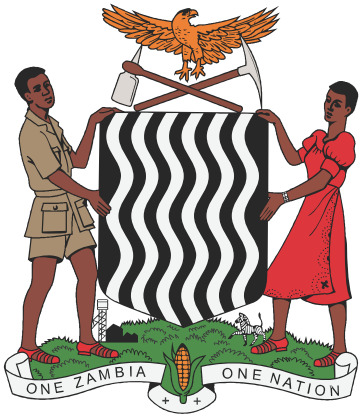


REPUBLIC OF ZAMBIA

NATIONAL EDUCATION POLICY

"SHAPING TOMORROW'S FUTURE"

2025



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Foreword



Hon. Douglas. M Syakalima, MP
MINISTER OF EDUCATION

The Government of the Republic of Zambia recognises education as a cornerstone for human capital development and a key enabler for achieving the nation's Vision 2030, to become a prosperous middle-income country. Over the years, Zambia has made commendable strides in expanding access to education.

However, the education sector continues to face significant challenges. These include, persistent low literacy and numeracy outcomes, poor progression and high dropout rates, limited access to education, inadequate infrastructure and facilities, rural-urban disparities, and gender inequalities. Compounding these challenges, is the fact that our existing Education Policy formulated in 1996, does not sufficiently address contemporary trends such as digital transformation, 21st-century skills, inclusive education, and the urgent need for curriculum review and effective implementation of a new, modern curriculum to enhance learning outcomes and align education with current and future national development priorities. These challenges have constrained the sector's ability to fully contribute to national development.

In response, the Government has undertaken a comprehensive review of the 1996 National Education Policy to address these challenges and to align the education system with the evolving demands of the 21st century. This revised National Education Policy represents a renewed commitment to fostering critical skills such as innovation, problem-solving, adaptability among learners and skills essential for both individual success and the nation's socio-economic transfor-mation.

The Policy is structured around six strategic pillars: Access and Participation, Quality, Equity, Excellence, Partnerships, and Efficiency, designed to drive the education sector's contribution to sustainable development. These areas are aligned with regional and global frameworks, such as the SADC Protocol on Education and Training, the African Union's Continental Education Strategy for Africa, and Agenda 2063, as well as the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs).

As we chart this new course, I call on all stakeholders, including policymakers, educators, development partners, communities, and the private sector, to work collaboratively in implementing the objectives and measures outlined in this policy. Our collective efforts will ensure the delivery of quality, equitable, and inclusive education for all Zambians. Together, let us empower learners to thrive in a rapidly changing world, for when our children succeed, our nation prospers.



Hon. Douglas. M Syakalima, MP
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This National Education Policy document is a product of extensive engagements, consultations and reflections involving several stakeholders. We wish to acknowledge the support provided by different Ministries that worked in close collaboration with the Ministry of Education.

We also recognise the invaluable support given by Districts, Provinces, Cooperating Partners, Non-governmental Organisations, Colleges of Education, Universities, and Education Secretaries of our Grant-Aided Institutions, the Unions and the General Public.

This consultative process involved intensive desk reviews, technical meetings, workshops, validation forums and feedback analyses.

Developing a policy of this magnitude requires focused engagement and analysis of the implications of each policy objective, as well as the measures adopted.

Specifically, we wish to recognise the tremendous effort which was put into the development of this Policy by the Policy Analysis and Coordination Division at the Cabinet Office.

Lastly, we are certain that this policy will provide the much-needed guidance and practicality in Education provision.

Kelvin Mambwe (PHD.)
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Working Definitions

21st Century Skills	A broad range of knowledge, skills, work habits, and character traits that are important for one to succeed in today's world, particularly in educational programmes, contemporary careers and workplaces. These are often called the 5Cs: Critical Thinking (Problem Solving), Creative Thinking (Innovation), Communicating, Collaborating (Teamwork) and Curiosity.
Aided Educational Institution	An educational institution established or maintained by an organisation, institution or community with assistance from the Ministry responsible for education.
Alternative Mode of Education Provision	Provision of education to learners other than in-person instruction that may include, without limitation, use of online learning, telephone communications, radio, email and virtual instruction.
Blended Learning	The use of traditional classroom teaching methods together with the use of online learning for the same students studying the same content in the same course.
Community Educational Institution / Community School	An educational institution that is community-based, owned and managed by the community.
Continuing Education	Lifelong learning pursued by a person through an open learning class, self-study, or any other distance education programme, who, for any reason, had no opportunity to continue with, or complete formal education.
Curriculum	A specification of the desired knowledge, competences, skills, values and attitudes which a learner is expected to acquire relative to a specific level of education.
Distance Education	A form of education where a learner and a teacher are separated in time and space from each other, most of the time, except during residential schools when a learner meets the teacher face-to-face.
Early Childhood Education	An organised form of education for children that focuses on the holistic development of the learner in preparation for primary school.

Early Childhood Education Centre	A place used to advance holistic early childhood education practices that bring about the holistic development of a child and school readiness.
Education for Sustainable Development	Sees education as the key to unlocking progress in all the global development goals. It teaches individuals to make informed decisions and take action, both individually and collectively, to change society and protect the planet.
Educational Institution	A school, college, university, distance Education College, centre of open learning or school for continuing education.
Formal Education	All forms of organised learning that follow a structured programme and/or curriculum leading to an award. It refers to basic literacy, numeracy, and transferable skills that are the building blocks for a life of learning.
Foundational Learning	Basic literacy, numeracy, and transferable skills, which are the building blocks for a life of learning acquired during the early years of a child's development.
Functional Literacy	An approach to literacy that stresses the teaching and learning of basic life skills for individual livelihood improvement and helps one participate in economic development.
Higher Education	Tertiary education leading to the award of a certificate, diploma, bachelor's degree, and postgraduate diploma, master's degree or doctorate.
Inclusive Education	A process of enabling all children to access, participate and benefit from learning, within the mainstream education system.
Inclusive School	An early childhood centre, school, college, university or other place with inclusive educational practices, where the teaching and learning methods and environment accommodate all learners, enabling them to participate fully to the best of their abilities and benefit from learning in an adapted, barrier-free formal or informal mainstream education system.

Informal Education	Learning resulting from daily activities, through experience outside of a structured curriculum. It is also not organised or structured in terms of objectives, time and learning support.
Language of Instruction	Approved medium of instruction in a learning institution.
Learner with Special Educational Needs and Disability	A learner who has physical, hearing, speech, visual, or mental disability; is significantly different from other learners mentally; has social, emotional or behavioural disorders as certified by a medical practitioner or prescribed officer; or is gifted and talented.
Lifelong Learning	Ongoing voluntary and self-motivated pursuit of knowledge for either personal or professional reasons.
National Assessment	Assessment surveys undertaken to obtain evidence on the functioning of the education system (or part thereof) by assessing the performance of learners, teachers, school heads and education officials as well as evaluating the functioning of structures and programmes within that system.
National Examination	A standardised, high-stakes assessment conducted at the national level to evaluate a learner's knowledge, skills, or competencies in a specific subject or course of study, primarily for placement, progression, and certification. These examinations are administered under the authority of a designated national examining body and serve as a key mechanism for quality assurance and benchmarking within the education system.
Non-Formal Education	Learning obtained through organised training not leading to an award (e.g. an agriculture training, college, faith-based, in private and public enterprises).
Open Learning	Education that is flexible in terms of time and place for both the learner and teacher.
Parent-Community School Committee	A school-based governance body composed of elected parents, teachers, and community representatives

	responsible for supporting the management, oversight, and development of a community school, including planning, resource mobilisation, and community engagement.
Parent-Teacher Committee	A committee comprising parents, teachers and staff that is intended to facilitate parental participation in a school.
Primary Education	Education provision between ECE and Secondary education.
Private Educational Institution	An educational institution which is not run or aided by the Government.
Public Educational Institution	An educational institution administered or controlled by the Ministry responsible for education or established and maintained using public funds.
Public Funds	Money for the Government, or a public, community or aided educational institution, or any money donated to the Government or an aided, public or community educational institution.
School	An institution at which formal and regular instruction is provided.
School for Continuing Education	A learning institution offering continuing education for outof-school children, youth and adults in the form of academic and skills training (two-tier system) to learners.
Secondary Education	Formal education that follows primary education and precedes higher education.
Special Education Institution	An educational institution providing a course of instruction for learners with special educational needs and disabilities.
STEM Education	An interdisciplinary approach in learning that removes traditional barriers of separating the four disciplines of Science, Technology, Engineering and Mathematics, and integrates them into the real world, but with relevant learning experiences.

