



REPUBLIC OF ZAMBIA

REPORT OF THE

**COMMITTEE ON EDUCATION, SCIENCE AND TECHNOLOGY ON
REVIEWING THE STATE OF FOUNDATIONAL LITERACY AND NUMERACY
LEVELS IN PRIMARY SCHOOLS**

FOR THE

FIFTH SESSION OF THE THIRTEENTH NATIONAL ASSEMBLY

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LIST OF ACRONYMS

CPD	Continuing Professional Development
ECE	Early Childhood Education
ECZ	Examinations Council of Zambia
EFA	Education for All
EGRA	Early Grade Reading Assessment
EGMA	Early Grade Mathematics Assessment
ESB	Education Statistical Bulletin
FLN	Foundational Learning and Numeracy
GPE	Global Partnership for Education
HEA	Higher Education Loans and Scholarship Boards
HIM/TGM	Headteachers' Inservice Meeting/Teacher Group Meetings
MDD	Management Development Division
MPL	Global Minimum Proficiency Level
NAS	National Assessment Survey
NCA's	National Competence Assessments
NLF	National Literacy Framework
NNF	National Numeracy Framework
NMCZ	Nursing and Midwifery Council of Zambia
PCK	Pedagogical Content Knowledge
PISA-D	Programme for International Student Assessment for Development
STN	Strategies for Teaching Numeracy
SEACMEQ	Southern and Eastern Africa Consortium for Monitoring Educational Quality
TaRL	Teach at the Right Level
THRASS	Teaching Handwriting, Reading, and Spelling Skills
TLM	Teaching and Learning Materials
TTE	Transforming Teacher Education
USAID	United States Aid
UNESCO	United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organisation

UNICEF

United Nations Children’s Fund

ZREAD

Zambia Reading for Education and Development

PART II

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FOREWORD

Honourable Madam Speaker, the Committee on Education, Science and Technology has the honour to present its Report on a Review of the State of Foundational Literacy and Numeracy Levels in Primary Schools, for the Fifth Session of the Thirteenth National Assembly. The functions of the Committee are stipulated in Standing Order 206(c) of the National Assembly of Zambia Standing Orders, 2024.

In accordance with its Programme of Work, the Committee held thirteen meetings to consider the topical issue. To fully interrogate the topical issue, the Committee requested detailed memoranda from various stakeholders, who were also invited to appear before it to clarify any issues contained therein. The list of stakeholders is at Appendix II.

The Committee's Report is organised in two parts: Part I gives the background, objectives of the study, a summary of submissions from stakeholders and the Committee's observations and recommendations. Part II of the Report contains the Action-Taken Report on the Report of the Committee for the Fourth Session of the Thirteenth National Assembly.

The Committee is grateful to all stakeholders who tendered both written and oral submissions. The Committee also appreciates the services rendered by the Office of the Clerk of the National Assembly during its deliberations. The Committee further wishes to thank you, Madam Speaker, for affording it an opportunity to carry out its work.



PP Mr Harry S K Kamboni, MP
CHAIRPERSON

April 2026
LUSAKA

1.0 COMPOSITION OF THE COMMITTEE

The Committee consisted of: Mr Harry S K Kamboni, MP (Chairperson); Ms Melesiana Phiri, MP (Vice-Chairperson); Mr Twaambo Mutinta, MP; Mr Mweemba Malambo, MP; Mr Chinga Miyutu, MP; Mr Tyson Simuzingili, MP; Mr George Chisanga, MP; Mr Sydney Mushanga, MP; Mr Allen Banda, MP; and Mr Elias Daka, MP.

PART I 2.0 CONSIDERATION OF THE TOPICAL ISSUE

2.1 REVIEW OF THE STATE OF FOUNDATIONAL LITERACY AND NUMERACY LEVELS IN PRIMARY SCHOOLS

2.1.1 Background

Acquiring foundational literacy and numeracy skills in primary school is the bedrock for all learning. Without the ability to read, write, and do basic mathematics, learners struggle to stay in school, continue in education, and are more likely to drop out or repeat a grade.

Zambia's 8th National Development Plan 2022-2026 highlights the importance of foundational literacy and numeracy and asserts that the development of these skills must begin from early childhood. The 2023 National Education Curriculum Framework outlines the requirements for literacy and numeracy in greater detail, spanning from early childhood through to primary education.

In practice, pupils learning outcomes had been low and stagnant since the year 2010. A 2024 national study conducted by the Examinations Council of Zambia (ECZ), the Ministry of Education and United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organisation (UNESCO) showed that just 14.4 per cent of Grade 4 pupils reached or exceeded the target for their age level in mathematics and only 12.7 per cent of Grade 4 pupils did so in reading. This meant that nine out of ten, 10-year-old children could not read, write or do basic mathematics for their age.

The Ministry of Education, alongside VVOB Zambia, United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF) and Teach at the Right Level (TaRL) Africa were implementing the Catch-Up Programme to help children improve their academic performance. This initiative was based on evidence-based teaching practices, and was already showing promising results and putting students back on track.

