ZAMBIA NATIONAL EDUCATION COALITION

Zambia National Education Coalition's
EDU-TECH ADVOCACY PLAN

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INTRODUCTION

The Zambia National Education Coalition (ZANEC) is a coalition of 91 member organisations, working in the education and skills sector throughout the country. Member organisations range from Teacher Trade Unions, Students' Unions, Community Based Organisations, Faith Based Organisations, and local and international Non-Governmental Organisations. ZANEC's mission is to promote quality and inclusive education for all through research, advocacy and member capacity building. To this effect, ZANEC implemented the BACKUP initiative's EdTech project in 2022 under the title *Promoting Digital Learning for Equitable Quality Education*. The project aimed to promote access to digital technologies to learners in six rural districts of Zambia mainly to mitigate the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on education.

In order to address this gap, ZANEC would like to conduct a series of advocacy activities designed to empower learners and teachers in rural districts with digital tools from an early age such as the digital literacy training programmes for both teachers and learners, establishment of more radio listener clubs, airing of radio programmes that will promote awareness on the importance of digital literacy among the teachers, Learners and Parents.

The Methodology employed in developing this advocacy plan involved holding consultation meetings with relevant member organisations, officials from the Directorate of Open and Distance Education (DODE), Education Broadcasting Services (EBS), ActionAid, Save the Children, Ministry of Technology and Science and UNICEF. In addition, the plan was also informed by existing literature from the ZANEC library.

This advocacy plan therefore includes the context that highlights the main challenges to secure the right to education in the country and the role of EdTech in the process. Furthermore, the plan identifies key challenges in relation to EdTech in the country after which it will highlight how the identified challenges will be addressed, the timeframe for implementation of the advocacy plan, expected outcomes of the plan, mechanisms to create partnerships with governmental bodies and performance indicators. Thereafter, the relevant references and an appendix section has been presented.

CONTEXT

Zambia before the onset of the pandemic had realised the importance of technology in education and as a result introduced Computer Studies as a compulsory subject at the Junior secondary level (Grades 8 and 9) and as an optional subject at the senior secondary level (Grades 10 to 12) in the 2013 Revised Curriculum. The introduction of computer studies at the junior secondary level exposed inequalities in the education sector that had previously been overlooked such as the lack of computers, electricity and access to internet connectivity in the rural school.

Furthermore, in 2020 when the COVID-19 pandemic hit Zambia, the initial response was to close schools to protect children's health, families and teachers from the pandemic (MoE et al., 2022; ZANEC, 2022). To prevent learning losses, the country initiated remote learning aimed at providing continuity of learning at home. This involved a combination of online lessons, television, radio and paper-based materials. At that time, the country believed that it was going to reach every child regardless of their economic status. However, without specific interventions designed to reach disadvantaged households, only children from wealthier and more educated households benefited thereby increasing inequalities in the education sector. The main challenge was that Zambia's population is concentrated in rural areas where access to the internet, radio and television is limited.

This, therefore, negatively affected learners in the rural areas and disadvantaged households (including learners with disabilities) because while their counterparts in the urban areas were able to access TV, Radio and Internet-based lessons, the learners in the rural areas and disadvantaged households did not have access to such facilities hence further disadvantaging them (MoE et al., 2022; ZANEC, 2022). The lessons learned from the experiences faced during COVID-19 show that there is a need to embrace a blended approach to learning that combines face-to-face and remote learning methods to make our education system resilient to future emergencies as well as equip the learners with the necessary digital tools that will make them competitive in the digital world. Achieving this would require significant public investment in education technologies, training of teachers and learners in digital skills necessary for them to conduct and access online lessons and providing the infrastructure necessary for learners in rural areas to access digital content.