Syllabus	A specification of what is to be taught and learnt and the order in which it is to be taught and learnt.
Teacher	A person engaged to facilitate the acquisition of knowledge and skills to learners.
Teacher Education	Training or instruction given to prospective and practising teachers in colleges, universities and other training platforms for Continuing Professional Development (CPD) of teachers to enable them to perform their teaching tasks effectively.
Teaching Profession	A regulated field that encompasses the roles of a Teacher, Teaching and education Management, requiring specialised qualifications obtained through Teacher training to effectively transmit knowledge, skills and values to learners.
Teachers' Union	An organisation that represents the collective interests of teachers in negotiations with employers registered under the relevant labour laws.
Teaching and Learning Materials	Educational materials, including textbooks, to support specific learning competencies.
Tertiary Education	Education provided after secondary education.
Underserved	Inadequately provided with a service or facility.
Universal Design	Buildings, products and environments that are accessible to persons with disabilities and older people.
User Fees	Charges levied by an educational institution on learners or their guardians for specific education-related services or activities, such as examinations, school maintenance, extracurricular activities, or instructional materials, which are not fully covered by public funding.
Youth and Adult Education	provided to youth and adult learners to enable them **Literacy Education** to acquire reading, writing, numeracy and other skills.

List of Acronyms

7NDP	-	Seventh National Development Plan
8NDP	-	Eighth National Development Plan
AMEP	-	Alternative Modes of Education Provision
AIDS	-	Acquired Immune Deficiency Syndrome
CP	-	Cooperating Partner
CPD	-	Continuing Professional Development
CSO	-	Civil Society Organisation
ECE	-	Early Childhood Education
ECZ	-	Examinations Council of Zambia
EMIS	-	Education Management Information System
ESD	-	Education for Sustainable Development
G5NA	-	Grade 5 National Assessment
HEA	-	Higher Education Authority
HIV	-	Human Immune-Deficiency Virus
ICT	-	Information and Communication Technology
KGS	-	Keeping Girls in School
LSEND	-	Learners with Special Education Needs and Disabilities
MoE	-	Ministry of Education
PE	-	Personal Emolument
PISA-D	-	Programme for International Student Assessment for Development
PTC	-	Parent-Teacher Committee
SABER	-	System for Better Education Results
SDGs	-	Sustainable Development Goals
SHN	-	School Health and Nutrition
STI	-	Sexually Transmitted Infection
STEM	-	Science, Technology, Engineering and Mathematics
TEVET	-	Technical Education, Vocational and Entrepreneurship Training
TEVETA	-	Technical Education, Vocational and Entrepreneurship Training Authority
TCZ	-	Teaching Council of Zambia
UNESCO	-	United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organisation
WASH	-	Water, Sanitation and Hygiene
ZAQA	-	Zambia Qualifications Authority
ZEPH	-	Zambia Education Publishing House
ZICTA	-	Zambia Information and Communication Technology Authority

CHAPTER ONE

1.0 INTRODUCTION

Education is a cornerstone of socio-economic transformation and one of the Government's highest priorities for national development. It represents a vital investment in both the present and future generations, playing a pivotal role in human capital development. As such, education remains a critical component of Zambia's national and regional development strategies. The National Education Policy, therefore, serves as a guiding framework for the design, implementation, and evaluation of these strategies.

Over the past two decades, Zambia has pursued ambitious national development goals through strategies such as Vision 2030 and the 7th and 8th National Development Plans (NDPs), with aspirations of achieving middle-income country status by 2030. These plans emphasise increasing access to education, improving quality, fostering innovation, and advancing skills development. The education sector's contributions to these goals have, until now, been guided by the 1996 National Education Policy, "Educating Our Future."

While the "Educating Our Future" Policy has provided foundational guidance since its adoption, the evolving challenges and emerging trends in education necessitate a revised approach. Key challenges include persistent low literacy and numeracy outcomes, poor progression and high dropout rates, limited access to education, inadequate infrastructure and facilities, rural-urban disparities, and gender inequalities. In addition, the 1996 Education Policy does not sufficiently address contemporary trends, such as digital transformation, 21st-century skills, inclusive education, and the urgent need for a curriculum review and the effective implementation of a new, modern curriculum to enhance learning outcomes and align education with current and future national development priorities.

The 1996 Education Policy, Educating Our Future, marked a significant milestone in the transformation of Zambia's education sector. It notably expanded access to education, particularly at the primary level, through initiatives such as the introduction of free basic education.

The policy also led to critical institutional and legal reforms, including the establishment of key regulatory bodies such as the Teaching Council of Zambia, the Higher Education Authority (HEA), the Higher Education Loans and Scholarship Board, and the Zambia Qualifications Authority. Furthermore, it promoted the decentralisation of education management, fostering greater community participation in the planning and delivery of education services.

The policy encouraged the participation of private and community stakeholders, which helped expand service delivery across the sector. It introduced initial curriculum reforms, such as including life skills and HIV/AIDS education, and placed strong emphasis on promoting gender equity, especially at the basic education level. While early childhood education was introduced, its provision was mostly left to

the private sector and local authorities, laying a foundation for improved learning outcomes in later years.

Despite these achievements, significant challenges remain. Learning outcomes in foundational areas such as literacy, numeracy, and science continue to be low. Persistent rural-urban and gender disparities, inadequate infrastructure, and limited teaching and learning resources hinder progress. The curriculum has become outdated and is misaligned with the demands of digital transformation, inclusive education, and 21st-century skills. High dropout and poor progression rates, particularly among disadvantaged learners, along with underfunding and inefficiencies in resource utilization, continue to constrain the sector's performance.

Moreover, the 1996 policy does not adequately address emerging national and global priorities, underscoring the urgent need for a comprehensive policy review and modernization to realign the education system with Zambia's Vision 2030, the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), and other contemporary development frameworks.

Recognizing these challenges, the revised National Education Policy has been developed to address current needs, integrate emerging trends, and guide Zambia's education system towards inclusivity, quality, and relevance. Drawing lessons from "Educating Our Future", this policy incorporates insights from curriculum reforms, national development plans, and international frameworks. Its primary aim is to nurture 21st-century skills essential for achieving Zambia's developmental aspirations.

The policy calls for a restructured education system to align with regional, continental, and global standards. Specifically, it advocates for the 4-6-4-2 structure: four years of Early Childhood Care, Development, and Education (ECCDE), six years of primary education, four years of secondary education at the Ordinary Level, and two years at the Advanced Level. This restructured system emphasizes quality, inclusivity, and efficiency while preparing learners for a competitive global environment.

Additionally, the policy aspires to position Zambia as a regional education hub, with mechanisms to ensure collective investment in education. It aims to provide curricula and educational resources responsive to individual, societal, and global needs, ensuring equitable access to quality education and skills development.

This National Education Policy is organised to ensure a clear and coherent progression from contextual analysis to practical implementation. It begins with an examination of the current state of education in Zambia, providing the foundation upon which the policy is built, and moves through to the strategies and structures required for its successful execution.

The second chapter presents a comprehensive situation analysis, highlighting key achievements, persistent challenges, and emerging trends across all levels of the education system. This analysis forms the evidence base for the policy's proposed interventions.

The third chapter articulates the overarching vision for Zambia's education sector, outlines the rationale for policy reform, and defines the guiding principles that underpin the policy's direction and priorities.