However, primary education should be of sufficient quality to guarantee that students acquire literacy and numeracy skills, without the need to repeat or to attend catch-up classes. This ensured the best use of public finances and helped children progress in school, build their knowledge, and in turn, supported them to stay in school and continue to learn.

In view of the foregoing, the Committee on Education, Science and Technology resolved to review the state of foundational literacy and numeracy levels in primary schools in Zambia.

2.1.2 Objectives

The objectives of the study were to:

- i. understand the levels of foundational literacy and numeracy in primary schools;
- ii. investigate how well teachers were trained and supported to teach foundational literacy and numeracy effectively;
- iii. examine the availability and quality of teaching and learning materials used in early grade reading and mathematics;
- iv. examine urban-rural disparities in literacy and numeracy outcomes, as well as the equitable provision of resources and the deployment of qualified teachers; and
- v. appreciate any further challenges and opportunities to achieving literacy and numeracy in primary schools, and recommend the way forward.

2.2 SUMMARY OF SUBMISSIONS FROM STAKEHOLDERS

The submissions made by the stakeholders were as summarised below.

2.2.1 STATE OF FOUNDATIONAL LITERACY AND NUMERACY IN PRIMARY SCHOOLS

With regard to the state of foundational literacy and numeracy in primary schools, stakeholders submitted as set out below.

2.2.1.1 Literacy Performance Trends

Zambia monitored foundational literacy through five large-scale assessments, namely: the National Assessment Survey (NAS), Early Grade Reading Assessment (EGRA), Early Grade Mathematics Assessment (EGMA), Southern and Eastern Africa Consortium for Monitoring Educational Quality (SEACMEQ), and Programme for International Student Assessment for Development (PISA-D). These assessments provided insights into the reading and writing skills learners acquired in early grades and helped track progress over time.

i. National Assessment Survey of 2021

The Committee was informed that Grade 5 learners achieved a mean score of 35.73 per cent in English reading (a slight increase from 35.08 per cent in 2016) and 39.30 per cent in Zambian languages (up from 38.17 per cent in 2016), indicating only marginal improvement over five years.

ii. National Competence Assessments

The Committee was informed that the National Competence Assessments (NCAs) administered at Grades 1 and 4 across all primary schools, measured literacy proficiency in

both English and Zambian languages. Performance was categorised as Outstanding, Desirable, Minimum, or Below Minimum.

- a) *Grade 1 (Zambian Languages)*: 22 per cent of learners were outstanding, 30 per cent desirable, and 28 per cent fell at minimum or below minimum, meaning 48 per cent of learners were below the desirable level.
- b) *Grade 4 (Zambian Languages)*: 25 per cent outstanding, 31 per cent desirable, and 44 per cent below the desirable standard.
- c) *Grade 4 (English)*: 23 per cent outstanding, 28 per cent desirable, with 49 per cent of learners below the desirable level.

The findings highlighted that a significant proportion of learners in early grades were not meeting foundational literacy benchmarks. This underscored the urgent need for targeted interventions, such as the Catch-Up Programme, which provided small-group, level appropriate instruction to help learners bridge gaps in reading and writing skills.

2.2.1.2 Numeracy Performance Trends

The Committee was informed that National assessment data revealed that foundational numeracy in Zambia remained a significant concern, as a result of the following:

- i. *NAS (2001–2021)*: Performance initially improved between 2001 and 2008 but subsequently declined, with 2021 mean scores at 33.1 per cent, the lowest in two decades. This trend highlighted persistent challenges in teaching and learning numeracy at the lower primary level.
- ii. *Recent NCAs and Statistics (2023–2025)*: Data from the National Competence Assessments and the Education Statistics Bulletin indicated that approximately 40 per cent of learners in Grades 1 and 4 demonstrated competence in numeracy. These results remained well below regional averages, reflecting ongoing gaps in early-grade mathematics achievement.

The Committee was informed that to address the challenges, the Catch-Up Programme had been adapted for numeracy. This intervention provided targeted remediation for learners struggling with key mathematical concepts and equipped teachers to deliver hands-on, practical lessons tailored to learners' abilities. By emphasising small-group instruction and concrete learning materials, the Catch-Up approach helped strengthen conceptual understanding and improve foundational numeracy outcomes.

2.2.1.3 Learner Competencies

The Committee was informed that Zambia's learner outcome data, especially in primary school, was low. A study conducted by UNICEF in 2007 showed that among grade 6 students, 12 per cent in reading had achieved the Global Minimum Proficiency Level (MPL) at the end of primary school. In 2023, as part of the Assessment for Minimum Proficiency Level, the percentage of grade 7 students who reached the MPL at the end of primary was 10 per cent in reading and 16 per cent in mathematics.

Further, the percentage of grade 4 students achieving the Minimum Proficiency Level expected at the end of lower primary school (grades 2/3) was 12 per cent in reading and 14 per cent in Mathematics. The same test was also administered to grade 7 pupils: results showed that 24 per cent and 45 per cent of grade 7 pupils did not achieve the Minimum Proficiency Level expected by the end of grade 3 in Mathematics and reading, respectively. The pace, therefore, of learning was slow in early grades. Furthermore, an EGRA conducted by the United States Aid (USAID), “Let’s Read project” in 2018 showed that among grade 2 learners, 38 per cent could not get any letter sound correctly in the language of instruction, 64 per cent were not even able to successfully start to read a small passage, and 72 per cent could not answer any reading comprehension question. Also, as part of an Early Grade Mathematics Assessment in 2014, among grade 2 pupils, 66 per cent could answer a simple addition problem and 56 per cent a simple subtraction problem, but only 25 per cent could answer a more complex addition problem and 18 per cent a more complex subtraction problem, at the conceptual level.

