

WEDNESDAY, 31 OCTOBER, 2018

MINISTERIAL STATEMENT

**UPLIFTING OF THE SUSPENSION OF THE CONDUCT OF THE 2018
EXAMINATIONS**

THE HON. MINISTER OF GENERAL EDUCATION, MR MABUMBA, MP

Mr Speaker, I want to thank you for giving me this opportunity to render a Ministerial Statement on the uplifting of the suspension of the conduct of the 2018 examination.

Sir, the Ministry of General Education working with the Examinations Council of Zambia (ECZ), on 23rd October, 2018 made the following decision which I did communicate to the House earlier on relating to the leaked 2018 mathematics examination paper as follows:

- (a) nullification of the 2018 Grade 9 Mathematics Paper 2. This was in line with ECZ Act Chapter 137 of the Laws of Zambia Section 22(1);
- (b) postponement of the 2018 Grades 7, 9 and 12 examinations to a later date.

Mr Speaker, the ministry's management further instituted investigations with relevant authorities to effect remedial measures in order to mitigate the situation. Arising from the investigations conducted, I therefore, wish to inform the House of the outcomes using the following themes:

- (a) investigation strategy;
- (b) findings from the investigation;
- (c) findings from the verification;
- (d) observation and recommendation; and
- (e) conclusions.

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Mr Speaker, in relation to (i), the investigation was conducted in the following ways:

- (a) Provincial Education Officers (PEOs) were instructed to ensure that no examination centre in their provinces opened and administered the nullified paper. The envelopes of the paper were therefore, expected to remain intact as they were delivered to the schools and other strong rooms;
- (b) PEOs were instructed to ensure that the District Education officials visited every strong room in their jurisdiction to verify the state of envelopes of the nullified paper and those of other subjects;
- (c) PEOs were instructed that where the envelopes were opened, the school authorities or those in charge of the strong room were required to write reports;
- (d) PEOs were instructed to return the nullified 2018 Mathematics paper to the Examinations Council of Zambia where another verification of the state of the envelopes would be carried out and materials would be received; and
- (e) the Ministry of General Education was expected to work with all stakeholders and security agencies to carry out the investigations.

Mr Speaker, the investigations revealed the following happenings from the field:

- (a) *Opening and administration of the nullified Mathematics Paper 2 envelopes*

Colleagues and hon. Members of Parliament, it was observed that 248 schools had opened the envelopes of the nullified paper and administered the examination. It was reported that this was due to accessibility and communication challenges among the PEOs, the District Education Board Secretary (DEBS) and the school administration in the concerned schools. The affected schools were largely in isolated hard to reach areas. Additionally, a few of those schools which were situated in urban areas also administered the examination due to delayed

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or non communication of the decision to nullify the examination paper by appropriate authorities.

(b) *Tampering with the nullified paper 2 envelopes with intent to defraud the system*

Sir, it was observed that seventy seven examination centres tampered with the envelopes of the 2018 mathematics Paper 2, and some of them attempted to seal the envelopes with super glue or other adhesive materials. Some of such envelopes had at least one question paper missing. However, other envelopes had all the question papers because those who tampered with them had taken images using electronic gadgets before putting the question papers back into the envelopes. Some of the question papers were returned in the envelopes with worked out answers on them. Some materials in electronic form were found in the phones of some of the perpetrators.

Mr Speaker, the frequency of tampering incidents ranks Central Province in position one at 38 per cent with Mumbwa having been the district with the most erring officials. The second position in terms of the leakage ranked Southern Province as second at 14.3 per cent where Mazabuka District topped the most. The third position was the Copperbelt Province at 13 per cent with Lufwanyama and Ndola districts as the most erring districts.

(c) *Tampering of Examination Papers other than 2018 Mathematics Paper 2*

In addition to Mathematics Paper 2 and Social Studies Paper 2 which were leaked to social media online platforms, it was also discovered that four other papers were tampered with but due to security reasons, I will not be able to mention the stated subjects.

(d) *School Authorities Giving False Information*

It was observed that despite some school and district authorities giving information which the envelopes carrying the nullified 2018 Mathematics

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Paper 2 Examination paper were intact, some envelopes in the category were found to have been tampered with by the joint-verification team from both the Examination Council of Zambia and the Provincial Education Offices. In such cases, it was observed that some of the school and district authorities had provided false information of the state of examination materials in their district and school strong rooms.

(e) *Grades 7 and 12 Examination Papers*

It was observed that the 2018 Grade 7 and 12 Examination Papers were intact and were still in the district strong rooms. There were no cases of tampering of examination papers at this level.

Mr Speaker, other findings from the verification exercise found the following:

(a) *Non-Existent of Examination Security Committees at the Lower Levels*

the guidelines for administration and management of examinations provide for the establishment of Examination Security Committees at national, provincial, district, zonal and school levels. Despite the fact that the national and provincial level committees exists, meeting regularly and operators expected the district, zonal and school level committees were dysfunctional and non-existent in most parts of the country. This has caused the conduct of examinations to be considered as simply as an education sector business in most situations than a national responsibility. As a result, security wings have not been involved and have not taken part in planning and securing of examination materials during the conduct of examinations causing the entire system to be reactive other than pro-active;

(b) there is serious moral breakdown among some school and education administrators at school and district levels, leading to unprofessional conduct where some members of the system that are charged with responsibility to protect examination materials are the ones who facilitate leakages of such materials;

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- (c) there is an observation that the mushrooming tuition centres in most part of the country has caused more harm than good. It was observed that in some cases, teachers have established tuition centres and boarding houses within the premises of Government schools. It was further observed that some pupils in the third term attend more tuition centres than normal classes in their schools. This has all been due to lack of clear legislation on the management of tuition centres, which largely become conduits of leakages and assistance to learners for them to fraudulently pass the examinations;
- (d) practice of management of strong rooms in schools that are hard to reach did not adhere to the specifications in the Guidelines for Administration and Management of Examinations in Zambia; and
- (e) there is a good number of districts that had logistical challenges to monitor the conduct of examinations and ensure the security of examination materials.

Mr Speaker, as regards recommendations, after considering all the operational factors surrounding the status of 2018 Grad 9 Examinations, the Ministry of General Education made the following decisions:

- (a) replace all the six 2018 Grade 9 Examination Papers with new ones; and
- (b) resume the conduct of all examinations effective 31st October, 2018. In this vein, the examinations will run as follows:

| <i>Examination</i> | <i>Commence</i> | <i>End</i> |
|---|---------------------------------|---------------------------------|
| Grade 7 Composition Examination | 5 th November, 2018 | 9 th November, 2018 |
| Grade 9 Examination | 2 nd November, 2018 | 26 th November, 2018 |
| Grade 12 Examination 31 st October, 2018 | 30 th November, 2018 | |

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This timetable has been prepared to allow for replacement of the tampered examination materials

- (c) disciplinary action will be taken on all the erring officers and it will comprise two forms. These are the administrative action which will be taken and the security wings through the Ministry of Home Affairs and Ministry of Justice will also pursue these matters on the basis of criminality.

Further, Mr Speaker, the ministry appeals for calmness among learners and parents because the decision to postpone the examinations was premised on restoring public confidence in the education assessment system and ensuring equity and social justice in the management of examinations.

I thank you, Mr Speaker.