The fourth chapter details the strategic objectives of the policy, along with targeted measures and interventions aimed at achieving inclusive, equitable, and quality education for all learners.

The fifth chapter provides the implementation framework, outlining the institutional arrangements, coordination mechanisms, and systems for monitoring and evaluation. It emphasizes accountability, results-based management, and continuous improvement throughout the policy life-cycle.

Together, these chapters reflect Zambia's renewed commitment to building a resilient, inclusive, and future-focused education system. This policy aims to empower learners with the knowledge, skills, and values they need to thrive in a dynamic and globally connected world, while contributing meaningfully to the nation's sustainable development.

CHAPTER TWO

2.0 SITUATION ANALYSIS

2.1 Background

At independence in 1964, Zambia had a population of approximately 3.5 million, which grew to 19.6 million by 2022, as recorded in the National Census of Housing and Population (Zamstats, 2023). This rapid population growth has had significant implications for access to and the delivery of education services in the country.

While the Government has made commendable progress in increasing the education budget in absolute terms, the sector's share of the overall national budget has experienced a notable decline. Educational spending dropped from 20 percent in 2015 to 10.4 percent in 2022, falling well below the Sub-Saharan Africa median and the internationally recommended target of 20 percent set under the African Union's Dakar Commitment on Education for All.

Compounding this situation, support from Cooperating Partners declined between 2018 and 2022, while debt servicing obligations rose significantly. This shift in fiscal priorities has disrupted the balance between recurrent and development expenditure in the education sector, with personal emoluments accounting for over 90 percent of total spending in 2022. As a result, low levels of capital investment have adversely affected service delivery, leading to a mismatch between the growing school-age population and the availability of classrooms, qualified teachers, and teaching and learning materials.

National, regional, and international learning assessments continue to expose significant gaps in foundational skills among Zambian learners. Findings from the Early Grade Reading Assessment (EGRA), Early Grade Mathematics Assessment (EGMA), and the Grade Five National Assessment (G5NA) consistently show that a large proportion of primary school learners are not achieving minimum competency levels, with only one-third meeting the expected proficiency standards.

Similarly, Zambia performs poorly in regional and international assessments such as the Southern and Eastern Africa Consortium for Monitoring Educational Quality (SACMEQ), the Programme for International Student Assessment for Development (PISA-D), and UNESCO's Institute for Statistics Assessment of Minimum Proficiency Levels (AMPL). These assessments indicate that the majority of Zambian learners fall below international benchmarks. Contributing factors include limited teacher learner contact time, high pupil-teacher ratios, inadequate pedagogical skills among educators, and a persistent shortage of teaching and learning materials.

2.2 Access and Participation

Over the years, the implementation of the 1996 National Education Policy has led to notable improvements in access to and participation in education. These achievements can largely be attributed to various Government policies and programmes, including the enacting the 2011 Education Act, the Re-Entry Policy of 1997, the Basic Education Sub-Sector Investment Programme (BESSIP) from 1999 to 2002, the introduction of Free Primary Education in 2002, and the Education National Implementation Frameworks (NIF).

Building on these gains, in 2021, the Government further committed to enhancing access by implementing tuition-free education at the Early Childhood Education (ECE), Primary, and Secondary levels, starting in 2022. This intervention has significantly improved access and participation in education.

Despite the progress achieved across all sub-sectors of the education system, ECE, Primary, Secondary, and Youth and Adult Literacy Education (YALE), several challenges persist that hinder access and participation, requiring targeted solutions.

In addition, a significant portion of vulnerable learners is unable to access education in FBO-run institutions due to the high fees charged. This financial barrier limits the impact of FBOs in reaching marginalised populations.

2.2.1 Early Childhood Education (ECE) Sub-sector

The ECE sub-sector has benefited from multiple interventions aimed at increasing access and participation. These include the annexing of ECE classrooms to primary schools, the construction of hubs and satellite centres by the Government, and the establishment of community-based stimulation centres by Cooperating Partners, communities, and the private sector.

However, challenges persist, particularly in the provision of adequate classroom spaces and resources for implementing science and technology in ECE. For example, in 2021, only 29.8% of learners entering Grade 1 had prior ECE experience, falling short of the 50% target set in the 7th National Development Plan (7NDP) by the end of 2021(Education Statistics Bulletin, 2022).

Addressing these gaps will require greater investment in infrastructure and learning resources.

2.2.2 Primary Sub-sector

The primary education sub-sector has undergone significant reforms aimed at expanding access and improving learner outcomes. Key interventions include the introduction of free education in 2002 and the conversion of basic schools into primary schools in 2011. The Education Act of 2011 further strengthened this sub-sector by making primary education compulsory for all school-age children, prohibiting child marriages, and formally recognizing community schools. The Act also abolished Grade 7 national examination fees and introduced the School Health and Nutrition (SHN) Programme, which encompasses school feeding, menstrual hygiene management, and Water, Sanitation, and Hygiene (WASH) initiatives, critical components for supporting learner well-being and retention.

Despite these advancements, the 1996 policy target of achieving a 100% Net Enrolment Rate (NER) by 2005 was not met. As of 2023, the NER for primary education stood at 91.8%, while secondary education lagged at 48.7%. This shortfall can be attributed to systemic challenges, including inadequate classroom infrastructure and resources. While the Gross Enrolment Rate (GER) for primary education reached 102.4%, this figure reflects an influx of overaged children occupying spaces meant for age-appropriate learners, highlighting misalignment in enrolment practices (Education Statistics Bulletin, 2023).

The growing school-age population and the introduction of the Education For All (EFA) Policy in 2022 have further increased the demand for classroom spaces. Poverty and cultural practices, particularly those affecting girls, also remain significant barriers to access.

2.2.3 Secondary Sub-sector

Since 1996, the Government has implemented various interventions to retain learners in school and expand secondary school capacity, enabling more learners to transition from Grades 7 and 9 to Grades 8 and 10, respectively. Despite these efforts, the secondary education sub-sector has faced persistent challenges due to limited investment in infrastructure. One of the key challenges has been classroom shortages, which have constrained progression rates from Grades 9 to 10, with rates remaining below 55% between 1996 and 2020. Additionally, the learner-to-classroom ratio stood at 85:1 in 2020, far exceeding recommended standards (Education Statistics Bulletin, 2021). The introduction of the Education For All Policy in 2022, while commendable in expanding access, has placed additional pressure on the education system by increasing enrolment without a corresponding expansion in infrastructure and support services. Addressing these bottlenecks is critical for ensuring equitable access to and quality education at the secondary level.

2.2.4 Youth and Adult Literacy Education (YALE) Sub-sector

2.2.4.1 Youth and Adult Literacy Education (YALE)

Zambia has made significant strides in addressing youth and adult illiteracy by establishing Youth and Adult Literacy Education (YALE) centres in communities and training adult literacy facilitators in collaboration with stakeholders. Despite these efforts, an estimated 27% of young people and adults aged 15 years and above have never been to school or lack basic literacy skills. The YALE sub-sector faces several challenges, including limited bursaries and scholarships for youth and adult learners, which leaves many vulnerable and poor individuals unable to afford tuition fees. There is also a lack of dedicated human resources to deliver YALE programs and inadequate infrastructure for literacy centres. Furthermore, limited equipment for skills training hampers learners' ability to attain self-sustaining skills. These challenges highlight the urgent need for increased investment and stronger structural support to ensure the effectiveness and reach of the YALE sub-sector.

2.2.4.2 Alternative Modes of Education Provision (AMEP)

Alternative Modes of Education Provision (AMEP) provide pathways for out-of-school children, youth, and adults through diverse methodologies enhanced by ICT. AMEP has increasingly been integrated into conventional education, particularly during emergencies. Interventions in AMEP include providing education for inmates in correctional facilities, reforming academic production units into open learning centres, and establishing an Education Broadcasting Services (EBS) Radio and television channel, along with platforms such as Learning Passport Zambia. Additionally, a separate assessment system has been introduced to encourage more enrolments in AMEP. However, the program faces several challenges, including limited access to electricity, high internet and broadcasting costs, and insufficient infrastructure for effective program delivery.