The Committee was further informed that national and regional data consistently showed that Foundational Learning and Numeracy (FLN) outcomes remained below desired benchmarks, particularly for learners in Grades 1 to 4. Zambia’s 2021 to 2023 catch up pilots across Lusaka, Eastern, and Southern Provinces, supported by VVOB and partners, demonstrated that many learners in middle grades were still performing at pre-reading and emergent numeracy levels.

The data revealed significant learning deficits among Grade 3 learners, with large proportions unable to read a simple paragraph or perform basic operations, findings that could be corroborated with those by the Let's Read Programme.

2.2.2 INVESTIGATION OF HOW WELL TEACHERS WERE TRAINED AND SUPPORTED TO TEACH FOUNDATIONAL LITERACY AND NUMERACY EFFECTIVELY

With regard to teacher training and support, the Committee was informed as set out below.

2.2.2.1 Pre-service Teacher Training

Zambia’s Colleges of Education offered three-year diploma programmes for Early Childhood Education (ECE) and primary teachers, while universities provided four-year degree programmes for the same levels. Pre-service training equipped teachers with both content knowledge and pedagogical skills in foundational literacy and numeracy. Key areas of focus included:

- i. literacy and numeracy pedagogy, oral language development, emergent literacy, reading and writing instruction, lesson planning, and teaching strategies;
- ii. school-based teaching practice, including supervised classroom teaching, peer teaching, and mentoring by lecturers and in-service teachers; and

- iii. integration of catch-up strategies, which prepared teachers to identify learning gaps and implement small-group, level-appropriate remedial instruction effectively, ensuring learners who were behind could catch up to grade-level expectations.

2.2.2.2 Capacity Building for Teacher Educators

The Committee learnt that to strengthen teacher education quality, the Ministry of Education had implemented several initiatives, including the following:

- i. Transforming Teacher Education (TTE) Project (2020–2024) and the Catch-Up Programme had trained lecturers in delivering high-quality foundational literacy instruction and effective numeracy teaching strategies;
- ii. Partner-led innovations such as Jolly Phonics, Teaching Handwriting, Reading, And Spelling Skills (THRASS), Zambia Reading for Education and Development (ZREAD), and the Catch-Up Programme had enhanced lecturers' and teachers' skills, promoting evidence-based, practical instructional methods; and
- iii. these programmes ensured that pre-service teachers received consistent, curriculum-aligned training that translated directly into improved classroom practice.

2.2.2.3 Numeracy-focused Training

The Committee was informed that pre-service teachers were trained using specialised modules such as Strategies for Teaching Numeracy (STN), which incorporated Catch-Up methods. These modules equipped teachers with targeted techniques to address common learning difficulties, strengthened conceptual understanding, and delivered concrete, practical numeracy lessons tailored to learners' needs.

2.2.2.4 Technology-enabled Learning Competence

The Committee was informed that recognising the role of ICT in education, the Commonwealth of Learning, in collaboration with the Teaching Council of Zambia, had developed a Technology-Enabled Learning Competence Framework. This framework guided teachers, especially those without formal IT training, in integrating digital tools and blended learning approaches to enhance literacy and numeracy instruction in both ECE and primary classrooms.

2.2.2.5 School Leadership and Classroom Management

The Committee was informed that Zambian school leaders played a pivotal role in FLN, yet leadership capacity gaps hindered classroom orchestration for skill-based grouping. Strengths emerged in MoE-supported head teacher training under Headteachers' Inservice Meeting/Teacher Group Meetings (HIM/TGM), for monitoring of teaching and learning, had weaknesses, as most lacked tools for data-informed supervision, resulting in inconsistent teaching, learning and support. Academic literature, including J-PAL evaluations, reveals that

empowered principals who prioritised daily 45-minute FLN slots and playful methods sustained gains, which gains could be sustained through parliamentary probes to highlight persistent management lapses amid resource strains.

2.2.3 EXAMINATION OF THE AVAILABILITY AND QUALITY OF TEACHING AND LEARNING MATERIALS USED IN EARLY-GRADE READING AND MATHEMATICS

Regarding the availability and quality of early grade reading and mathematics; teaching and learning materials, the Committee was informed as set out below.

2.2.3.1 Teaching and Learning Materials

Though quality teaching and learning materials had been designed and well-produced, their availability was limited. Through monitoring activities conducted by VVOB and ZANEC, it was clear that there was a Teaching and Learning Materials (TLM) deficit directly eroding FLN outcomes, amplifying inequities in high-enrollment rural schools. As observed by UNICEF (2023), Core challenges included scarce graded reading books, insufficient new curriculum teacher and learner books for grades 1 to 4, insufficient quantities amid overcrowding, and suboptimal deployment of innovations, where production scaled unevenly, and teacher utilisation faltered without reinforcement.

