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The information in this brief comes from research carried out by ZAMISE, UNZA faculty and graduate students in partnership with the Ministry of General Education (MOGE) and Strengthening Educational Performance Up (STEP-Up) Zambia, a USAID-funded project designed to improve education management and raise academic achievement at the primary level. It is based on questionnaires administered to 68 lecturers in 8 Teacher Training Colleges across seven provinces.

Align the Curriculum, Avail the Policy, Provide Time and Materials

The 2013 *Zambian Education Curriculum Framework* indicates that “*Study Areas in the tertiary (Teacher Education) curriculum have been linked to school curriculum so that student teachers become familiar with school curriculum while at college* (p. 69).” However, more work needs to be done to link the curriculum in colleges with that in schools and also, to actively engage college lecturers in the curriculum change process. This conclusion is derived from a 2014 study with a policy brief titled “*Teacher Training is Critical to Improve Early Grade Literacy in Zambia*” and results from a follow-up study in 2015 contained in this brief.

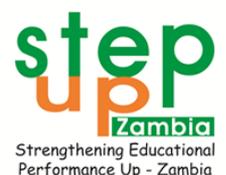
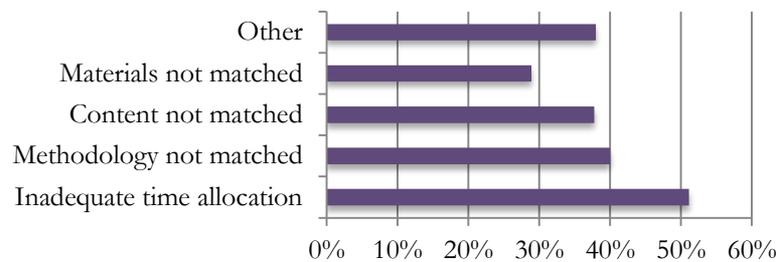
Finding 1: Lecturers Lack Access and Time to Attend to New Curriculum Policy

This current study reveals that access for lecturers to key curriculum materials requires further attention. The study suggests that the revised Zambia Education Curriculum was widely distributed. However, lecturers require teaching and learning materials, time to familiarize themselves with the document and consider adjustments needed in the college curricula and courses to align with school curricula.

“I have not read it before because of not being readily available.” – a lecturer

- 84% of the lecturers (n=64) from colleges and universities indicated that they had a copy of the framework. However, 16% of lectures from both colleges and universities indicated that their institutions did not have the Curriculum.
- 27% of lecturers (n=64) have not read the revised curriculum, even though 41% (7 lecturers) had the curriculum available in their institutions and 59% (10 lecturers) said they did not have access to the curriculum policy at their institution. The unavailability and inaccessibility of the document as the major reason for their failure to read it.

Lecturers' views of challenges in aligning the college curriculum and the revised school curriculum (n=45)



- According to lecturers, the greatest challenge when aligning the college and school curriculum was inadequate time (see chart). Those who said “other” indicated lack of materials, the policy document is not available, or the alignment is currently in process.

For some lecturers in teacher training colleges, teacher preparation is proceeding in complete absence of the Curriculum Framework, or else with limited time or resources. A real danger exists of uncoordinated and unguided teaching approaches at the teacher training level with grave implications for the education system. This may mean that teacher preparation occurs without a critical component: the curriculum itself. By implication, student teachers may be ill prepared to teach in the school.

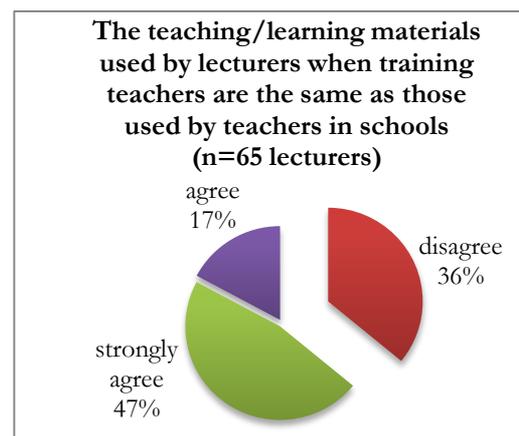
“There is need for reorientation of the lecturers on teacher Education colleges”
– A Lecturer

Finding 2: Teachers are Not Consistently Trained Using the Same Materials Found in Schools

In addition to reading and understanding the revised curriculum, it is important that teachers are trained how to use the materials available in schools.