2.2.4.3 Summary of Access and Participation

While Zambia has made significant progress in improving access to and participation in education across all sub-sectors, persistent challenges remain. These include inadequate infrastructure, high learner-to-classroom ratios, poverty, cultural practices, and limited resources for specialised programs such as YALE and AMEP. Addressing these challenges is essential to achieve universal access, equitable participation, and quality education for all learners in Zambia.

2.3 Educational Quality and Relevance

Ensuring quality and relevance in education remains a top priority for the Government of Zambia. To this end, the Government has established several quality assurance mechanisms and agencies across all levels of education, including the Zambia Qualifications Authority (ZAQA), Examinations Council of Zambia (ECZ), Higher Education Authority (HEA), Technical Education, Vocational and Entrepreneurship Training Authority (TEVETA), and Teaching Council of Zambia (TCZ).

The Ministry of Education has also been realigned according to service delivery programs to address quality issues across Early Childhood Education (ECE), Primary, Secondary, Youth and Adult Literacy Education (YALE), Alternative Modes of Education Provision (AMEP), and university education.

The Government recognizes the vital importance of qualifications, staff retention, and motivation in providing quality education. Accordingly, various strategies have been put in place to reduce teacher attrition and boost motivation.

2.3.1 Early Childhood Education (ECE) Sub-sector

The Government has continued to invest in Early Childhood Care, Development, and Education (ECCDE) as part of foundational learning. Key measures include raising the minimum qualification for early childhood teachers from a certificate to a diploma, as well as introducing degree, master's, and doctoral programs in ECCDE. Efforts have also been made to reduce the teacher-pupil ratio from over 1:80 to an ideal ratio of less than 1:20. A Continuing Professional Development (CPD) strategy and manual have been developed to enhance in-service teachers' pedagogical skills.

Despite these initiatives, challenges persist in meeting required standards. There is a shortage of age appropriate infrastructure, play equipment, teaching and learning materials, ICT infrastructure, and teaching staff, including caregivers and assistant teachers. These gaps hinder the effective delivery of quality ECCDE services.

2.3.2 Primary Education Sub-sector

Under the 1996 National Education Policy, the Government emphasized improving the quality of primary education, focusing on literacy and numeracy skills. Key interventions included the recruitment and deployment of teachers, the provision of teaching and learning materials, and the enactment of the 2011 Education Act.

The Act contributed to improving the quality of education by making primary education compulsory, promoting child protection through the prohibition of early marriages, and formally recognizing community schools. It also enhanced learner well-being and retention through the introduction of the School Health and Nutrition (SHN) programme, which includes school feeding, menstrual hygiene management, and comprehensive Water, Sanitation, and Hygiene (WASH) interventions.

Further measures to enhance primary education included a review of the 2013 curriculum and the introduction of familiar local languages as the medium of instruction in the first four years of primary school. The Government also implemented the Primary Literacy Program (PLP) and extended support to community schools by providing teachers, school grants, and resources, including ICT equipment with limited access to the internet.

Despite these efforts, challenges remain. The teacher-pupil ratio remains high, classroom spaces and teaching and learning materials are limited. ICT resources are inadequate, with limited internet connectivity. Multigrade teaching due to teacher shortages and reduced contact hours further impede the delivery of quality education at the primary level.

2.3.3 Secondary Education Sub-sector

Providing quality secondary education requires adequate teachers, specialised rooms for practical subjects, teaching and learning materials, and school-based continuous professional development (SBCPD) programs. The Government has made efforts to improve secondary education by constructing and rehabilitating secondary schools, recruiting teachers, facilitating their professional development, and connecting a few schools to the network.

Despite these interventions, the sub-sector continues to face challenges. The completion rate averages only 37%, highlighting significant barriers to progression. The learner-teacher ratio remains high at over 57:1, and there is insufficient investment in infrastructure maintenance and expansion. Additionally, a lack of specialised teachers, equipment, internet and networking, and materials for practical subjects has constrained the delivery of quality secondary education.

2.3.4 Youth and Adult Literacy Education (YALE) Sub-sector

2.3.4.1 Youth and Adult Literacy Education (YALE)

To improve quality in the YALE sub-sector, the Government has trained teachers and volunteers in pedagogical skills and developed a curriculum and primers in seven major local languages. However, challenges persist, including inadequate skills training facilities, teaching and learning materials, and skilled human resources. Further, the sub-sector lacks a management information system to track

progression, completion, and dropout rates. Furthermore, the effectiveness and quality of Youth and Adult Literacy Education (YALE) programs are hindered by inadequate infrastructure and the lack of standardized incentives for volunteer facilitators, which affect motivation, consistency, and overall instructional delivery.

2.3.4.2 Alternative Modes of Education Provision (AMEP)

The AMEP program offers pathways for out-of-school children, youth, and adults through diverse methodologies enhanced by ICT. Open Learning Guidelines have been developed, and teachers and education administrators have received capacity-building training in Open Distance Learning. The Government has also distributed radios and self-study kits to 48 AMEP centres across five provinces between 2020 and 2023.

Despite these efforts, challenges remain, including inadequate ICT gadgets, high internet costs, limited network coverage, and poor radio and television transmission. The implementation of the Alternative Modes of Education Provision (AMEP) faces several systemic and operational challenges that impact its effectiveness and inclusivity. These include inadequate ICT infrastructure and connectivity, limited classroom access and poor infrastructure, insufficient teacher training and high attrition, and underfunding. Additionally, AMEP suffers from negative perceptions, limited counselling support for vulnerable learners, outdated broadcast equipment, and a shortage of tailored teaching and learning materials. These issues continue to limit the full potential of providing quality AMEP programmes. Addressing these issues through strategic investments and capacity-building is crucial to ensuring equitable and quality lifelong learning opportunities for all.

The Government aims to strengthen and expand the AMEP programme by enhancing ICT infrastructure, improving access to digital tools, and developing quality, relevant content. Focus will also be placed on teacher training, learner support services, and promoting AMEP as an inclusive education pathway. These efforts will position AMEP as a resilient, equitable platform for lifelong learning, especially for vulnerable and out-of-school populations.

2.4 Equity and Inclusion

Equitable access to education is essential for achieving national development goals and ensuring that every learner has the opportunity to succeed. The Government of Zambia has recognised the importance of providing inclusive education and has made significant efforts to address barriers faced by marginalized groups, such as gender disparities, learners with disabilities, orphans, and vulnerable children. These efforts have aimed to eliminate rural-urban inequalities, address the impact of HIV/AIDS, and improve water and sanitation conditions in schools.

Several key interventions have been implemented to promote equity and inclusion in education. These include the provision of bursaries for the girl child through affirmative action, the Re-Entry Policy, and the 50/50 enrolment policy. The Government has also introduced menstrual hygiene management initiatives, including the provision of sanitary towels. To improve early access to education, early basic screening is conducted to identify learners with disabilities and special education needs before they are placed in schools, starting at early childhood and Grade 1 levels. Additionally, the Government has provided continuing training for special education teachers, while other colleges and universities train educators in inclusive education methods. Some curriculum features have been transcribed into braille and audio formats, and newly built schools have incorporated universally designed features, including ramps and spacious, accessible toilets. Furthermore, assistive devices such as wheelchairs are provided to learners with disabilities to facilitate easy access to education.

The Government has also implemented the School Health and Nutrition (SHN) Programme, which includes a school feeding initiative to improve student attendance and nutrition. The introduction of free education has enabled orphans and vulnerable children to access both primary and secondary education. To support the retention of the girl child, the Government has implemented the Girls Education and Women Empowerment and Livelihoods (GEWEL) Project. One component of this project, Keeping Girls in School (KGS), provides school requisites and boarding fees to parents or guardians. The Government is also implementing social assistance programs, including social cash transfers and women's empowerment initiatives, which assist parents in procuring necessary school supplies for their children.