Many pupils had neither textbooks nor other learning materials. In 2023, in schools where textbooks were available, an average of five pupils shared one book, contrary to the prescribed standards of a 1:1 learner-to-book ratio. With the new curriculum, the number of learner-text books could be higher as materials were yet to be uniformly distributed in schools countrywide. Further, the 2024 Education Statistical Bulletin (ESB) indicated that the Pupil-Book Ratio stood at thirty-one learners per book for primary schools. This aligned with findings in Zambia from USAID (2022) and Global Partnership for Education (GPE) (2023), which found that TLM availability, cultural relevance, and dosage were pivotal for early grade reading fluency and arithmetic mastery, was inadequate, explaining why Zambia's End Learning Poverty for all campaign launch targeted these for universal proficiency by 2035.

On the teacher-pupil ratio, the number differed greatly from urban to rural schools. According to the ESB 2024, the teacher-pupil ratio stood at 1 to 44 learners, while another research showed 1 to 80.

2.2.3.2 Assessment Systems and Data Use

Zambia's assessment ecosystem continued to face challenges in translating diagnostic information into effective action to improve Foundational Literacy and Numeracy outcomes. While progress had been made through Ministry of Education pilots that introduced termly formative assessment tools linked to Continuous Professional Development, these efforts remained limited in scale and impact. Systemic gaps persisted, including infrequent administration of national assessments such as EGRA and EGMA, weak data flows between

schools, districts, and national levels, and limited teacher agency in using assessment data to inform instruction.

2.2.3.3 Equity and Inclusion

Significant disparities in learning conditions persisted across Zambia, driven largely by inequitable teacher deployment and uneven access to support. Data from the 2024 ESB indicated that rural districts consistently experienced higher learner–teacher ratios, greater reliance on multi-grade classrooms, and lower levels of teacher retention, all of which constrained effective FLN instruction. Additionally, schools in remote and hard-to-reach areas also received less teaching and learning materials, and Continuous Professional Development support due to logistical and infrastructure constraints, further widening learning gaps. Conversely, urban and peri-urban schools faced severe congestion, with overcrowded classrooms undermining instructional quality and limiting opportunities for individual learner support. Evidence from Sub-Saharan Africa confirmed that such inequitable deployment of teachers and resources was a major barrier to achieving foundational literacy and numeracy at scale, underscoring the need for deliberate, data driven strategies to ensure equitable distribution of teachers, materials, and professional support across all contexts (World Bank, 2023).

2.2.3.4 Language of Instruction Implementation

In Zambia, effective implementation of the Language of Instruction remained central to the development of Foundational Literacy and Numeracy, yet persistent challenges undermined its impact. While early grade instruction in familiar local languages had been shown to support foundational learning, the transition from mother tongue instruction to English continued to be uneven and insufficiently supported. This challenge had been further amplified by the introduction of the new curriculum, which reverted to English as the primary language of instruction, placing additional demands on teachers and learners who may not yet have developed adequate proficiency. Inadequate teacher preparation, limited availability of instructional materials in both local languages and English, and inconsistent guidance on transition strategies collectively weakened instructional quality and learner comprehension in the early grades.

2.2.3.5 Enabling Environment and Policy Context

Zambia’s national development agenda placed strong emphasis on ensuring that all children acquired foundational literacy and numeracy skills. These competencies were central to the country’s long-term educational vision and were reflected across several policy instruments. The national policy document *Educating Our Future* (1996) identified the provision of adequate resources for basic education as a critical priority. Subsequent reforms, most notably the Education for All (EFA) Policy and the 2023 curriculum shift in language of instruction, had further shaped the foundational learning landscape.

The National Strategy 2020-2024 underscored the need to “improve the progression of learners,” a goal that was contingent on strengthening foundational learning from the earliest grades. This included initiatives aimed at improving learning readiness, such as expanding

access to basic nutrition through the Home Grown School Meals Programme. In 2022, the Government advanced its commitment to inclusive and equitable education by making schooling free up to the secondary level. The policy on Universal Access to Education for All was reinforced during the 2022 national budget address, which abolished user fees at the early childhood, primary levels and day secondary schools. The Government covered the costs through school grants, signaling a strong national commitment to removing financial barriers to learning.

2.2.3.6 School Readiness and Learner Wellbeing

Zambian FLN initiatives emphasises the importance of school readiness and wellbeing as precursors to effective FLN learning, particularly in rural high poverty areas where holistic deficits exacerbated inequities. Key progress included preschool expansions by the MoE, and integration of nutrition-sensitive grouping, fostering psychosocial stability through peer play, with data from J-PAL showing a correlation between attendance and improved proficiency . However, significant challenges still persisted, such as stunting rates at over 30 per cent, trauma from household shocks, and absent pre-literacy screenings. Further, SADC research synthesised that unaddressed wellbeing, encompassing hunger, mental health, and ECD access, undermined neural foundations for phonics or arithmetic, demanding multisectoral remedies to align with ELPAf's universal goals.