Furthermore, Zambia is implementing the Education for All Policy which entails that the government has assumed the responsibility of catering for user fees such as tuition, examination and Parents Teachers Association

(PTA). This has led to a significant increase in enrolment between December 2021 and April 2022 estimated at 14.08% and 11.4% at primary and secondary levels respectively (ZANEC 2022). Although this has been a progressive policy by the government in that all children can now access education countrywide, the policy has resulted in overcrowding in the classrooms leading to a rise in the teacher-pupil ratios, a shortage of teaching and learning materials, inadequate classroom space and a rise in the pupil-book ratios among others. It is, therefore, imperative that the Zambian Government begins to embrace blended learning in its mode of delivering education if it is to promote access to quality education for all.

To add on, online lessons can play a major role in supplementing face-to-face learning in cases where learners are unable to fully benefit from learning in overcrowded classrooms. Thus, there is a need to promote access to educational content online for all learners in the country. With reduced cases of COVID-19, the momentum in airing radio, television lessons and promoting remote learning is slowly reducing. For instance, most schools have stopped utilising AMEPs in their lesson delivery. There is thus a need to promote the use of educational technologies in schools to supplement the traditional face-to-face method as this would help improve access to education in Zambia and at the same time, help guarantee the country's continuity of learning during emergencies such as COVID-19.

IDENTIFICATION OF KEY CHALLENGES RELATED TO EDTECH IN THE COUNTRY.

The Zambian education system faces several challenges with regard to access to education technology. To solve this problem, the Zambian government in its curriculum reform of 2013 introduced Computer Studies as a compulsory subject for learners at the Junior secondary level (ZANEC, 2022). Although this was a plausible move, it, however, brought to light several challenges that Zambia faces to fully implement the subject in schools and these challenges were further augmented during the Covid-19 pandemic. The challenges are outlined below:

ACCESS TO TECHNOLOGICAL DEVICES AND THE INTERNET

Remote learning is dependent on the use of digital technologies, however, one of the biggest challenges in Zambia that hinder access to education technology is access to digital devices and reliable internet. The study conducted by ZANEC in 2022, reported that, while about 14.7% of urban households had access to computers, only 2.7% in the rural areas had

access to a computer and in terms of access to mobile phones, 88.1% of the urban households had access to a basic mobile phone compared to 61.6% in the rural areas. However, while access to mobile devices in rural areas stood at 61.6%, internet access was only at 6.6%, because rural areas lack access to reliable internet connectivity. During the 2014 final Grade Nine national assessments, it was discovered that rural schools lacked access to computers as well as the internet, necessary for the successful implementation of Computer studies. Some schools only had one laptop personally owned by a teacher that was used by all the learners to sit for their practical exams. Although the government distributed computers to rural schools, the lack of access to electricity in the areas hindered their use. Access to power in rural areas stood at 6% which means that it is practically impossible for learners in some rural and remote areas to have access to technological devices as well as the internet. The report further highlights that Zambia as a whole has unequal internet usage, underdeveloped internet infrastructure and limited digital literacy. This situation is worse in rural areas. Therefore, this entails that a large proportion of the Zambian population still lacks sufficient internet connectivity to engage in online lessons.

TEACHERS' AND STUDENTS' DIGITAL SKILLS

ZANEC's 2022 Survey on Digital Literacy highlighted that while most rural schools lacked digital devices and internet facilities, teachers on the other hand had limited digital literacy and ICT competencies. When computer studies were introduced in schools, teachers specialised in other subjects volunteered to teach it as there was a lack of teachers trained to teach ICTs. The survey further reported that only 6.8% of the teachers and pupils

interviewed claimed to be digitally literate. The rest of the respondents stated that they used their computers for basic tasks and hence very few possessed advanced ICT skills. From the sampled teachers, only 33.3% of the teachers teaching ICT had attended basic ICT training. In comparison to the teachers, the learners were reported to possess basic ICT skills because of their exposure to the subject.

PARENTAL SUPPORT TO USE TECHNOLOGY

A lack of parental support was another challenge noted in that most parents especially in rural areas lacked the necessary digital skills to support their children. In most rural homes, it was reported that only a parent had access to a basic mobile phone used only for communication. Therefore, the parent's inability to support their children's access to digital devices tends to make them unresponsive to digital learning platforms.