In the fight against HIV/AIDS, the Government provides drugs, testing, and treatment services at health facilities, which have contributed to a reduction in the mother-to-child transmission of HIV. In addition, HIV/AIDS awareness is integrated into teacher in-service training programs to alleviate related stress. The Government is also working to improve Water, Sanitation, and Hygiene (WASH) education in schools, as these factors are vital to learners' health and their ability to succeed academically.

Despite these positive interventions, challenges remain in achieving full equity in education. There has been a decline in completion rates, particularly for girls, due to factors such as teenage pregnancy, child marriage, distance to schools, inadequate boarding facilities, and economic constraints. Additionally, there are cultural barriers and stigma that prevent some girls from returning to school after childbirth. Learners with disabilities, particularly those with severe disabilities, face challenges in integrating into the education system, resulting in low transition rates to higher levels of education. In some cases, parents hide or overprotect children with disabilities, denying them access to education altogether. The country lacks sufficient assessment centres for learners with disabilities, leading to improper identification and placement. Furthermore, learners with disabilities in primary boarding schools are often excluded from bursary support under the Constituency Development Fund (CDF), which contributes to high dropout rates.

The school feeding program, while beneficial, has not been expanded nationwide due to challenges such as poor coordination, inadequate capacity at the district level, and limited financial resources. Cultural and social norms surrounding health behaviours also hinder its full implementation. Inequities between rural and urban areas persist, particularly in terms of access to education. Learners in rural areas face significant challenges, including geographical barriers and poverty, which inhibit their ability to access and progress in education.

Additionally, children who do not attend school often end up in child labour to help support their families. Some girls are married off early due to economic pressures. Access to education in rural areas reduces both child labour and child marriage, providing a pathway out of poverty. However, poor sanitation facilities, which do not provide adequate privacy or cater to menstrual needs, exacerbate the challenges girls face. Lack of clean water and inadequate sanitation facilities have led to increased absenteeism among girls and female teachers. Poor water and sanitation also contribute to health issues such as diarrhoea, which affects learners' performance and attendance.

In summary, while the Government has made significant progress in promoting equity and inclusion in education, challenges remain that need to be addressed to ensure that every learner, regardless of gender, disability, or geographic location, has access to quality education. More investment and strategic interventions are necessary to overcome these barriers and achieve true equity in education across Zambia.

2.5 Efficiency and Effectiveness

The efficiency and effectiveness of an education system are essential in achieving desired learning outcomes. It is not sufficient to enroll children in school; ensuring consistent attenda-nce, progression, and successful completion is paramount. School completion and progression rates are critical indicators of internal efficiency, guiding authorities in identifying and addressing the causes of dropouts and poor retention. High dropout rates undermine the efficiency of the system as resources allocated to those who leave school prematurely are wasted. Similarly, grade repetition results in a misallocation of resources that could otherwise be used to educate other learners. These challenges contribute to low transition rates, particularly between Grades 7 to 8 and Grades 9 to 10.

Between 2014 and 2020, the transition rate from Grade 7 to Grade 8 increased from 59.3% to 63.0%, while the rate from Grade 9 to Grade 10 rose from 42% to 46.8%. However, a decline was observed between 2019 and 2020, with transition rates at both primary and secondary levels dropping by 11.0% and 6.2%, respectively (Education Statistics Bulletin, 2020). This decline highlights that approximately 20% of learners who completed Grade 7 did not progress to sit for the Grade 9 national examinations, as monitored by the Examinations Council of Zambia. Key factors contributing to dropouts, repetition, and low transition rates include economic challenges, long distances to schools, pregnancies, child marriages, negative cultural practices, and bullying.

While Zambia has made notable progress in improving the efficiency and effectiveness of its education system, significant challenges remain. These include infrastructure deficits, insufficient teacher quality, inadequate financing, and limited data management capabilities. Addressing these challenges is crucial to achieving a more robust and equitable education system that meets the needs of learners and aligns with the country's broader socio-economic development aspirations.

2.5.1 Structure of the Education System

Since independence, Zambia's education system has undergone several structural changes. In 1996, the Government adopted the 4-7-5-4 system, which consists of four years of Early Childhood Care, Development, and Education (ECCDE), seven years of primary education, five years of secondary education, and four years of university education. This structure has contributed significantly to the production of human resources aligned with national development goals.

In 2011, the structure of Zambia's education system was revised from the 9-3-4 system, which consisted of nine years of Basic Education, three years of Senior Secondary Education, and four years of Tertiary Education, to the 3-7-5-4 system. This new structure comprises three years of Early Childhood Education (ECE), seven years of primary education, five years of secondary education, and four years

of university education. The four-year university education period refers to the standard duration for an ordinary bachelor's degree, though tertiary academic programs range from one to seven years of study.

However, the current structure has several limitations, particularly its lack of alignment with regional, continental, and global trends. Unlike many Commonwealth and Southern African Development Community (SADC) countries, such as Tanzania, Zimbabwe, South Africa, and Mauritius, Zambia does not offer an Advanced Level (A-Level) certification, which has become the standard entry requirement for university education globally. Zambia's reliance on the Ordinary Level (O-Level) School Certificate for university entry has significant implications:

1. Zambian school graduates face challenges in meeting university entry requirements in countries where A-Level certification is mandatory.
2. Within the SADC region, Zambian graduates with Bachelor's Degrees are often required to complete bridging courses before enrolling in Master's Degree programs, resulting in additional costs and time.

3. International qualification recognition institutions, such as UK ENIC, have downgraded Zambia's four-year Bachelor's Degree, reducing its global competitiveness.

To address these issues, there is an urgent need to realign Zambia's education system by adopting a 46-4-2 structure: four years of ECCDE, six years of primary education, four years of secondary education at the Ordinary Level, and two years at the Advanced Level. This restructuring will harmonize Zambia's education framework with regional and international standards, enhance university admission prospects globally, and align with the SADC Qualifications Framework, Africa Agenda 2063, and the African Continental Qualifications Framework (ACQF). Additionally, it will potentially reduce the duration of diploma and undergraduate degree programs without compromising educational quality.

2.5.2 Financing

The Government has made efforts to increase funding to the education sector, with budget allocations rising from 10.4% in 2022 to 15.4% in 2024 (National Budgets). However, this remains below the 20% target set by the Dakar Convention, to which Zambia is a signatory. The increased funding is intended to expand school infrastructure, implement free education policies, and recruit more teachers. Despite these efforts, the allocation remains inadequate to meet the growing demands of the education sector, particularly in addressing infrastructure deficits and ensuring access to quality teaching and learning resources.

2.5.3 Data Management and Information Systems

Robust data management is essential for monitoring and improving the efficiency and effectiveness of the education system. The Government has made progress in strengthening data management processes by implementing the Education Management Information System (EMIS) and building capacity for Monitoring and Evaluation (M&E). However, the current EMIS (or PMIS – Project Management System) system which was implemented under the Zambia Education Enhancement Project (ZEEP), faces several challenges. Among the challenges are its usability as it is not fully multi-year or realtime, and it lacks sufficient parameters to monitor efficiency in key areas such as Early Childhood Education (ECE), Youth and Adult Literacy Education (YALE), and Alternative Modes of Education Provision (AMEP).

The education sector faces critical challenges in data management, including an outdated and userunfriendly EMIS/PMIS system that lacks real-time, multi-year functionality and adequate indicators for monitoring key programmes such as ECE, YALE, projects and AMEP. In addition, inadequate ICT infrastructure, particularly limited internet access, electricity, and digital devices in schools, continues to hinder progress toward digital transformation. Fragmented, non-integrated data systems further constrain the development of a unified education data platform, while insufficient investment and coordination remain key barriers to achieving efficient and effective data management.