2.2.3.7 Cost, Efficiency, and Sustainability of FLN Interventions

Strengthening Foundational Literacy and Numeracy required sustained and strategic investment, particularly at Early Childhood Education and lower primary levels where learning foundations were formed. According to the ESB 2022, while public expenditure on education had increased following the introduction of the free education policy, allocations to Early Childhood Education remained relatively low compared to primary education, despite strong evidence that early investment yielded the highest returns. The ESB further indicated that Zambia had made progress in expanding access to ECE through public and community based centres. However, the number of operational ECE centres remained insufficient relative to the size of the eligible population. Many primary schools still did not integrate ECE centres, particularly in rural and peri urban areas, highlighting the need for additional infrastructure development and integration of ECE classes within existing primary schools to improve school readiness and reduce early learning gaps.

From an efficiency and sustainability perspective, strengthening FLN represented a cost effective approach to improving learning outcomes while maximising existing resources. ESB data and national assessments showed that many learners progressed through the system without mastering foundational skills, resulting in inefficiencies such as repetition, remedial costs, and persistently low learning outcomes. Evidence from Zambia, including Catch Up and Teaching at the Right Level initiatives implemented between 2021 and 2023, demonstrated that simple learner assessments and targeted instruction could produce significant learning gains at relatively low cost. Long term sustainability depended on embedding these approaches within Ministry of Education systems, including teacher education, continuous professional development, curriculum implementation, and school

leadership practices. Predictable domestic financing, improved Education Management Information Systems as highlighted in ESB 2021–2022, consistent provision of teaching and learning materials, and coordinated partner support were critical to sustaining and scaling improvements in foundational literacy and numeracy nationwide.

2.2.4 APPRECIATION OF THE CHALLENGES AND OPPORTUNITIES TO ACHIEVING LITERACY AND NUMERACY IN PRIMARY SCHOOLS, AND RECOMMENDATIONS ON THE WAY FORWARD

The Committee was informed that achieving strong literacy and numeracy outcomes in Zambia’s primary schools was influenced by multiple interrelated factors. While significant progress had been made, several persistent challenges continued to hinder effective learning, alongside opportunities for strategic interventions.

2.2.4.1 Teacher-related Challenges

i. Qualifications and Content Knowledge

Many teachers possessed formal qualifications but lacked deep mastery of literacy and numeracy content, which limited their ability to deliver effective instruction.

ii. Pre-service and In-service Training Gaps

Pre-service programmes often focused more on general pedagogy than subject-specific content. In-service Continuing Professional Development (CPD) varied in quality and reach, leaving some teachers inadequately prepared to address learning gaps.

iii. Deployment and Retention

Uneven deployment and high turnover, especially in rural areas, resulted in shortages of qualified teachers where they were most needed, undermining continuity in literacy and numeracy instruction.

2.2.4.2 Learner-related Challenges

i. Foundational Skill Gaps

Many learners entered primary school without sufficient pre-literacy and pre-numeracy skills due to limited exposure in ECE, large class sizes, or socio-economic barriers.

ii. *Mathematical Conceptual Difficulties*

Learners often struggled to understand abstract mathematical concepts, particularly when lessons were delivered without concrete examples or teaching aids. This led to rote learning and weak comprehension. iii. *Literacy Development Barriers*

Challenges in transitioning from mother-tongue instruction to English, coupled with limited print-rich environments at home and school, impeded reading and writing skills acquisition.

2.2.4.3 Teaching and Learning Material Challenges

i. *Resource Shortages*

Textbooks, manipulatives, and other literacy and numeracy resources remained insufficient, particularly in rural schools.

ii. *Hands-on Learning Limitations*

Scarcity of concrete materials constrained interactive and practical learning opportunities critical for early numeracy and literacy.

iii. *Equitable Distribution*

Inequities in resource allocation reduced the impact of interventions, including the CatchUp Programme, in regions most in need.

Despite the highlighted challenges, the Committee was informed that various opportunities existed, which included the following:

- i. Catch Up/TaRL Programme success in Zambia had proved that remedial support was key to bringing learners left behind up to speed;
- ii. structured pedagogy was key to supporting teachers in selecting the right activities and right methods to enable learners break through;
- iii. School Leadership strengthening, which VVOB was supporting through the development of national leadership units, improved instructional oversight;
- iv. digital low-cost tools enhanced teacher lesson preparation and learner engagement;
- v. MoE's renewed focus on learning outcomes aligned well with SDG 4; and
- vi. partnership potential to embed FLN interventions sustainably within government systems.