INEQUALITIES RELATED TO ACCESS AND USE OF TECHNOLOGY IN AND BEYOND THE CLASSROOM

According to statistics produced in the ZANEC survey, there are marked differences in access to digital technologies between urban and rural

areas. In terms of access to television sets, it was reported that 66.3 % of households in urban areas had access to a television set compared to only 14.8% in rural areas. In terms of access to the radio, the urban areas had 60.3% access while only 37.4% had access in the rural areas. Urban areas had 14.3% access to the Internet while only 2.1% had access to the Internet in the rural areas.

The statistics above show that there are huge inequalities related to access and use of technologies in and beyond the classroom between children living in rural and urban areas. This has constantly put children in rural areas in a disadvantaged position hence hindering their development of the necessary digital skills. This problem is further compounded by the fact most rural areas have insufficient internet connectivity as only 2G internet which is only capable of handling voice calls is available in the rural areas.

ADAPTATION AND MANAGEMENT OF THE LEARNING ENVIRONMENT

During COVID-19, some schools in urban areas were able to quickly transition from face-to-face learning to online learning. However, schools in rural areas as well as some government schools in the country lacked the necessary resources needed to conduct lessons online. This is because access to the internet in Zambia is very expensive and the lack of digital tools in the homes compounded the problem even further. It was, therefore, challenging for most schools to transition to online lessons making most learners who could not access radio and TV lessons lose out on valuable catch-up lessons.

Furthermore, the promotion of education technologies in schools requires adequate funding, unfortunately, the Zambian government despite having several policies that promote access to and internet usage, such as the Zambia National ICT Policy and the ICT Act of 2009, the progress in promoting Internet connectivity in the country, especially in rural areas has been very slow making it difficult to adapt and effectively manage digital learning in Zambia. Furthermore, Covid-19 highlighted challenges that learners with disabilities face such as those who are visually impaired or have hearing impairments as they were unable to follow online and TV lessons as they lack access to appropriate technological devices.

OTHER CHALLENGES NOT CONSIDERED IN THE FRAMEWORK

The other major challenge faced in the country related to education technologies is the limited amount of digital content in the country. This is because of the lack of resources necessary for the creation of digital content and also a lack of content creators. The Education Broadcasting Services currently is mandated to create content for TV and Radio, however, there is limited access to this content for both the teachers and learners as the station only has a licence to air radio programmes within Lusaka. Furthermore, educational content in local languages in Zambia is not available, hence making it difficult for some learners to fully engage with the content.

ADVOCACY PLAN TO OVERCOME THE IDENTIFIED CHALLENGES:

In order to Promote education technologies in the country, the Zambia National Education Coalition proposes to undertake the following actions and activities,

HOLD A MEETING WITH THE MINISTRY OF EDUCATION, AND OTHER RELEVANT GOVERNMENT MINISTRIES AND DEPARTMENTS TO ADVOCATE FOR THE INCLUSION OF A DISABILITY INCLUSIVE COMPULSORY TRAINING IN DIGITAL SKILLS IN THE CURRICULUM

Zambia has just commenced the process of reviewing its curriculum framework of 2013 which spans from Early Childhood Education (ECE) to teacher education. Currently, the stakeholders' consultative process is

ongoing and will remain open until the end of 2023. To this effect, ZANEC would like to present the evidence from the GiZ research to the Ministry of Education to influence policymakers to make a disability-inclusive digital skills training compulsory in the curriculum from ECE to teacher training and present the EdTech Advocacy Plan which is being developed drawing on the research findings. The meeting will bring together various stakeholders including policymakers, parliamentarians, the private sector and learners.