As part of the Digital Transformation Agenda spearheaded by the Cabinet Office and the Presidential Delivery Unit, the Government aims to enhance digital literacy by training 4.3 million citizens by 2026. The Ministry of Education plays a central role in this initiative, with a strategy to first train its teaching workforce, estimated at over 150,000, who will then cascade the training to the broader population.

Achieving this agenda requires reliable internet connectivity, access to digital devices, and electricity in schools. While some schools already have computers, laptops, and internet connectivity, the current infrastructure is insufficient for Zambia's 13,487 schools (Education Statistics Bulletin, 2024). The Government has engaged Cooperating Partners to address these gaps, but further investment is needed to achieve comprehensive digital transformation.

2.6 Education Centres of Excellence

Education Centres of Excellence in Zambia are designed to enhance the quality of teaching, improve learner outcomes, and equip learners with future-ready skills across diverse domains, including Science, Technology, Engineering, and Mathematics (STEM), the Arts, Special Education, Early

Childhood Education, and Adult Literacy. Key institutions such as the Zambia Institute for Special Education (ZAMISE), the National Science Centre, Charles Lwanga Teachers' College, and the

Technical and Vocational Teachers' College (TVTC) have demonstrated notable progress, particularly in areas of ICT integration and teacher training. These institutions are recognised as national leaders and play a critical role in shaping educational delivery and setting standards in their respective fields.

Despite these advancements, several challenges hinder the full realization of the Centres' potential. These include limited investment in research and innovation, inadequate integration of ICT in teaching and learning, low foundational learning outcomes, the absence of a dedicated national research fund, outdated curricula, and an unequal distribution of Centres across the education sub-sectors and geographic regions.

To position Zambia as a regional hub for quality education, there is a need for strengthened policy support in the areas of research and innovation, ICT, curriculum reform, and equitable access to specialised education. Establishing Centres of Excellence at all levels of the education system will be critical to addressing these gaps and ensuring inclusive, high-quality, and future-oriented education for all.

2.7 Digital Transformation Landscape in the Education Sector

The digital transformation of Zambia's education sector is a national priority, guided by the Smart Zambia National Electronic Government Plan. These plans are anchored on key thematic pillars: ICT governance, electronic government services, digital infrastructure, information security, and capacity building and change management. These pillars provide a strategic framework for advancing the integration of digital technologies in public service delivery, including in education.

In line with this agenda, the Ministry of Education has undertaken a series of initiatives aimed at improving education delivery, accessibility, and operational efficiency through the integration of Information and Communication Technology (ICT) in teaching, learning, and administration. Key interventions include the expansion of internet access in schools, the distribution of digital devices, and the implementation of policies on data protection and cyber security.

Despite these efforts, several structural and systemic challenges persist. Less than 50 percent of schools in Zambia have access to electricity, and only 4,951 out of 13,487 schools are currently connected to the internet. Although partnerships with service providers such as Liquid Telecom and Starlink have begun to address connectivity gaps, progress has been hindered by inconsistent power supply, insufficient funding, and weak coordination among stakeholders.

The transition from manual to digital systems remains slow and uneven. Many schools continue to rely on paper-based processes, lack sufficient digital devices, and have limited ICT capacity among both

educators and learners. Furthermore, the absence of integrated information systems and the decentralised nature of data management significantly undermine data quality, consistency, and the use of evidence for decision-making.

Digital literacy levels are low, with only 6.8 percent of learners and 33 percent of teachers having received formal ICT training. While the government has introduced innovation hubs and digital literacy programmes aimed at enhancing skills and awareness, their uptake remains limited, particularly in rural and underserved areas. Compounding these challenges are growing concerns around digital security, as many schools lack the necessary infrastructure to support secure networks and protect sensitive information.

There is a growing national interest in digital entrepreneurship; however, support for educational innovation remains minimal. The Ministry's ICT initiatives are not yet fully aligned with national digital standards, and the adoption of emerging technologies such as Artificial Intelligence (AI), cloud computing, and big data remains limited. Although Zambia has enacted a range of progressive digital policy instruments, including the Data Protection Act and the Cyber Security and Cyber Crimes Act, enforcement has been weak due to infrastructure limitations and fragmented implementation across sectors.

In light of these challenges, there is an urgent need for a comprehensive and inclusive Education Sector Digitalization Strategy. This forward-looking strategy should focus on strengthening leadership and policy enforcement, increasing investment in digital infrastructure and capacity development, and promoting sustainable, inclusive, and transformative digital practices across all levels of the education system. Through these efforts, Zambia can build a resilient, future-ready education sector that empowers learners and educators to thrive in a rapidly evolving digital world.

2.8 Partnerships and Collaboration in the Education Sector

Achieving inclusive, quality education requires significant technical and financial resources.

Successful implementation of education programs depends largely on resource mobilization. The Government collaborates with Cooperating Partners, Civil Society Organisations (CSOs), communities, Faith-Based Organisations (FBOs), and the private sector to gather additional financial, technical, material, and human resources to support the education sector.

2.8.1 Cooperating Partners (Cps)

The Government has fostered an environment conducive to engaging Cooperating Partners (CPs), who play a critical role in supporting the education sector. CPs bridge funding gaps, provide technical expertise, facilitate capacity development, and support infrastructure and curriculum development.

To formalise its collaboration, the Government has endorsed several international instruments, including the United Nations' Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), the African Union Agenda 2063, the Southern African Development Community (SADC) Protocol on Education and Training, the Convention on Technical and Vocational Education, and the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women.

However, despite significant contributions, challenges persist in donor-initiated educational programmes. Key issues include concerns over the long-term sustainability of supported initiatives, duplication of efforts across programmes, and inadequate coordination mechanisms among partners. Addressing these challenges requires streamlined strategies, enhanced collaboration, and effective coordination to maximise the impact of donor-driven initiatives.

2.8.2 Civil Society and Faith-Based Organisations (FBOs)

The Government has created an enabling environment for CSOs and FBOs to actively participate in education delivery. CSOs focus on advocacy efforts, promoting equity and inclusion, increasing funding to meet international commitments, and enhancing the quality of education.

FBOs complement the Government's efforts by providing education to vulnerable groups, including orphans, out-of-school children, girls, and persons with disabilities. The Government supports FBOoperated institutions with teachers, financial assistance, materials, and infrastructure development. Additionally, monitoring mechanisms have been enhanced to ensure these institutions adhere to national education standards.

Despite the supportive environment established by the Government, challenges remain in fully leveraging the contributions of Civil Society and Faith-Based Organisations. These include limited coordination mechanisms, inconsistent adherence to national education standards, and inadequate resource allocation to sustain and scale up their efforts. Additionally, monitoring and accountability frameworks require further strengthening to ensure effective collaboration and alignment with national education goals.

The Government aims to strengthen coordination, accountability, and resource support for Civil Society and Faith-Based Organisations to enhance their impact in delivering inclusive and equitable education. Future efforts will focus on capacity building, improved regulatory oversight, and aligning their contributions with national education priorities.

2.8.3 Private Sector

Since the liberalisation of the education sector in the 1990s, the Government has created a conducive environment for private sector participation. The private sector supplements Government efforts by directly running schools, providing Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) initiatives, and participating in Public-Private Partnerships (PPPs).

Despite the private sector's active participation in education delivery, significant disparities in service quality and compliance persist. Many private schools in Zambia face critical challenges that hinder their ability to fully adhere to established educational standards and regulations. A number of these institutions operate without adequate infrastructure and essential facilities necessary for providing a safe and conducive learning environment.

Moreover, there is increasing concern over the employment of teachers who lack the requisite qualifications or specialization in key sub-sectors such as Early Childhood Education (ECE), primary, and secondary education. In some instances, teachers are not registered with the Teaching Council of Zambia, raising serious questions about the quality, professionalism, and accountability within the private education sector.

2.8.4 Communities

Communities play a pivotal role in the education sector. They provide learners, build schools, and hold educational institutions accountable for their outcomes. The Government works to strengthen community participation, particularly in establishing and running schools, and facilitates productive collaboration among various community stakeholders to enhance education delivery.