- Although the majority of lecturers (64%) indicated that the Teaching and Learning Materials (TLMs) are similar at both the school and college level, the number of lecturers who disagreed with this statement (36%) is quite substantial.

There is need to pay close attention to the extent of alignment between the materials used in colleges and those in schools as this could result in student teachers who may not be well prepared to teach using the actual materials available in schools.



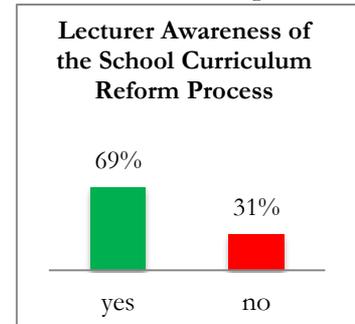
Finding 3: Lecturers tend to be Involved in College Curricula Development, but Not in the Primary School Curricula Revision Processes

The study reveals that lecturer involvement in the review of the respective *college curricula* was rather good. This might be on account of the internal autonomy that the system confers on colleges of education affiliated to one university or another, which gives greater control over their curricula.

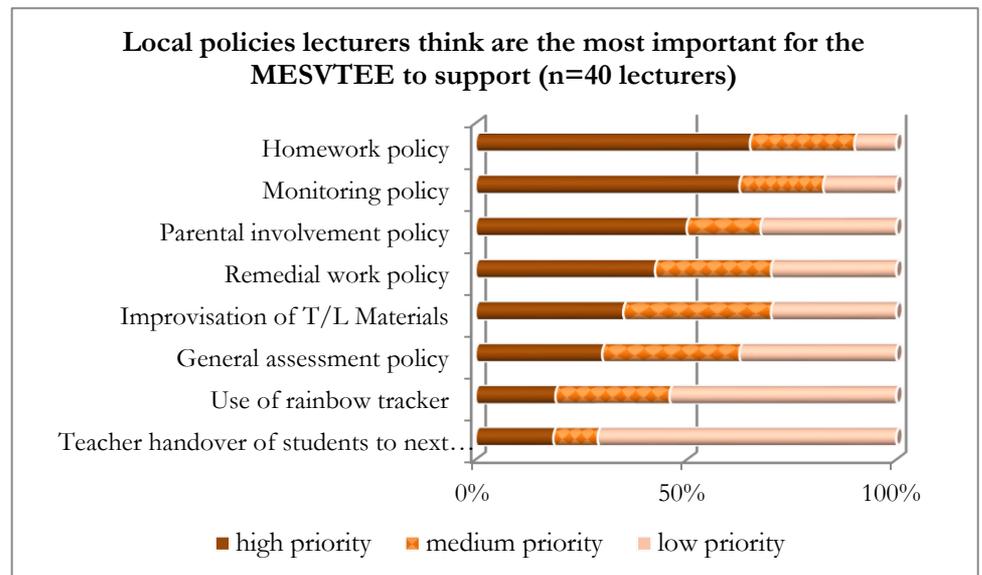
- Of the 59 lecturers, only 4 said they were not involved in the review of the college curricula.
- When lecturers are involved in the review of the college curriculum, they indicated they are most frequently involved in workshops, followed by meetings, headquarters staff visits, or seminars. Several lecturers said they have not participated recently in college curriculum review efforts, but have in the past.

However, this picture contrasts sharply with lecturer perceptions of involvement of their colleges and universities in the revision of the *primary school curriculum*.

- Although 69% of the lecturers say they are aware of the process of school curriculum review and development, the level of unawareness (31%) is hardly impressive; it translates into 1/3 of the 60 lecturers who answered this question.
- Fewer lecturers (42) indicated any involvement in the revision of the primary curriculum in comparison to the college curriculum (60). Furthermore, their level of engagement seems limited to only a few select lecturers as individual representatives going to workshops, meetings, consultancies, seminars, hosting headquarters visits. In contrast, events at the college level to share the school curriculum would be welcome.
- Lecturers were asked to rank the existing policies related to primary education and literacy that they think are most important for the MOGE to support. In their responses, 40 lecturers indicated that the homework policy needs the most attention for support followed by monitoring and parental involvement. Interestingly, policies related to in-school practices by teachers, such as teacher handover of students, use of the literacy assessment (rainbow tracker), and general assessments were largely considered or low or medium priority for MOGE support by the lecturers.