TRAIN MORE TEACHERS IN DIGITAL SKILLS IN THE CURRENT GIZ PROJECT OPERATIONAL DISTRICTS

As part of the GiZ-funded digital literacy project, ZANEC developed a training manual which is being used under the project to train teachers in the targeted six rural districts of Mufumbwe and Kasempa in North-western Province, Kafue and Chiawa in Lusaka Province as well as Mpika and Chinsali in Muchinga Province. Experience from the implementation of the GiZ-supported project has revealed that there is a significant demand for the training of teachers in digital skills. To this effect, ZANEC is proposing to train 240 teachers and parents in digital literacy in six more districts namely Kabwe and Kapiri in Central Province, Kazungula and Livingstone in Southern Province and Senanga and Mongu in Western Province. The districts were selected because ZANEC already has a presence in the provinces and hence it will not be difficult to establish a relationship with the various educational stakeholders.

MOBILISE MEMBERS OF PARLIAMENT TO SUPPORT EDTECH PROGRAMMES

Engagement with the Members of parliament (MPs) is cardinal as they are responsible for passing laws in parliament. It is, therefore, important that a meeting is held with MPs so that they can take up ownership of EdTech in their constituencies and hence will become ambassadors of EdTech in the various constituencies. This engagement meeting will also help ZANEC and its partners to influence the MPs to invest their Constituency Development Fund in Edu-tech and initiate the process of reviewing the Education Broadcasting Services Act which was passed in 1962 and is now outdated.

EXTEND THE ESTABLISHMENT OF RADIO LISTENING CLUBS TO OTHER PROVINCES

Linked to the above activity, ZANEC will need to support the teachers that will be trained in digital skills to start using radios in complementing their in-person teaching processes. This blended teaching approach, which was also piloted in the GiZ Digital literacy project generated a lot of interest and

demand among learners and teachers in the targeted rural districts mainly due to inadequate numbers of teachers and the reduced burden of producing lesson plans. Teachers also find it easier to repeat a lesson for purposes of remedial teaching when using a radio. Children also find learning through technology within the school more engaging and as a result, pupil attendance in the targeted schools has improved significantly. Thus, ZANEC is proposing to scale up the number of radio listening groups to the newly identified provinces of Central, Southern and Western Provinces. To this effect, we are proposing to establish and support 240 new radio listening clubs with 600 radios to enable ZANEC to scale up this intervention to other provinces.

AIR RADIO PROGRAMMES TO PROMOTE AWARENESS OF THE IMPORTANCE OF DIGITAL LITERACY AMONG LEARNERS, PARENTS AND TEACHERS.

The research findings from the status of education technology and digital literacy in Zambia study supported by GiZ also revealed low levels of digital literacy and access to education technology in Zambia. Furthermore, the findings revealed that with the reduction in COVID-19 cases, most schools had discontinued the use of alternative modes of education provision using technology. Thus, ZANEC strongly believes that all innovations that proved useful in providing continuity of learning at home during the COVID-19 remain relevant in the post-COVID-19 era. To this effect, ZANEC is proposing to air radio programmes on community radio stations aimed at promoting blended learning as a way of building a more resilient education system against future emergencies.

FACILITATE EXCHANGE VISITS BETWEEN INCLUSIVE /SPECIAL SCHOOLS TO ENHANCE KNOWLEDGE SHARING ON THE USE OF DIGITAL SKILLS IN SCHOOLS

Another major gap identified in the GiZ-supported research is the need to encourage the development and teaching of inclusive, sustainable and differentiated digital skills instead of using a "one-size-fits-all" strategy to meet the needs of learners with special education needs. For this reason, ZANEC is proposing to conduct exchange visits involving teachers and managers from selected schools that are doing well and those that are not doing well in providing inclusive digital literacy.

CONDUCT A RESEARCH TO ASCERTAIN THE DEPLOYMENT LEVELS OF ICT TEACHERS IN ZAMBIA.

During the digital literacy training in the six target districts for the GiZ-funded EdTech project, most District education officers lamented having a shortage of ICT teachers, especially at the primary school level. It is for this

reason that ZANEC is proposing to conduct a research to determine the shortfall in the number of qualified ICT teachers especially at primary school level in rural areas and also those trained to cater to the digital literacy needs of learners with disabilities

PRINT AND DISSEMINATE THE RESEARCH FINDINGS

ZANEC is proposing to hold a national-level engagement meeting to disseminate the research findings It is hoped that the research findings will help dispel areas needing further advocacy in ICT education, especially in relation to the deployment of qualified ICT teachers.

