

THURSDAY, 15 JUNE, 2017

MINISTERIAL STATEMENT

ON THE

IMPLEMENTATION OF THE FAST TRACK TEACHERS EDUCATION PROGRAMME

BY THE

HON. MINISTER OF GENERAL EDUCATION, DR WANCHINGA

Mr Speaker, thank you for giving me an opportunity to address the House on the topical issue on how the Ministry of General Education is implementing the Fast Track Teacher Education Programme for the benefit of the nation. Let me preface my statement by giving a brief background on why this particular subject is of great concern to the ministry and the country as a whole.

Sir, the teaching of mathematics, science and technical subjects is characterised by a number of factors such as inadequate numbers of children who take up these subjects in schools and being able to pursue them to completion. There is also the challenge of the inadequate number of teachers in schools who teach these subjects. Further, we have inadequate infrastructure for the teaching of these subjects. We also have the usual challenge of phobia, particularly among the child who is not willing to take up mathematics. However, in recent times, we have seen the girl child taking up technical subjects.

Mr Speaker, the impact of inadequate numbers of children graduating from our secondary schools is that it will be very difficult for us to answer to a number of national objectives, which include diversifying our economy, value addition and moving from our dependence on copper mining to other sectors which require the input of technological knowledge. This is the net effect.

Sir, therefore, when the Ministry of General Education recognised the need to accelerate the output of teachers from teacher training colleges, it implemented the programme called the Fast Track Teachers Education Programme.

THURSDAY, 15 JUNE, 2017

Mr Speaker, Zambia has about twelve teacher training colleges, which are inadequately producing the teachers our educational system desperately needs. Let me also give you a few statistics concerning our educational sector so that this statement can be put in the right context.

Sir, this country has about 1,003 teachers at primary and secondary school levels. We also have about 851 secondary schools and about 3,300 primary schools. Out of these schools, only about 1,054 secondary schools are able to have laboratory facilities. Out of that number, only about 357 have some kind of laboratory space for the teaching of science and mathematics.

Mr Speaker, we also have what we call temporal structures for those schools which are unable to have full structures. We also have situations where some schools have put aside normal classrooms for the teaching of science.

Sir, the Ministry of General Education, through the National Science Centre, which is based in Kabulonga, also produces mobile laboratories which are distributed for the teaching of science in various schools. This is the background to the teaching of science and mathematics.

Mr Speaker, we are all aware that countries that have developed significantly are those that have invested heavily in the teaching of science and mathematics.

Indeed, the so-called tiger nations in the far East were able to rise to where they are now because of the heavy investment in science and technology. The Fast Track Teachers Education Programme was aimed at ensuring that Zambia has adequate stock of young people who could take up technical skills training, which this country badly needs, such as engineers, technologists, nurses, doctors and civil engineers. This programme of producing teachers at a fast rate was launched in 2012.

Mr Speaker, the Fast Track Teacher Education Programme for teachers is a modular distance education programme which enables teachers to attend residential school during holidays. During normal teaching periods, teachers are supposed to be at their bases practicing skills in which they were trained. The programme is currently being implemented at the University of

THURSDAY, 15 JUNE, 2017

Zambia (UNZA), the Zambia Open University (ZAOU), the University of Lusaka (UNILUS) and DMI-St. Eugene University. Initially in 2012, when this programme was rolled-out, we started with 600 teachers for science and mathematics who were admitted at UNZA. This was followed by an additional 250 teachers in 2014.

Sir, ZAOU was allocated 167 and an additional seventy-nine teachers were allocated during the same period. In 2015, 2,000 teachers were allocated to various institutions to undertake training in science and mathematics and the breakdown is as follows:

DMI-St Eugene University

<i>Courses</i>	<i>No. of Teachers</i>
Primary Diploma	400
Primary Degree	400
Secondary Social Science	400
Secondary Science	400
Secondary Mathematics	400

Mr Speaker, between 2015 to date, 165 teachers have graduated from ZAOU, sixty-six from UNILUS, 340 from UNZA and 400 teachers from DMI-St Eugene University. However, currently, we have 2,000 teachers who are upgrading their skills in various areas and focusing on science and mathematics education who still remain sponsored by the Ministry of General Education. We have an additional amount of 1,600 teachers who are also undertaking mathematics and science education at DMI-St. Eugene University. The fast track programme has not only helped to upgrade the qualifications and competences of teachers, but has also

THURSDAY, 15 JUNE, 2017

contributed greatly to improved teacher performance which in the long run, will impact learning outcomes in the country.