Parent-Teacher Committees (PTCs) have been instrumental in improving school-community linkages, particularly for girls and disadvantaged groups. These committees contribute to providing equitable, quality education and ensuring that community-run institutions adhere to Government standards.

However, despite the Government's proactive implementation of the Education for All Policy, challenges persist. Learners from rural and marginalised communities remain vulnerable to dropping out of formal education due to factors such as early pregnancies, child marriages, and economic hardships. Communities play an assertive and participatory role in addressing these challenges by ensuring their children continue to attend school and progress in their education.

In summary, while partnerships and collaborations have significantly contributed to education delivery in Zambia, challenges such as financial barriers, unequal service distribution, and socio-economic constraints require continued efforts to strengthen these partnerships for greater inclusivity and effectiveness.

CHAPTER THREE

3.0 VISION, RATIONALE AND GUIDING PRINCIPLES

3.1 Vision

"Quality, inclusive and relevant lifelong education and skills training for an empowered society."

3.2 Rationale

Since gaining independence in 1964, the Government of Zambia has consistently demonstrated a strong commitment to education as a vehicle for national development. A landmark in this commitment was the formulation of the 1996 National Policy on Education, Educating Our Future, which provided a comprehensive framework for guiding the education sector. However, since its adoption, the policy has not been revised, limiting its ability to respond effectively to emerging challenges and opportunities within the sector.

Over the past two decades, the national, regional, and global education landscape has evolved significantly. The current policy framework does not adequately reflect Zambia's commitments to Education for All (EFA) or align with international and continental agendas such as the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), the Continental Education Strategy for Africa (CESA), and the African Union's Agenda 2063.

Moreover, Zambia's 3-7-5-4 education structure, while historically beneficial, lacks alignment with global academic standards particularly due to the absence of Advanced Level (A-Level) certification. This gap has placed Zambian graduates at a disadvantage in the international academic environment, where A' Level qualifications are the standard for university entry. Consequently, students often face additional costs and delays through bridging programs, and Zambia's qualifications have been downgraded by international recognition agencies, reducing their global competitiveness.

In addition, the current curriculum does not adequately equip learners with 21st-century skills needed for the modern world, including digital literacy, climate education, entrepreneurship, and STEM competencies. The limited emphasis on these areas undermines the relevance of the education system in supporting Zambia's broader socio-economic development.

In response to these challenges, this revised policy proposes a shift to a 4-6-4-2 structure, comprising four years of Early Childhood Care, Development and Education (ECCDE), six years of primary education, four years of secondary education at the Ordinary Level, and two years at the Advanced Level. This reform will harmonize Zambia's education system with regional and international frameworks such as the SADC Qualifications Framework, Agenda 2063, and the African Continental Qualifications Framework (ACQF).

The development of this policy is therefore driven by the need to align Zambia's education system with current government priorities and strategic aspirations, including Vision 2030, which envisions Zambia as a prosperous middle-income nation. It also seeks to ensure that the education system is globally competitive, regionally relevant, and nationally responsive.

To this end, the policy is committed to removing structural and systemic barriers that hinder learner achievement and to promoting inclusive and equitable access to quality, relevant, and lifelong education and skills development. It also aims to integrate global best practices and position Zambia as a centre of excellence in education within the region and beyond. Ultimately, the policy serves as a transformative tool to drive national human capital development and socio-economic transformation.

3.3 Guiding Principles

(a) Inclusiveness and Equity:

All learners irrespective of differences in age, gender, ethnicity, language, disability or any other form of marginalisation shall access, participate in and benefit from the provision of quality education.

(b) Accountability:

The Government shall be responsible and answerable to its citizens and stakeholders in its delivery of the objectives and measures in this Policy.

(c) Transparency:

The information on education performance shall be accessible to all key stakeholders in the education sector as and when it shall be required in accordance with the agreed procedures.

(d) Partnerships:

The Government will at all times promote stakeholder participation in the provision of education services by integrating and strengthening their voices in the welfare of education.

(e) Social Justice:

In the implementation of this Policy, the poor and vulnerable learners will be given special consideration.

(f) Integrity:

The Government will operate with integrity in meeting the objectives and measures in the Policy.

CHAPTER FOUR

4.0 POLICY OBJECTIVES AND MEASURES

The Policy objectives are as follows:

1. To attain universal access to and participation in education and skills development;
2. To achieve quality and relevant lifelong education and skills development;
3. To achieve equity and inclusion in the education system;
4. To deliver efficient and effective education services;
5. To position Zambia as a regional hub for quality and inclusive education;
6. To lead a secure, inclusive, and innovation-driven digital transformation in education; and
7. To strengthen partnerships and coordination in education service delivery.

4.1 Policy Objective 1

* To attain universal access to and participation in education and skills development.

4.1.1 Policy Measures

i. Ensure access to and participation in education and skills development at all levels;
ii. Facilitate appropriate and adequate facilities for delivery of education and skills development;
iii. Strengthen Alternative Mode of Education Provision and skills development at all levels; and
iv. Enhance learner support frameworks and mechanisms.

4.2 Policy Objective 2

* To achieve quality and relevant lifelong education and skills development.

4.2.1 Policy Measures

i. Facilitate for the provision of the curricula that are responsive to individual, societal and global needs, including climate change, the fourth industrial revolution, and Zambia's national core values;
ii. Enhance the provision of quality and relevant teaching and learning materials and equipment;

iii. Strengthen Continuing Professional Development for educators to improve the delivery of quality education and skills development;
iv. Enhance staff recruitment, deployment and retention especially in underserved areas; and
v. Strengthen educational assessment, monitoring and evaluation mechanisms to ensure accountability and improved education outcomes.

4.3 Policy Objective 3

* To achieve equity and inclusion in the education system.

4.3.1 Policy Measures

i. Promote the provision of appropriate gender balanced education;
ii. Promote access, participation and support for Learners with Disabilities and Special Education Needs (LSEND), orphans and vulnerable learners in education; iii. Enhance the provision of health, nutrition, and water and sanitation services in learning institutions;
iv. Enhance access to education in the underserved communities in urban and rural areas; and
v. Raise awareness and advocate against harmful cultural and social norms that negatively affect gender equity and the inclusion of learners with disabilities in education.

4.4 Policy Objective 4

* To deliver efficient and effective education services.

4.4.1 Policy Measures

i. Restructure the education system to align it to local needs, regional and international trends;
ii. Strengthen the Monitoring and Evaluation system;
iii. Enhance the integration and use of management information systems to support datadriven decision-making; iv. Increase budgetary allocation to the education sector;
v. Establish sustainable financing mechanisms for education; and
vi. Enhance mechanisms for tracking learner and teacher/lecturer attendance and performance in education systems.

4.5 Policy Objective 5:

* To position Zambia as a regional hub for quality and inclusive education.

4.5.1 Policy Measures

i. Strengthen and Expand the Institutional Capacity of Centres of Excellence;
ii. Integrate ICT and Digital Innovation in Teaching, Learning, and Management;
iii. Establish and Operationalize a National Education Research and Innovation Fund;
iv. Promote Curriculum Reform and Pedagogical Innovation;
v. Strengthen Foundational Learning Through Centres of Excellence; and
vi. Enhance Partnerships, Monitoring, and International Collaboration.

4.6 Policy Objective 6:

* To lead a secure, inclusive, and innovation-driven digital transformation in education.

4.6.1 Policy Measures

i. Enhance Digital Infrastructure and Connectivity;
ii. Expand Access to Digital Devices;
iii. Strengthen ICT Competencies for Learners and Educators;
iv. Digitize Teaching, Learning, and Administrative Processes;
v. Ensure Cybersecurity and Promote Safe, Responsible Use of Technology; and
vi. Foster Innovation, Entrepreneurship, Leadership and Governance, and Alignment with National ICT Standards.

4.7 Policy Objective 7:

* To strengthen partnerships, collaboration and coordination in education service delivery.

