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PN-ABE-700

ISA 722A

Paper not formally reviewed.

CONFRONTING THE BASIC EDUCATION CRISIS: THE ZAMBIAN DILEMMA

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Project BRIDGES
Harvard University
Cambridge, Massachusetts

July 1989

Prepared for presentation at the
Comparative International Education Society
Annual Meeting

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Introduction and Background

The history of the growth of Zambia's modern educational sector needs to be seen against a backdrop of struggle and survival and ongoing political change. The unwilling role imposed on an African state caught between an escalating debt burden (Greene, 1989) and the dramatic effects of a racial war which continues to rage along her Southern borders has been a crisis fraught one. This landlocked central African Republic, as one of seven front-line states politically committed to bringing about a radical social change in South Africa's racially segregated white-dominated system, has had to face the growing hostility from her Southern neighbor with little more than a modicum of assistance from the Eastern or Western block nations who, at least in principle, are also opposed to South Africa's racial policies. In recent years Zambia's example has seldom attracted much positive attention from the international press, which has been quick to identify African failure but slow to reward real achievement. In the 25 years since achieving independence from the British in 1964, this remarkable country of eight million people has made an outstanding effort in transforming an inherited deficit in trained manpower--only 100 university graduates and 7,000 Africans enrolled

in secondary school at independence--into a nation which now claims a primary gross enrollment rate of more than 95% for its seven-year-old school-going population and a transition rate of 46% for those leaving grade VII and entering the first year of secondary school. In addition, since the University of Zambia's foundation in 1966, a total of 9,672 degrees, diplomas and certificates have been conferred. These are disaggregated into 491 postgraduate awards, 8,057 undergraduate first degrees, 609 diplomas and 515 certificates (Kelly, 1988). Zambia has now begun to produce enough graduates per year to meet a portion of her manpower needs in a range of disciplines such as agriculture, medicine, engineering, education, and the arts and sciences. All this was achieved despite the economic and political constraints which continue to be imposed on Zambia by the prevailing crisis in Southern Africa and a severely constrained national economy.

This short paper will attempt to focus on only one area of Zambia's educational achievement, namely, her efforts and successes in providing a basic education over a relatively short period of time to over 90% of her school-going population. Few, if any of the developed nations, can boast a similar achievement over a comparable time span. Although burdened by an average population growth rate of 3.4% per annum as compared with 3.0% just ten years ago, Zambia's educational system has so far shown an ability to be resilient in adversity. After the near collapse of Zambia's economy which began in 1975, the country has been able to provide enough school places to satisfy the growing demand for primary

education at the grade I level to meet the dramatic increase in rate of growth of her population. However, this has been achieved at considerable expense to maintaining an acceptable standard in educational quality. The loss in "quality" of education experienced here and elsewhere in Africa as a result of the sustained rapid expansion of the continent's post independence educational systems at all levels may prove to be too high a price to pay in attempting to satisfy the popular demand, imposed by newly independent African electorates, for more schools and quicker access to primary education for Africa's children. Rising expectations and a determination to bring about quick change in Zambia forced the newly elected United National Independence Party (UNIP) to spend an unprecedented portion of the budget on education. Today a drop in examination pass rates, an increasing number of repeaters at the grade 4 and grade 7 levels and the overall shortage in resources like books, chalk, teaching aids and school furniture, and other essential educational materials, all attest to the need to urgently re-examine educational priorities in the light of the dramatic changes which have recently taken place in Zambia's economy. Can more realistic policies be adopted to help restore quality to the system without severely limiting children's hard won access to a place in school? What should these policies be? (Fuller,1986). Should planners adopt a policy of "triage" which would trade off improvements in higher and secondary education in the interests of improving the overall quality of primary, or basic education? This latter strategy,

which is one of the policy options suggested in the World Bank's recent Education in Sub-Saharan Africa Report (1987), would by severely restricting access to secondary and higher levels of education create serious equity problems. An improvement of quality at one level of the existing system would be achieved at the expense of many who would then graduate from the primary level without being able to continue through to secondary and higher education. Such an option would be politically unacceptable to many African governments and their education-hungry electorates. In Zambia's case any solution would need to include a formula to redistribute rapidly diminishing resources where these would make the most impact on national needs like rural development and agricultural production, while at the same time respecting the diverse and complex political and regional interests which have continued to constrain and confound the local decision-making process. This will be no mean task and is likely to succeed only if Zambians are encouraged to find solutions to their own educational problems.