PARTNER WITH SOFTWARE DEVELOPERS AND EQUIPMENT SUPPLIERS TO PROVIDE ONLINE MATERIALS TO VISUALLY IMPAIRED LEARNERS IN SCHOOLS.

One challenge that is faced by learners with disabilities is access to materials as these are normally provided in print form making it difficult for visually impaired learners to access them. It is for this reason that ZANEC is proposing to engage publishers in the country to be able to provide soft copy materials or audiobooks to visually impaired learners.

CONDUCT AN ONLINE CAMPAIGN TO LINK THE ENTIRE COUNTRY TO THE INTERNET TO IMPROVE ACCESS TO EDUCATIONAL CONTENT BY RURAL CHILDREN AND TEACHERS.

ZANEC is proposing to host an online campaign through hashtags and panel discussions to popularise the need to increase internet coverage throughout the country to improve access to digital educational content for all learners countrywide, especially for those in rural areas.

HOLD AN ENGAGEMENT MEETING TO ADVOCATE FOR THE COUNTRYWIDE AIRING OF EDUCATION PROGRAMMES BY THE EDUCATION BROADCASTING SERVICES.

During the engagement meeting to advocate for a countrywide broadcasting licence for the Education Broadcasting Services (EBS), it was recommended by the Independent Broadcasting Association that there was a need to advocate for the EBS to partner with the Zambia National Broadcasting Cooperation (ZNBC) to be able to televise the TV lessons by EBS on their behalf. ZANEC is, therefore, proposing to host this engagement meeting between EBS and ZNBC.

MONITOR ACTIVITIES OF RADIO LISTENING CLUBS IN THE TARGET DISTRICTS

To ensure that the radio listener clubs are producing the intended results, there is a need to monitor the activities of the clubs in the areas in which the clubs will be established and hence ZANEC hopes to go back into the field to monitor the establishment of the radio listener clubs and their effectiveness in the delivery of remedial lessons including in the initial districts covered by the GiZ project.

TIMEFRAME

The activities are envisaged to be implemented and completed in two years.

This is because year one will target the implementation of activities such as

- research to ascertain the teacher deployment levels of ICT Conduct teachers in Zambia.
- Print and disseminate the research findings
- Hold a meeting with the Ministry of Education to advocate for the inclusion of a disability-inclusive compulsory training in digital skills in the curriculum
- Train more teachers in digital skills in the current GiZ project operational districts
- Extend the establishment of radio listening clubs to other Provinces
- Air radio programmes to promote awareness of the importance of digital literacy among learners, parents and teachers.
- Hold an engagement meeting to advocate for the countrywide airing of education programmes by the Education Broadcasting Services.

Year two will target the implementation of the following activities:

- Mobilise members of parliament to support EdTech programmes
- Facilitate exchange visits between inclusive /special schools to enhance knowledge sharing on the use of digital skills in schools
- Partner with software developers and equipment suppliers to provide online materials to visually impaired learners in schools.
- Monitor activities of radio listening clubs in the target districts
- Conduct an online campaign to link the entire country to the internet for the sake of improving access to educational content by rural children and teachers.

EXPECTED OUTCOMES OF THE ADVOCACY PLAN

OUTCOME 1: MORE TEACHERS USING THEIR DIGITAL SKILLS TO DELIVER LESSONS IN THE TARGET DISTRICTS

Output 1: Teachers acquire digital skills through training and exchange visits

The digital literacy training for teachers and parents will equip teachers and Parents with the necessary digital skills to enable them to conduct lessons and assessments online.

OUTCOME 2: IMPROVED POLICY FRAMEWORK FOR DIGITAL SKILLS

Output 2: Policy proposals on digital skills adopted by the government for inclusion in the curriculum framework.