3.0 COMMITTEE'S OBSERVATIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Having considered the submissions made by various stakeholders, the Committee makes the observations and recommendations set out below.

a. Strengthening Teacher Education and Professional Development

The Committee observes the need to enhance pre-service and in-service teacher training to improve the quality of literacy and numeracy instruction; and recommends that:

- i. the Executive reviews and strengthens pre-service teacher education curricula to emphasise literacy and numeracy pedagogy and Pedagogical Content Knowledge (PCK), with clearer specialisation between lower and upper primary teaching;
- ii. In-service Continuing Professional Development (CPD) be institutionalised through regular, school-based support mechanisms such as lesson observation, coaching, peer mentoring, and feedback, with a strong focus on early-grade literacy and numeracy;
- iii. training explicitly incorporates Catch-Up Programme methodologies, enabling teachers to identify learning gaps and provide effective small-group remedial instruction; and
- iv. capacity building for teacher educators and mentors be expanded through partnerships with cooperating organisations to ensure consistent use of evidence based instructional approaches;

b. Equitable Deployment of Teachers and Learning Resources

The Committee observes that disparities in learning outcomes exist between urban and rural schools. In view of this, the Committee recommends the following:

- i. the Executive should apply data-driven teacher deployment models to ensure equitable distribution of qualified teachers, prioritising underserved and hard-to-reach areas;
- ii. the Executive should strengthen the provision and equitable distribution of curriculum-aligned teaching and learning materials, including resources guided by the National Literacy Framework (NLF) and National Numeracy Framework (NNF); and
- iii. the Executive should ensure that schools with high proportions of learners below grade-level proficiency receive adequate Catch-Up Programme materials, including remedial guides and learner resources

c. Community and Stakeholder Engagement

The Committee observes that there is limited collaboration with communities and partners, by the Ministry of Education, to reinforce foundational learning. In this regard, the Committee recommends the following:

- i. the Executive puts measures in place that will promote parental and caregiver involvement in supporting literacy and numeracy development at home;
- ii. the Executive partners with NGOs, civil society, and development partners in providing learning materials, teacher training, and remedial support in disadvantaged areas; and
- iii. the Executive implements flexible schooling strategies, including adjusted timetables in high-mobility communities, to reduce absenteeism and learning loss.

PART II

ACTION TAKEN REPORT ON THE REPORT OF THE COMMITTEE ON EDUCATION, SCIENCE AND TECHNOLOGY FOR THE FOURTH SESSION OF THE THIRTEENTH NATIONAL ASSEMBLY

A REVIEW OF THE OPERATIONS OF THE HIGHER EDUCATION AUTHORITY IN ZAMBIA

a. Legal Framework

The Committee, in the previous session, had urged the Executive to effect the harmonisation of the *Higher Education (Amendment) Act, No. 23 of 2021* with the *Nursing and Midwives Act, No. 10 of 2019*, which had undergone consequential amendments following the amendment of the *Higher Education Act, No. 4 of 2013*.

Executive's Response

It was reported in the Action-Taken Report that the Higher Education Authority had initiated high-level consultations with the Nursing and Midwifery Council of Zambia (NMCZ) to develop a harmonised regulatory framework that clearly delineated the roles and responsibilities of each institution.

The Executive was also of the view that professional bodies continue to safeguard professional and ethical standards, while the HEA retains its statutory responsibility for programme accreditation and quality assurance, ensuring coherence between the *Higher Education (Amendment) Act, No. 23 of 2021* and the *Nursing and Midwives Act, No. 10 of 2019*, in line with the Committee's recommendation.

Committee's Observations and Recommendations

The Committee will await a progress report on the harmonisation of the *Higher Education (Amendment) Act, No. 23 of 2021* with the *Nursing and Midwives Act, No. 10 of 2019*, without delay.

b. Funding Constraints

The Committee, in the previous session, had urged the Executive to consider revising upwards, the budget allocation to the HEA in order to optimally perform its mandate. The Committee had also urged the Executive to engage external partners for funding, to bolster the Authority's operational capacity.

Executive's Response

It was reported in the Action-Taken Report that the Higher Education Authority formally requested an increase in funding from K26,556,686 to K67,012,408.80 for the 2025 financial year. The Treasury approved a marginal increment of K1,000,000, resulting in an annual grant of K27,556,686. Despite this, the Authority had continued to engage the Ministry of Education and Ministry of Finance and National Planning to advocate for increased funding in 2026, while actively pursuing strategic partnerships and external funding to strengthen operational capacity.

Committee's Observations and Recommendations

The Committee resolves to await a progress report on the engagement of external partners for funding, to bolster the Authority's operational capacity.

c. Centralisation

The Committee, in the previous session, had urged the Executive to consider restructuring the HEA in order to increase and align its capacity to the increased mandate and functions as per the requirement of the *Higher Education (Amendment) Act, No. 23 of 2021*.

Executive's Response

It was reported in the Action-Taken Report that regarding the centralised structure of the HEA, a comprehensive restructuring exercise had been undertaken in collaboration with the Management Development Division (MDD).

The Restructuring Report had been approved by the HEA Board and submitted to the Emoluments Commission. Regional offices were planned to facilitate decentralisation, improve oversight, compliance, and service delivery, with implementation scheduled for 2026, subject to Treasury authority and resource availability.