Mr Speaker, in addition to DMI-St. Eugene University programmes, which have enabled teachers to acquire skills in the teaching of mathematics and science, the university also has a special programme for the training of teachers in Information and Communication Technology (ICT) skills.

Sir, you will recall that, in this House, a number of statements have been made concerning the importance of ICT and science education in anchoring our national programmes of diversification and value addition. These teachers will be expected to be rolled-out to various schools to take up the teaching of ICT. As the House is aware, this is a subject which is now examinable in our school curriculum.

Mr Speaker, in addition to the direct training of teachers under the Fast Track Teachers Education programme, we also have an additional programme known as the Retraining Programme for Design and Technology Teachers. The House is aware that under the new programme, which was rolled out in 2014, we have a two-tier system which emphasises skills training and the academic line. To be able to implement this programme, which is turning out to be very useful for the nation, we need to ensure that we have adequate skills for those people who will teach in areas of design and technology.

Sir, under this programme, we are working with the Technical Education, Vocational and Entrepreneurship Training (TEVET) and following its curriculum. The implication of harmonising the secondary school and TEVET curriculum is that TEVET is an institution that assesses candidates at junior and secondary school levels. In the harmonisation of design and technology, some of the new subjects at secondary school level which have been harmonised under the TEVET system include bricklaying, carpentry, power electrical and metal fabrication. Thus, candidates who will take up these subjects will have life skills which they can use when they leave the formal educational system. We are hoping that these courses will really

THURSDAY, 15 JUNE, 2017

go a long way in providing skills in contributing towards the skill base of our children. These are the skills which our country badly needs.

Sir, the retaining process started in 2015 for this category of teachers with 128 teachers enrolling from the ten provinces. The approach which was used to train them intensively was done during the termly breaks. In September, 2015, the ministry also embarked on retraining of teachers of technology studies for primary schools. This programme was designed in such a way that the teachers who will take up this programme will be able to teach at primary school level. The training will also be in such a way that when they go to teach at senior secondary, they would find it very easy. For example, if somebody is taking carpentry at junior secondary school level, the curriculum would be organised in such a way that when they go to teach at senior secondary school, the transition would be smooth in terms using the skills that they would have acquired at junior primary school level.

Mr Speaker, the programme invited one teacher from each district across the country and 110 teachers have, so far, been trained in this area. As I earlier mentioned, it is envisaged that, through this training, teachers will be equipped with the necessary skills that they can use for their survival. With such skills, the cost of doing business in the related fields such as bricklaying, carpentry, power electrical and metal fabrication would be reduced tremendously.

Sir, you may have heard of complaints about technicians with skills in carpentry and bricklaying who come from other countries to work in Zambia. These people come to work under contracts which are awarded to contractors from outside the country. This programme will ensure that we use our young people instead of having people from outside to come and work in our country.

Mr Speaker, however, I would like to share with the House and the nation at large that although this has been a very successful programme, it has not been free from challenges. For instance, the cost of running the programme is quite high and at this point, the Ministry of General Education owes quite a good sum of money to institutions which have been rolling out these programmes such as UNZA, DMI-St. Eugene University and UNILUS,

THURSDAY, 15 JUNE, 2017

We still have a large number of teachers that still has to be trained to ensure that it is upgraded and is able to play a useful role in the teaching of science and mathematics in schools.

We also had a challenge where some students, for some reason, withdrew from the programme.

However, going forward, we have evaluated this high cost of the fast training programme and are looking at new ways of handling it. For instance, we have suggested that the ministry only sponsors students who will study hard sciences which are mathematics and science under the fast track programme.

We have also said that it is high time we introduced some kind of cost-sharing in the implementation of this particular programme. This model of cost sharing is implemented in some countries. For instance, I recall it being implemented in Botswana where free scholarships are provided for those going in for hard sciences while those in other fields share the cost.

Mr Speaker, I wanted to share with the House and the nation at large what the Ministry of General Education is doing in answering to the call of providing skills to the nation and ensuring that we have a sound base in the teaching of science and mathematics upon which future professional training will be anchored.

Mr Speaker, I thank you.