However, apart from the all-important contextual factors which have to be considered in any equation which will set out to try to improve African education, most donors concur with, and the little research there is supports, the notion that the most value can be obtained from putting one's limited resources into more and better primary education (Heyneman, *et al.*, 1983). Unfortunately, here as in other parts of Africa, an increasing part of the shrinking educational budget is being spent on salaries and personal costs

like the provision of expensive boarding facilities at both the secondary and higher education levels, with the larger portion going to the Universities. Studies indicate that the cost of providing a place at an institution of higher learning like the University of Zambia is 19 times more than the cost of keeping a child in primary school (Kelly, 1988). Unfortunately, identifying the problem in the complex African context does not always guarantee finding the right solution. In Zambia, as elsewhere in Africa, diagnosis is relatively easy; the cure requires a lot more thought and a great deal of understanding about national cultural attitudes, management and administrative practices (Verspoor, 1989), and the historical prerequisites which may have shaped these management styles and outcomes. At independence, as now, there were strong regional pressures and other important political and cultural constraints which prevented a transfer of financial resources from one education level to another and one sector to another. Higher and secondary education were given priority because urban-based politicians, many of whom had not received an education above the primary level, wanted to compete with white controlled Southern Rhodesia, and other recently independent neighboring states and thought they would have to produce an educated elite able to match the European standards set by a departing elitist urban colonial tradition to do so. Not having a University in Northern Rhodesia while Southern Rhodesia had a well established one of its own meant having to accept a second-class status for the newly independent Zambia. So it became

politically expedient to spend a lot on building and staffing a university in the capital, Lusaka, and upgrading the secondary education system, the latter so as to prepare the required number of school leavers to enter degree-level training at the newly founded university in Lusaka. Supplying the fledgling Republic with professionally trained manpower to replace the inherited heavy dependence on expatriates in nearly all key government positions still remained a priority. A better understanding of some of these less tangible but equally important historical and political factors must be had of these kinds of issues if the international donors working in Africa are to be able to engage in the kind of well-informed dialogue which is necessary for a better understanding of the issues hampering Zambia's and Africa's educational progress.

The Growth of Primary Education in Zambia

The history of Zambia's Western educational system began with the arrival of the first Christian missions to the area brought in 1796 by a Portuguese, Manoel Periera, who started out from the Portuguese settlement of "Tate" (Tete) on the banks of the Zambezi river which today is part of Mozambique. By the end of the nineteenth century and in the wake of the explorations of David Livingstone came the rapid European settlement of this area later to be incorporated into the British colony of Northern Rhodesia (Mwanakatwe, 1974).

Mission schools were established initially by Protestant missions bent on evangelizing a pagan population into adopting Christianity, and with it Western European cultural values. Early schooling provided Africans with enough basic education to enable them to read the Bible, learn basic writing skills to write their names and carry out basic clerical duties. Mission schools were also used to transfer cultural values like wearing clothes, eating with knives and forks and European notions of personal hygiene. Some skills like dressmaking, sewing, carpentry and horticulture were taught by the more socially responsible missions, of which one of the best examples was the Paris Missionary Society headed by Francois Coillard, which established its headquarters in Paramount Chief Lewanika's capital in Barotseland in Western Zambia in the 1890s. During this period of Christian colonization little or no attention was paid to preserving existing traditional educational practices or values, which promoted in a more pragmatic way the transmission of survival qualities like wisdom, knowledge, experience and practical skills (Lane, 1976).

After the signing of the agreement with Paramount Chief Lewanika in 1890 the British South Africa Company (BSAC), headed by Cecil Rhodes, penetrated large areas of what was later named Northern Rhodesia, and responsibility for maintaining any educational provision continued to lie with the missions. BSAC rule continued until 1924, after which responsibility for governing the territory passed to the British Colonial office in London. When BSAC rule ended there were 1,500 schools scattered throughout

the territory and an enrollment of about 50,000 pupils. All this was achieved largely through voluntary donations and the sacrifice of donor church congregations in Western Europe.

Education during the next Colonial period (1924-1952) was influenced seminally by the Phelps-Stoke Commission which visited Northern Rhodesia in 1924. The task of the Commission was to investigate the educational needs of the people and to ascertain whether or not these were being met by the existing system. The Commission advised that the educational system should be adapted to meet the real needs of the people and should prepare the recipients of such an education for life in the villages. According to the Phelps-Stoke Commission report, "education should aim at advancing agriculture, developing industries, improving health, training people in the management of their own affairs and inculcating true ideals for citizenship and service." Strong recommendations were also given for the establishment of a Directorate of Native Education for the specific purpose of looking after and guaranteeing the interests of the indigenous population. The Commission also deserves credit for suggesting the setting up of a university-type institution, an idea which would later be translated into setting up a University College in Salisbury to service the territory's need for higher-levels of skilled manpower.