Committee's Observations and Recommendations

The Committee will await a progress report on the comprehensive Restructuring Exercise.

d. Rapid Changes

The Committee, in the previous session, had urged the Executive to conduct periodic reviews of legal and regulatory frameworks so that they were aligned with emerging challenges, technological advancements, and international best practices in higher education governance.
Executive's Response

It was reported in the Action-Taken Report that the HEA, in collaboration with the Ministry of Education, had initiated measures to ensure that the regulatory environment remained responsive to global and technological trends as shown below.

i. Legislative and Policy Review

The HEA, together with the Ministry of Education, intends to review the Higher Education Act and the Zambia Qualifications Framework (ZQF) standards to strengthen quality assurance mechanisms for emerging delivery modes such as online and blended learning, and to ensure alignment with international best practices.

ii. Policy on Artificial Intelligence (AI)

The HEA had commenced the development of a Policy on the Use of Artificial Intelligence in Higher Education Institutions (HEIs). The policy sought to promote the ethical and responsible integration of AI technologies in teaching, learning, assessment, and research, while safeguarding academic integrity and data protection standards.

These initiatives were aimed at enhancing the resilience, adaptability, and competitiveness of Zambia's higher education system in the face of rapid global and technological transformation.

Committee's Observations and Recommendations

The Committee will await a progress report on the outcome of the measures put in place.

e. Development of the Student Database

The Committee, in the previous session, had urged the Executive to mobilise requisite funding and technical support to develop the student database in order to allow for monitoring of students' enrolments in HEIs.
Executive's Response

It was reported in the Action-Taken Report that significant progress had been made in developing a National Student Database in collaboration with SMART Zambia Institute. To

ensure the system's robustness and alignment with international standards, the Authority undertook a benchmarking visit to Kenya, which has a well-established national higher education data system. Lessons from this visit were being incorporated into the design and functionality of Zambia's database.

In addition, the HEA, in collaboration with the Ministry of Education, was developing a Centralised Student Enrolment System for public HEIs to enable real-time tracking of enrolment trends, enhance data-driven policy decisions, and improve efficiency in student monitoring and reporting across the sector.

Committee's Observations and Recommendations

The Committee will await a progress report on the development a centralised Student Enrolment System for public HEIs.

f. Low Awareness among HEIs

The Committee, in the previous session, had urged the Executive to put measures in place that would increase awareness of HEA regulations and standards among HEIs.

Executive's Response

It was reported in the Action-Taken Report that a comprehensive Communication Strategy (2022–2026) and a Structured Stakeholder Management Plan had been implemented.

i. Communication Strategy and Implementation Plan (2022–2026)

The Authority had developed a comprehensive strategy to ensure the consistent, accurate, and timely dissemination of information on regulations, quality standards, and accreditation processes to all stakeholders.

ii. Structured Stakeholder Management Plan

The Authority had established a framework for targeted engagement with HEIs, including tailored outreach, sensitisation workshops, and feedback mechanisms. This approach was designed to improve understanding, promote compliance, and foster collaboration across the higher education sub-sector. Through these initiatives, the Authority aimed to strengthen institutional knowledge, encourage adherence to statutory requirements, and support continuous improvement in higher education quality.

Committee's Observations and Recommendations

The Committee resolves to await a progress report on the outcome of the said Communication Strategy and Implementation/Management Plan.

g. Annual Inspection Audit Fees

The Committee, in the previous session, had urged the Executive to revise the regulation and only mandate HEIs to pay the said fees once an inspection report for the preceding year had been issued to them by the HEA.

Executive's Response

It was reported in the Action-Taken Report that measures were being implemented to strengthen compliance with the Annual Audit Plan. The Authority's objective was to ensure that all HEIs paying inspection audit fees were audited in a timely and systematic manner, in accordance with the provisions of the Higher Education Act. Audit reports and feedback were issued promptly to HEIs following completion of inspections, thereby enhancing transparency and accountability in the fee collection and auditing process. These measures were intended to align fee collection with service delivery, ensuring fairness, accountability, and improved confidence in the Authority's audit processes.

Committee's Observations and Recommendations

The Committee reaffirms its recommendation of aligning payment of audit fees to availing of preceding audit reports and urges the Authority to acquaint itself with the findings of the Committee on the matter.

h. Multiple Payment of Statutory Fees

The Committee, in the previous session, had urged the Executive to harmonise the payments so that professional bodies should only be collecting membership fees and leave the other obligations to the HEA.

Executive's Response

It was reported in the Action-Taken Report that HEA was engaging professional bodies to develop mechanisms that eliminated duplication of statutory fees and to ensure clarity regarding the distinct statutory mandates and responsibilities of each entity. These measures were intended to streamline fee collection, reduce unnecessary financial strain on HEIs, and maintain compliance with statutory requirements while safeguarding professional standards.

Committee's Observations and Recommendations

The Committee will await a progress report on the outcome of the engagements.

THE REVIEW OF THE IMPLEMENTATION OF THE 2013 ZAMBIAN CURRICULUM: OPPORTUNITIES AND CHALLENGES

a. Revamp the Teacher Resource Centers

The Committee, in the previous session, had resolved to await a progress report on the revamping of the teacher resource centers.

Executive's Response

It was reported in the Action-Taken Report that the preparatory work for the Teacher Resource Center (TRC) assessment was still ongoing. However, the Ministry of Education remained committed to ensuring that TRCs received the necessary attention and would provide an update once the assessment and consultations with Cooperating Partners were concluded.

Committee's Observations and Recommendations

The Committee will await a progress report on the consultations with cooperating partners.

