been ongoing reforms and there has been continual pressure for Zambia to adapt to the changing educational needs of its people. With the 2030 vision to become “a prosperous middle income Nation”, the onset of the 21st century committed to achieving both old and new targets by 2015.

According to a report on Millennium Development Goals (2008), the MDG (2) to have Universal Primary Education, was one of the most likely targets to be met, conceivably on account of having one of the strongest national support systems. In addition to commitment from government policy, there has been a number of sub-policies and programmes and cooperation from non-governmental organisations (NGOs), faith-based organisations (FBOs) and community based organisations (CBOs). This has undoubtedly helped to bolster the provision of education throughout the country.

Whilst there has been considerable improvement in areas across the board- and this brief will highlight and commend this where possible- undoubtedly there is still work to be done. Most notably, ‘Education for All’ in Zambia has still not been fully realised, leaving a percentage of children and adult learners deprived of a basic human right.

“If Government neglects to educate its people, it consigns them to a life of exclusion” (Chompolola, 2015, p.14)

This policy paper mainly draws on the JCTR’s findings from surveys taken in Mongu, Monze, Kasama and Kabwe, as well as other National reports taken from Ministry of Education and Millennium Development goals. It briefly aims to explain the current situation of education in Zambia and its on-going development and challenges, as well as offer appropriate

recommendations to help unlock Zambia's education potential. It is worth noting that this paper is predominantly focused around the urban picture. This being the case, where issues have been resolved in urban areas, it is likely that they remain a major hurdle for rural areas. Likewise, the challenges that urban areas continue to face are presumably exacerbated in rural areas, on account of more severe poverty levels. Henceforth, education in rural areas can only be properly addressed alongside rural development. Of course urban areas are one step ahead of this and so naturally some of the challenges and recommendations in this paper are more sensitive to this context.

It is hoped that policy makers and duty bearers will understand the importance of accessible and quality education for all through a Human Rights lens and hence endeavor to do all that is possible to promote, implement and monitor necessary reforms.

Introduction

Undoubtedly education is a high priority issue for Zambia. Through education Zambia can become a stronger, more successful and cohesive country. Not only does education address basic needs, such as the eradication of illiteracy but it also serves other valuable purposes. It is evident, that education is an indispensable tool for engaging in politics at any level- local/national, amateur/professional. For example, the possession of knowledge of basic rights and skills associated with political engagement can be vital for realising and maintaining such. This is ever more pressing for the more marginalised in society. Furthermore, the learning and development of life skills are crucial for every-day functioning. In terms of Zambia's specific needs, education is key in areas such as agriculture or agribusiness, health issues such as Malaria and HIV/AIDS as well as healthy living and nutrition.

Also those advancing in both vocational and academic expertise are valuable human capital within the national and international market.

“Education is a powerful tool to economic emancipation of an individual and a nation” (Honorable Dora Siliya MP, Ministry of Education Policy Statement, 2011)

With regards to ‘Access to Education’, lack of finances is a major barrier to education at different stages, whether it’s initial access to the institution or cost of required resources for learning across an individual’s education span. Those who are living on the poverty line simply cannot afford the maintenance. Furthermore, poverty levels are also associated with poor health and sanitation, which are also factors likely to inhibit people from being able to fully access education. Despite efforts to eradicate this barrier to education, Zambia is still off its national target of 100% basic education (early childhood-Grade 9) for all. This being the case, it is important to understand the more nuanced factors that prevent or obstruct access to education and subsequently recommend measures to appease these problems.

The second issue to be considered is ‘Quality of Education’. Notably this aspect has not been as fully developed and implemented in comparison to access. Whilst it seems logical that access to education is a first priority, it is vital that quality of education accompanies this; ultimately, the two should not be separate but rather develop simultaneously, i.e. opening and maintaining high quality educational institutional facilities throughout Zambia.

System of School Education in 4 stages:



What is accessible Education?

Accessible education is concerned with geographical demographics and also finance. Both equally important concerns are: being in reasonable travelling distance, i.e. within 30 minutes travel time from an education institution and making education affordable at all levels.

What is quality Education?

Quality education involves the basic welfare and flourishing of students and teachers. It is ensuring an accessible, safe and enriching environment for teaching and learning as well as appropriate and good quality facilities and resources. It is vital that education is specific to the needs of the individuals, including knowledge and skills related to national requirements and goals. To ensure that high quality education is maintained it is important to have necessary reviews of institutional management, teacher training and pupil achievement.