4.7.1 Policy Measures

i. Strengthen partnerships in education provision;
ii. Strengthen sector-wide donor coordination;
iii. Strengthen the multi-sectoral approach in delivery of educational services;
iv. Enhance transparency and accountability mechanisms in education; and
v. Promote Public-Private Partnerships (PPPs) in education service delivery.

CHAPTER FIVE

4.0 IMPLEMENTATION FRAMEWORK

The successful delivery of measures in this National Education Policy will depend on the implementation framework, whose key components are the institutional arrangements; the legal framework; resource mobilisation and financing, and monitoring and evaluation.

5.1 Institutional Arrangements

Institutional arrangements will involve management and governance structures, which will facilitate the effective delivery of the National Education Policy aspirations. These will be at national, provincial, district and institutional levels. Decentralisation will be the major window through which education will be managed. This will involve devolution of identified functions from the centre to the local level, and will promote broad-based participation in the management of education, with emphasis placed on the creativity and innovation of local-level education managers. The National Education Policy will be implemented in partnership with the following stakeholders.

5.1.1. Ministry responsible for Education

The ministry responsible for Education will take the overall responsibility for coordinating and ensuring successful implementation of the Policy.

5.1.2 Line Ministries

The different line ministries will contribute to education delivery within their mandates, in view of the sector being multi-sectoral and covering other elements like poverty reduction, water and sanitation as well as health. They will also participate in institutional Management Boards and Advisory Groups.

5.1.3. Cooperating Partners

The Cooperating Partners will contribute to education financing, technical assistance, and participate in education programmes promoting international linkages.

5.1.4. Civil Society and Faith-Based Organisations

These Organisations supplement Government efforts in education provision, provide opportunities for people to exercise their right to participation in education, and advocate the right to education as a fundamental right.

5.1.5. Private Sector

These will supplement Government efforts in education provision, participate in education programmes and enhance access to education.

5.1.6. Communities

The community will act as a watchdog and ensure that education serves the people, society, and the nation. The community will leverage its resources and assist learners in achieving learning outcomes.

5.1.7. Local Authorities

Local authorities have some responsibility for all schools in their area. Local authorities will operate schools, implement and enforce national laws and policies, develop and implement their own educational policies, hire and supervise professional teaching staff, and mobilise resources for education delivery.

5.1.8. Traditional Authorities

Traditional authorities will participate in education delivery as stated in various legislative instruments.

5.1.9. Teacher and Academic Unions

Teacher and Academic Unions will be negotiating for salaries and conditions of service through collective bargaining, conduct worker education and handle grievances.

5.1.10. Media

The role of the media will be to educate, inform and disseminate educational programmes.

5.1.11. Teachers/Academic Staff

Teachers/Academic staff will coach and mentor learners. They will shape academic goals and be dedicated to getting their learners to achieve them. Colleges of Education and Universities will provide preservice and in-service teacher education.

5.1.12. Learners

Learners will be responsible for their learning in order to achieve the desired outcomes facilitated by their teachers, trainers and lecturers.

5.2 Legal Framework

The National Education Policy will be implemented within the provisions of the Constitution of the Republic of Zambia and a range of sector-specific and cross-sectoral legal instruments. These laws provide the foundation for inclusive, equitable, accountable, and high-quality education service delivery in Zambia. The following legislation will facilitate the implementation of the National Education Policy:

5.2.1 Core Education and Training Legislation:

a) The Constitution of the Republic of Zambia (Amendment) Act No. 2 of 2016 – affirms the right to education and the duty of the state to provide accessible and quality education.
b) Education Act No. 23 of 2011 – provides for the establishment, regulation, and management of schools and educational institutions.
c) Higher Education Act No. 4 of 2013, as amended by Act No. 23 of 2021 – governs the regulation, quality assurance, and administration of higher education institutions.
d) Technical Education, Vocational and Entrepreneurship Training (TEVET) Act No. 13 of 1998, as amended by Act No. 11 of 2005 – provides the legal basis for vocational training and skills development.
e) Higher Education Loans and Scholarships Act No. 31 of 2016 – governs the provision of financial support to students in tertiary education.
f) Examinations Council of Zambia Act No. 3 of 2023 – regulates the development and administration of national examinations and assessments.
g) Teaching Profession Act No. 5 of 2013 – regulates teacher qualifications, registration, and professional conduct.
h) Zambia Educational Publishing House Act No. 2 of 1992 – facilitates the production and distribution of educational materials.
i) Zambia National Commission for UNESCO Act No. 32 of 1966 – supports Zambia's participation in international education, science, and culture programs.
j) Zambia Qualifications Authority Act No. 8 of 2024 – establishes the national qualifications framework and quality assurance mechanisms.
k) Local Government Act No. 2 of 2019 – facilitates decentralised education service delivery, including infrastructure development and oversight as well as school boarding bursaries.

5.2.2 Supporting ICT, Digitalization, and Data Protection Legislation:

a) Information and Communication Technologies (ICT) Act No. 15 of 2009 – promotes the development and regulation of ICT services, including in education.
b) Cyber Security Act 3 of 2025 and Cyber Crimes Act No. 4 of 2025 – provide for the protection of digital infrastructure and addresses online threats in educational environments.
c) Data Protection Act No. 3 of 2021 – ensures the privacy and protection of learners' and teachers' personal information in digital systems.
d) Electronic Communications and Transactions Act No. 21 of 2009 – supports e-learning, digital certification, and online educational platforms.

5.2.3 Child Rights, Inclusion, and Protection Legislation:

a) Children's Code Act No. 12 of 2022 – promotes child protection, welfare, and rights, including the right to education, health, and safety.
b) Persons with Disabilities Act No. 6 of 2012 – mandates the provision of inclusive education and reasonable accommodation for learners with disabilities.
c) The Zambia Correctional Service Act No37, of 2021 – providing essential items needed for their care and well-being" of a circumstantial child living with a female inmate typically include the Early Childhood Development:
r) Gender Equity and Equality Act No. 22 of 2015 – promotes gender parity in education and protects against discrimination in learning environments.
s) Anti-Gender-Based Violence Act No. 1 of 2011 – protects learners and staff from gender-based violence within and outside educational settings. 5.2.4 Governance, Financial Management, and Oversight:
t) Public Finance Management Act No. 1 of 2018 – ensures transparency and accountability in the use of education sector funds.
u) Public Procurement Act No. 8 of 2020 – regulates the procurement of goods and services for schools and institutions.
v) National Planning and Budgeting Act No. 1 of 2020 – provides the legal framework for integrated planning and budgeting across the education sector.

However, there will be a need to periodically review and harmonise various legislation pertaining to provision of education. In addition, Zambia has ratified and domesticated several international conventions, legal frameworks and policies that impact on provision of education.

5.3 Resource Mobilisation and Financing

The Government of the Republic of Zambia is committed to providing accessible, equitable, quality and inclusive education to all learners. Successful implementation of this Policy will require substantial technical and financial resources. Government shall mobilise financial and technical resources through increased budgetary allocation as well as mobilising additional financing and human resources from Cooperating Partners, communities, Civil Society Organisations (CSOs) and the private sector.

In order to enhance accountability and prudent resource management, the education sector will roll out the Integrated Financial Management Information System (IFMIS) at all levels of education delivery. Furthermore, the IFMIS shall be strengthened with placement of skilled staff and modernised with appropriate software and hardware tools to provide accurate and timely budgeting and financial information as well as a reliable payment system for the improved delivery of education.

5.4 Monitoring and Evaluation

The achievement of the Policy will depend on effective monitoring and evaluation systems being employed. Monitoring and Evaluation of the implementation of this Policy will be conducted through appropriate existing and new systems, procedures and mechanisms. The monitoring and evaluation frameworks will be informed by the comprehensive Implementation Plan for this Policy and other appropriate Government tools and mechanisms. The Implementation Plan outlines clear linkages between the Policy objectives, measures and activities with their performance indicators.