REVIEW OF THE IMPLEMENTATION OF ZAMBIA'S SCHOOL RE-ENTRY POLICY

a. Absence of a Statutory Instrument to Support Implementation of the School Reentry Policy

The Committee in the previous Session had urged the Executive to expedite the issuance of a Statutory Instrument, without delay.

Executive's Response

It was reported in the Action-Taken Report that the Zambia National Education Policy had since been approved by Cabinet. Following this development, the Ministry of Education was assessing options for commencing the amendment of the *Education Act, No. 23 of 2011*, to ensure full alignment with the new Policy. Once the legislative review process was completed, the Ministry would proceed to draft and issue the Statutory Instrument to provide a clear legal framework for the effective implementation of the School Re-entry Policy.

Committee's Observations and Recommendations

The Committee urges the Executive to expedite the process and will await a progress report on the matter.

b. Skills and Career Development in Primary and Secondary Schools

Lack of Adequate and Appropriate Infrastructure to Support Vocational Training

The Committee, in the previous Session, had resolved to await a progress report on the execution of the contract between the Executive and Mikalile Trading Company, for the supply and installation of various school materials and equipment, including laptops, desktops, design and technology tools, as well as solar equipment to power computers; laboratory supplies and equipment; office furniture; and carpentry tool kits. A full report would be provided once the deliveries were completed.

Executive's Response

It was reported in the Action-Taken Report that the contract with Mikalile Trading Company was undergoing investigation by the Anti-Corruption Commission (ACC) and the Drug Enforcement Commission (DEC). The Government remained committed to ensuring that, upon the conclusion of the investigations, appropriate administrative and contractual actions would be taken to safeguard public resources and ensure that the intended vocational training equipment and infrastructure improvements were delivered as planned.

Committee's Observations and Recommendations

The Committee will await a progress report on the outcome of the investigations.

c. The Teaching of Computer Studies in Zambian Schools Policy Framework to Support the Teaching of Computer Studies

The Committee, in the previous session, had resolved to await a progress report on the final launch of the Education Information and Communication Technology Policy.

Executive's Response

It was reported in the Action-Taken Report that the Zambia National Education Policy had since been approved by Cabinet. The approved Policy included a dedicated objective on Information and Communication Technology (ICT) in education, which underscored the Government's commitment to expanding and strengthening the teaching and learning of Computer Studies at all levels of the education system. Following this development, the Ministry of Education had commenced preparations for the review and finalisation of the Education ICT Policy to ensure full alignment with the newly approved National Education Policy. Once finalised, the ICT Policy would provide a clear framework for the integration of digital literacy, infrastructure development, and capacity building for teachers in the delivery of Computer Studies and related ICT-based learning programmes.

The Ministry remained committed to actualising the Policy through the implementation of a comprehensive ICT Strategy, which would guide investments in digital infrastructure, learning platforms, and the inclusion of Computer Studies as a core component of 21st century education delivery.

Committee's Observations and Recommendations

The Committee will await a progress report on the review of the Education ICT Policy.

4.0 CONCLUSION

Foundational literacy and numeracy are critical pillars for lifelong learning and overall educational success. The evidence from national assessments, including NAS, NCAs, EGRA, and EGMA, indicate that while there have been marginal improvements in literacy, numeracy achievement remains persistently low, with significant disparities between urban and rural learners.

Teacher capacity, equitable deployment, and the availability of quality teaching and learning materials remain key determinants of learning outcomes. Interventions such as the Catch-Up Programme demonstrate the potential of targeted, small-group remedial instruction to address learning gaps, yet their impact is constrained by uneven resource allocation and teacher shortages, particularly in rural and underserved areas.

To ensure that all Zambian learners acquire essential foundational skills, a coordinated, equity-focused approach is required. This includes strengthening pre-service and in-service teacher training, scaling up targeted interventions like Catch-Up, improving the distribution and quality of learning materials, and engaging communities in supporting early learning.

The Committee on Education, Science and Technology has made some far-reaching recommendations on the topical issue and is confident that the Executive will act upon the findings and the recommendations contained in its Report.



PP Mr Harry S K Kamboni, MP
CHAIRPERSON

April 2026
LUSAKA

APPENDIX I – LIST OF NATIONAL ASSEMBLY OFFICIALS

Mr Charles Hambote, Director (SC)
Mrs Chitalu K Mumba, Deputy Director (SC)
Mr Darius Kunda, Senior Committee Clerk (SC1)
Mr Elijah I C Chilimboyi, Committee Clerk
Mr Moses Chuba, Committee Clerk
Ms Anita Mulale, Administrative Assistant
Mr Daniel Lupiya, Committee Assistant
Mr Muyembi Kantumoya, Parliamentary Messenger

APPENDIX II – LIST OF STAKEHOLDERS

Action Aid- Zambia
Basic Education Teachers Union
Curriculum Development Centre
Edulusion Zambia
International Parliamentary Network for Education
Kwame Nkrumah University
Ministry of Education
Mukuba University
Ministry of Finance and National Planning
Ministry of Local Government and Rural Development
Save the Children Foundation
TaRL (Teach at the Right Level) Africa
UNICEF Zambia
VVOB Zambia
World Vision - Zambia
Zambia Open Community Schools (ZOCS)