It is hoped that after the engagement meetings, the government through the Ministry of Education will adopt the policy proposal to include the acquisition of disability-inclusive digital skills by all trained teachers compulsory in the teacher education curriculum. This will further be augmented by the research to determine the teacher deployment levels for ICT in the country.

OUTCOME 3: IMPROVED ACCESS TO DIGITAL SKILLS FOR LEARNERS IN THE TARGET DISTRICTS

Output 3: Learners benefit from lessons aired on community radio stations.

It is hoped that the airing of radio programmes will promote digital literacy among teachers and parents and ultimately the learners.

Output 4: Learners with disabilities access digital content

It is hoped that there will be improved access to digital content by learners with various disabilities after the exchange visits as well as the engagement meeting with software developers and equipment suppliers to provide online materials to visually impaired learners in schools.

MECHANISMS TO CREATE PARTNERSHIPS WITH GOVERNMENTAL BODIES AND OTHER STAKEHOLDERS

The engagements with partners will be done through the clustered national, provincial, district and community structures in line with the various sectors of interest.

Some of the platforms that will be used will include

- ➢ Project Implementation Technical Committee (PITC)
- ➢ Cooperating Partners Coordinating Committee (CPCC)
- ➢ Monitoring and Evaluation Technical Committee (METC)Project Coordinating Committee (PCC)
- ➢ Provincial Development Coordinating Committees (PDCC)
- ➢ District Development Coordinating Committees (DDCC)
- ➢ Ward Development Committee (WDC)Joint Annual Review (JAR) technical meetings and field visits
- ➢ National Budget Consultant
- ➢ National Planning Sectoral Committees
- ➢ Parliamentary Committees
- ➢ Traditional Leaders
- ➢ Engagement with service providers private and government bodies
- ➢ Engagement with media

- Further, engagements with the decision-makers will be done using evidence-based research.
- ZANEC will also submit a concept note on the EdTech project to the various stakeholders and MoE. Thereafter, a meeting will be arranged with the MoE and the various stakeholders to share the concept note.
- ZANEC hopes to prepare and share an MoU with the Ministry and other stakeholders so that all stakeholders involved can champion the call EdTech in the country
- ZANEC and the implementing partners further hope to buy into already existing activities that the ministry is implementing on EdTech.

PERFORMANCE INDICATORS

Level	Indicator(s) of achievement
Outcome 1: More teachers using their digital skills to deliver lessons in the target districts	• Number of teachers trained in digital literacy skills • Number of teachers using digital skills to deliver lessons effectively.
Outcome 2: Improved Policy Framework for Digital Skills	• MoE adopts the policy proposal to include the acquisition of disability-inclusive digital skills in teacher training curriculum • MoE adopts policy recommendations on recruitment of ICT teachers in schools • EBS coverage expanded to other parts of the country.
Outcome 3: Improved access to digital skills for learners in the target districts	• Number of learners accessing digital skills • Increased internet access and speed throughout the country

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APPENDICES

APPENDIX 1: LIST OF STAKEHOLDERS WHO PARTICIPATED IN THE DESIGN OF THE PLAN

SNo.	ORGANISATION
	GOVERNMENTAL BODIES AND PARTNERS
	Ministry Of Education: Directorate of Distance Education
	Ministry Of Education: Education Broadcasting Services
	Ministry Of Education: Planning Department
	Ministry Of Science and Technology
	UNICEF
	ActionAid Zambia
	Zambia Federation For Persons With Disabilities
	ZANEC MEMBER ORGANISATIONS
	Media Network for Child Rights And Development
	Boy Empowerment
	Sport Aid In Zambia
	National Action for Quality Education
	Virgins and Male Circumcision of Zambia
	Archie Hinchcliffe Disability
	Volunteer Welfare for Community-Based Care in Zambia
	Kafue Gospel Singers Community Development Organization
	Save The Girls
	Initiative For Community Transformation and Empowerment
	EduSport Foundation
	Childcare & Adoption Society Of Zambia

ZAMBIA NATIONAL EDUCATION COALITION

Promoting Quality Education For Every Zambian

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