Education Goals

Government Mission Statement

“The mission of the Ministry of Education is to guide the provision of education for all Zambians so that they are able to pursue knowledge and skills, manifest excellence in performance and moral uprightness, defend democratic ideals, and accept and value other persons on the basis of their personal worth and dignity, irrespective of gender, religion,

*ethnic origin, or any other discriminatory characteristic.”
(Educating our Future, n.d)*

Development Goals (Education for All 2015 National Review)

Goal 1: Expanding and improving comprehensive early childhood care, with particular focus on OAV (orphan and vulnerable)

Goal 2: Ensuring all children have access to and complete primary education of a good quality

Goal 3: Ensuring learning needs of all young people and adults are met through equitable access to learning and life-skills programmes

Goal 4: Achieving a 50% improvement in levels of adult literacy, particularly in women

Goal 5: Eliminating gender disparities and achieving gender equality

Goal 6: Improving all aspects of quality education and ensuring excellence of all so that measurable outcomes are achieved especially in literacy, Mathematics and life skills.

Education Policy and Programmes

The right to education is clearly stated in legislation, both on an international (as indicated by the Universal Declaration of HR) and continental level shown in this African Charter. This has inspired domestic efforts in Zambia to work towards a policy of accessible and quality education. The development of a national policy framework is certainly a positive starting point, on account of the fact that it is written declaration of Zambia's commitment to Education. In theory, this means that government and duty-bearers are legally bound and thus can

be held accountable for any discrepancies within the education system. Nonetheless the lived reality still remains very distant from this. This is perhaps due to the lack of or under developed sub-policies to address the challenges that intersect with access and quality education as well as sufficient follow up of implementation.

African Charter on Human and People's Rights (1981) Article 17: The Right to Education

1. Every individual shall have the right to education
2. Every individual may freely take part in the cultural life of his community
3. The promotion and protection of morals and traditional values recognised by the community shall be the duty of the state

'Educating our Future' (1996)

This legislation stresses the importance of education for all children in primary, secondary and tertiary institutions. The main objectives are decentralization, productivity, effective management, cost sharing and curriculum relevance and diversification. In order to properly facilitate such, government has tapped into the skills and resources of private, church and community organisations.

'Free Primary Education Policy' (2002) under 'Education for All'

Ultimately, the keystone in any national plan should be making education free and compulsory. There is evidence to suggest that economically driven education creates a divergence between class and gender entering the education system; privileging the elite and more often than not, boys. Government ownership of schools and abolition of user fees are therefore essential.

Education Act (2011)

In a review of this act, education was made compulsory. But still this only applies to Primary Education.

School Health and Nutrition (2006)

This policy is underpinned by the ethos of Educating our Future. As a part of quality education, attention to health care is vital. Since health can be a huge factor that inhibits access to education, it seems only necessary that education institutions cooperate with health issues and are an effective and stable support system for healthy development. The programme adopts a holistic approach to the physical, social and mental health of children. Not only does it aim to address the education of health risks, issues and management but also provide necessary services to children such as access to nutritional food, safe water and exercise.

Programme for the Advancement for Girls' Education (PAGE)

In order to address issues of gender disparity this programme seeks to monitor and analyse female participation in education, including what policies and strategies are employed to improve female participation. It also works on promoting public awareness of the importance of girls' education.

Current Situation

Achievements

Certainly education is considered a high priority in national development and, as a result, has been allocated greater public funding. The majority of this has been received by primary schools, where government has abolished all tuition fees. The reports from Mongu and Kasama reveal that majority of respondents felt the 'Free Primary Education' policy (2002) had enhanced access to education. The 'Educational for All' (EFA)

National Review shows that the Net Enrolment Ratio is 100%, which means that the enrolment rate corresponds to the population of children; this demonstrates the government's pledge to enrolling children in education. However there is a notable divergence in the Net Intake Rate of primary school children. Although this rate has increased by 10% from 2004 to 2014, it is still 43% of the national target of 100%.

With regards to children remaining in primary education, the EFA National Review observed substantial improvement. Results show that by 2014 there was a 99.04% completion rate. It would seem that once children start primary education they are extremely likely to continue; this suggests that children are experiencing fewer inhibiting factors at this level of education.

Across Monze, Mongu, Kabwe and Kasama it appears that geographical access was not a major obstacle to accessing education. The surveys revealed that majority of children were within a 30 minute travel time from their school. It was also noted that the most common mode of travel was walking. The findings of these reports could be taken as a general indicator that geographical access is therefore not a common problem within urban areas. Unfortunately, the same cannot be said for rural areas; the location of a central and accessible educational institutional still remains a problem, largely due to the sporadic settlements of people. With this in mind, we cannot deduce that geographical access of schools has been adequately addressed.