Given the importance of teacher training institutions in the teaching and learning process, lecturer involvement in curriculum review ought to be closer to 100%. Teacher morale and instructional delivery in the teacher training institutions may be hampered by such lukewarm involvement of teachers and teacher educators. Ultimately the lecturers' sense of ownership of the



curriculum might be impaired along with their ability to inform future teachers about the revisions to the curriculum. The lecturers' unawareness of these processes precludes their participation in the process. The result might be that the system of curriculum review may not be operating at full capacity, as the input of these critical stakeholders will be missing.

Finding 4: Lecturer Recommendations for Improvements to the System

Lecturers expressed concern over the local language policy with a range of responses, often indicating that more attention needs to be paid to *Zambian* languages in teacher training, in schools and in methods. Materials, curriculum alignment and the involvement of local stakeholders remain a concern.

- If given the opportunity, lecturers indicated they would like to see the following changes to language and literacy policies in Zambia:
 - the language policy needs further attention, such as teaching *Zambian* language and English as separate subjects during teacher training,
 - ensure that *Zambian* languages are core subjects,
 - access to similar materials found in schools,
 - stakeholder involvement with localized feedback, and
 - increased focus on improved teaching methods.

*“For reading to improve, there is need to make supplementary reading materials relevant for different levels [of literacy]” -
Lecturer*

- Lecturers were also asked what they would do to improve literacy and reading in the system, they suggest the following in order of emphasis:
 1. Teaching and learning materials need to be available in both schools and colleges with the same materials available in both institutions.
 2. Further alignment with the curriculum between teacher training colleges and the schools, including subject specializations in languages, policy harmonization, and the inclusion of lecturers as key stakeholders in the pre-service training of teachers.
 3. Localized support and decision making, such as parental involvement, including of lecturers and key stakeholders from all levels of the system in revisions, and not being donor driven where emphasized by approximately one third of lecturers.
 4. Allocating more time to literacy and language development at early ages, such as compulsory preschool, more time for literacy, and reducing pupil teacher ratios.
 5. Teaching methods were seen as having moderate importance to improve the current system of literacy and reading in the country.
 6. In service training, monitoring and assessment were also mentioned, though less than other suggestions for improvement.

In sum, the study reveals multiple gaps in the process of curriculum design, development, and implementation. The lack of participation in the curriculum review, the instruction of lecturers and associated preparation of teachers is hampered by limited interaction and engagement across the system. Lecturers see themselves as important contributors to the improvement of literacy and reading in the country and would like to be further engaged in supporting improvements.

The accessibility of curriculum materials as well as teaching and learning materials (TLMs) is critical to the smooth functioning of the education system. It is imperative that lecturers at teacher training institutions—as those most directly involved in preparing future teachers to implement the curriculum—have a nuanced understanding of the elements of the national curriculum and how it should best be implemented. It is also valuable when lecturers are involved in curriculum review, revision, and research.

Policy Action Points
<p>We propose that the Ministry of General Education, (MOGE), headquarters (specifically TESS and the CDC), universities, colleges ensure that all stakeholders are brought on board in any efforts towards curriculum review in the colleges and in the schools. This may increase commitment towards implementation and to raise the sense of ownership.</p> <p><u>Policy:</u></p>

- Educating our Future should redefine relationships and university involvement

Curriculum Alignment:

- Colleges should hold meetings to review the release of existing and new curriculum policy and ensure that all lecturers are aware of the policy changes, discuss implications, and create and implement action plans.
- Curriculum time allocations in the colleges and the schools should be synchronized.
- CDC and TESS should engage each other to ensure realistic apportionment of time and seek feedback from teacher training colleges, particularly lecturers and also other local stakeholders.

Teaching and Learning Materials:

- Teacher Education and Specialized Services, Curriculum Development Centre, and the Colleges of Education and Universities could conduct an audit of the system to determine the actual extent of alignment of teaching and learning materials available in colleges and schools and to ensure teachers are instructed on how to teach using actual materials from schools.
- Colleges should introduce a book allowance to enable lecturers to buy relevant books to help prepare their students.

Curriculum Revisions:

- Curriculum production, sorting, and distribution in institutions of learning be streamlined. DEBS / TESS / CDC should institutionalize a sensitization and distribution apparatus not only for the Curriculum Framework, but also for other curriculum related documents/materials. These should be distributed not only in the colleges and universities but also for individual teacher educators. This could involve outreach and events to colleges in consultation with proposed changes and following curriculum changes.
- As a matter of necessity it is worth proposing that there be reduced political involvement in the management of curriculum to ensure intergenerational consistency. The repeated disruption of curricula maturation occasioned by repeated changes in priorities depending on which political party is ruling does not serve the best interest of the education system.