Challenges

As already mentioned, data from the EFA National Review (2015) indicates that the Net Enrollment rate is still falling short of the 100% target, at a still disappointing 57%. Despite the fact that government abolished primary tuition fees under the 'Free Primary Education' policy in 2002, all four surveys in Mongu, Monze, Kabwe and Kasama suggest that lack of finances is still

a huge constraint on access to education. This is perhaps due to the additional costs encountered in schools. For example, school uniform, text books, food and sports clubs. Although government introduced a new law under the Education Act 2011, that children could not be denied attendance to school for not being in school uniform, this inadvertently raises other challenges, such as children being bullied for the quality of their clothes; this may also deter children from attending school.

As well as the every-day costs incurred by school, 'off the charter' fees are not uncommon. Many parents are still expected- if not relied on- to make contributions to expenses such as teacher housing and classroom resources. Quite simply, it becomes apparent that primary education is not entirely free; hence, the right to education cannot be realised by all.

Under the 2011 Education Act, Primary Education was made a legal requirement. This means that both government and parent/guardians of children are accountable for children's school attendance. Despite this legal requirement, the surveys in Mongu found that 19% of children who were supposed to be in school were not going. Whilst it is likely that a large portion of these cases were due to financial limitations as already discussed, other rivalling challenges were revealed. The second most common reason for not attending school across all four districts was 'lack of interest'. This arguably indicates a widespread mentality that does not value education. It seems to be the case that people do not recognise or are not convinced of the importance of education for personal development and human capital.

Although government has pledged its commitment to the 'Education for All' initiative, adequate attention and funding to all stages of education has not been equally distributed. As it stands, there is only a policy for free Primary Education; hence, education preceding and following on from this either demand heavy fees or are of poor quality.

Early Childhood Care, Development and Education (ECCDE) has been severely overlooked by the public sector. According to a Ministry of Education report on 'Educating our Future', the majority of these institutions are privately owned and those that are not have insufficient management and curriculum organisation. This means that many children enter primary education with poor quality or without any prior formal learning experience; this can be a significant hindrance to the pace of development at primary level. Furthermore, ECCDE's are important for protecting the Orphaned and Vulnerable (OAV) who have even more limited opportunities to access education. Without this initial stage of education, those who are OAV are in even less favorable circumstances to access the education system.

“ECCDE is one of the most effective strategies in poverty reduction as it enhances the chances of breaking down inter-generational cycle of poverty” (ZANEC, 2012)

In a like manner, secondary school has also been neglected in government initiatives. The EFA National Review recorded 89.3% transition rate from primary to secondary school. Whilst this is not shocking, the district surveys provide a breakdown of completion rate at secondary school which is less reassuring. In Kabwe for example, only 36% of students continue to upper-secondary school. The findings from Kasama indicate a similar drop-out pattern, with only 23% completing upper secondary school. The incompleteness of secondary school means that even less people make it as far as tertiary education. The lack of government subsidy in secondary institutions means that it is only a select few, rather than a majority making their way into advanced education; hence Zambia's overall human capital remains extremely low.

Most notably there is also a prevalent issue of high female dropout rates. The lack of financial support was cited as a greater issue amongst females than males, suggesting that

girls are at a disadvantage in realising their right to education. The disparity between male and female access to education could be down to deep-rooted attitudes towards female education. It is often the case that girls are viewed as a more valuable resource in the home; such perspectives mean that when educational opportunities arise, it is often the males within the family that are favored.

An ancillary challenge facing girls' access to education is the high number of teenage pregnancies. According to the Monze and Mongu reports, pregnancy was the second most common reason for female dropout after insufficient funds.

With regard to quality of education, a number of related issues arise within the district surveys. With the influx of enrolment in primary education, it is not surprising that there are some challenges maintaining a reasonable teacher pupil ratio of 1:32. Although schools reviewed in Monze were very satisfactory (1:35), the cases in Kasama, Kabwe and Mongu were varied (on average 1:54, 1:56, and 1:74 respectively). The growing class sizes and lack of teacher means that children are less likely to receive adequate support.

Not only is there a lack of qualified teachers but the poor quality of facilities and overcrowding in schools mean that those that are well qualified are less inclined to teach in public funded schools; hence many are lost to private institutions. It seems there is catch 22; in which government schools are in demand of more and better quality teachers to aid its development, however the current situation is that there is not an appealing environment for teachers to deliver their services.

All four district reports showed that many schools do not have auxiliary facilities necessary for quality education; if facilities were present they were extremely varied in quality. Less than half of the schools surveyed in Kabwe and Kasama had a library or science laboratories. Furthermore, the majority of

schools in Mongu and Monze did not have a sick bay. Contrary to the pledge made in the School Health and Nutrition policy (2006), these surveys indicate that health issues are not being appropriately managed, even at a very basic level. Since poor health is also cited as a cause for drop-out, it is vital that education institutions are a nurturer for good health, with clean, convenient and conducive facilities.

Overall, quality of education seems to be an afterthought in government initiatives. Whilst there is recognition within 'Educating our future' that quality services are vital, there has not been sufficient budget and management allocated to installing and maintaining these throughout government schools.

Recommendations

1. Foremost, in order to strengthen the case for the provision of education services, the right to education should be incorporated into the Bill of Rights.
2. In order for the potential social and economic health benefits of education to accrue, education must be prioritised through government funding. A high quality state education for all at all stages should be the ultimate goal for Zambia. Under the 'Education for All' initiative, government should start by extending the 'Free Primary Education' policy to include secondary schools.
3. In light of the findings that financial challenges are still a major drawback in access to primary education, there should be a selective subsidy scheme for children to cover the additional costs of schooling. This should include the basic school uniform, textbooks and stationery to see a child through the course of their primary education.

4. With regard to managing user fees, alongside greater government backing, primary schools should use parent governing boards and draw on community organisations to gather donations or help fundraise for more money towards projects such as teacher housing, school trips and supplementary facilities.
5. To address some of the travel difficulties government should establish boarding schools in urban areas. Since education in rural areas is dependent on further rural development, it would be beneficial for children from rural areas to receive special bursaries in order to allow them into urban schooling. These boarding schools would have to be comprehensive, particularly at a primary level to ensure that children received the appropriate care. It would be beneficial for such schools to collaborate with orphanages, to learn from their model of care as well as create stronger linkages for OAV children to access education.
6. A bursary scheme for girls should be implemented to encourage completion of secondary school education. This could also be extended to tertiary education, with bursaries funded by corporate organisations. This would in turn help bolster female recruitment.
7. To address the need for more EECDE centres, government should call upon community and church resources. Whilst early learning can be handed over to amateur institutions, government should take time to draw up a model of a suitable management, curriculum and professional practices. It would be in the interest of both EECDE's and primary schools to collaborate. The annexing of EECDE centres to successful primary institutions would strengthen the support network for children and enhance continuity of education.
8. Civil and church organisations should engage in mass sensitisation on the importance of education, with the

hope to transform attitudes towards education. The concepts of prospect, opportunity and aspiration need to be at the heart of this advocacy work. In particular this should be directed mostly in rural areas with the emphasis on improving female enrollment and completion rates.

9. New and detailed National Development goals and budget need to be set with regards to quality of education services, both in terms of service delivery and high quality facilities. Government should determine a national baseline for an adequate standard of schooling. The Ministry of Education should conduct annual reviews monitoring the progress of quality education in each school, giving schools appropriate endorsements and recommendations where necessary and an overall rating.

Conclusion

The scope of Education in Zambia is broad. This policy brief has mainly explored policy and programme in relation to Primary Education, since this has been a huge milestone in this country's development. It is apparent that although Free Primary Education exists in policy, this is not yet a lived reality, hence steps need to be taken to address the additional costs of schooling that so often inhibit access.

The provision of a strong and effective basic education is absolutely crucial for enabling the development of higher education institutions, hence it is necessary to stabilise the early education stages. Nonetheless, in doing so, the later stages of education cannot be neglected. This brief highlights that it is usual for children to only complete primary school, after which there is an obvious curtailment in attendance. To

address this, the 'Education for All' initiative simply must be as comprehensive as its name suggests.

Furthermore, it is vital to the development of Zambia's education system that quality of education is at the forefront of all initiatives, since access to poor quality education is essentially null. A consistently good quality education, both in terms of safe and conducive learning underpins the production of personal development and invaluable human capital.

The importance of education for the general well-being of individuals and the public as a whole cannot be stated enough; this is the message that should be received, disseminated and enacted upon by all duty bearers and citizens. Every person has a right to education; we therefore have both an individual and collective responsibility to see this right become actualised.

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