After the Phelps-Stoke Commission's recommendations were presented to the government a formal system of education was instituted, bringing together the broad diversity of competing mission schools into a coherent state-sponsored system. The new

department of native education's policy favored giving as many children as possible a basic primary education. However, a limited allocation of funds to this sector meant that few African children were able to access and complete even seven years of primary education. Whatever education was to be given to the indigenous African would be achieved through the institution of a limited teacher education program, the consolidation of existing primary schools and the training of a limited number of skilled craftsmen and technicians (Kelly, 1988).

In 1953, under a contested political transformation imposed on the black majority by the white settler minority, the Colonial territories of Southern Rhodesia, Northern Rhodesia and Nyasaland were formed into a Federation. The Federation, many felt, was instituted mainly to bolster and extend Southern Rhodesia's economic hegemony over the rest of the territories and supply Southern Rhodesia with cheap labor and resources to maintain her white supremacy over a white-dominated hinterland which now extended from South Africa to Northern Rhodesia. Under the new system native education was to remain the responsibility of each individual territory, while the education of other races, and especially that of the privileged white colonizers, passed onto the Federal Government which controlled the allocation of the bulk of financial resources. What this meant was that the white-controlled Federal Government was able to effectively control the type and quantity of education the black African majority was able

to obtain till the advent, eleven years later, of independence and majority rule for Northern Rhodesia.

When the Federation came to an end in 1963 there were only 342,000 children in school of which about 7,000 were in secondary school under the Northern Rhodesian government. The first census taken in 1964 established that only 77% of the eligible school-going population was being admitted to a primary education. Of these, 62% were boys and 45% were girls (UNESCO, 1964).

Primary Education After Independence

The post-colonial period began with the establishment of an Emergency Development Plan (EDP). The newly elected black African majority government led by Kenneth Kaunda and the United Independence Party (UNIP), about to inherit a voter induced crisis of expectations, had to act fast. A succession of national development plans followed, all placing emphasis on the need to bring Zambia's educational system in line to meet the nation's growing trained manpower shortage. Under the First, Second and Third National Development plans attention was given to the need to adjust and expand the educational infrastructure left by the outgoing Colonial Administration to meet the growing demand for more primary and secondary school places.

The Emergency Development Plan, 1964-1965

The EDP recognized the need to increase teachers and facilities to meet the growing demand for more primary education mainly in the urban areas. The need for a similar expansion of educational services in the rural areas was also recognized, but political pressures and a shortage of funds meant that the more populous mining towns, from whence the newly elected United Independence Party (UNIP) had its strongest support during the struggle immediately preceding independence, received a greater proportion of disposable resources. Rural communities, however, were invited to form self-help groups to provide labor to build schools in return for government assistance with cement, corrugated iron and other scarce building materials. In addition, the government promised to provide furniture, teaching materials and teachers. It is somewhat ironic that private voluntary assistance in the education sector was first provided by Zambia's poorest rural communities. Similar schemes to try to get private help for the construction and maintenance of schools in the urban areas failed to produce the same positive response. Urban workers who were largely employed in the mining industry were reluctant to provide voluntary inputs for the improvement of the children's education for a number of reasons. Life in the towns on low salaries was expensive and jobs long, arduous and physically exhausting. With little time or money to spare, the self-help movement did not catch on in the towns.

Under the self-help schemes 180 new rural primary classes were made available to accommodate an extra 21,000 children. By preaching the gospel of self-reliance UNIP, led by a charismatic President, Kenneth Kaunda, was able to generate the enthusiasm necessary to keep the rural areas satisfied. The gains achieved through the EDP were modest but important in that these initial efforts to reach out to the community for help to build an education system were to establish a community based self-help trend which throughout Zambia's short post-independence period has come to the rescue of a financially beleaguered state.

The Transitional Development Plan, 1965-1966

Under the TDP the government initiated a full-scale national review of primary education needs. Planning considerations like population growth, distribution and economic growth were factored in, and an educational planning unit was established to bring a more rigorous approach to this important new activity. Long-term plans were set for the expansion of primary education and these were carefully matched against long-term development needs. Ten to fifteen years of national growth were considered. An increase in overall enrollment meant that there would be a need for more schools and teachers and a subsequent need to increase the number of places in grades II-IV. The planning undertaken during the TDP set the levels for the subsequent First National Development Plan (FNDP), which would continue the basic policy adopted by UNIP to

proceed headlong with the expansion of education until universal primary education (UPE) was achieved.

The TDP was able to achieve a lot considering the many cross-sector demands which were then being made on Zambia's small budget. Four hundred and seventeen extra grade I classes were built and staffed. Four hundred and eighty grade V and 477 grade VII classes followed. This ambitious and largely successful educational initiative demonstrated the government's commitment toward UPE. One hundred and twenty thousand new primary places were created despite a shortage of trained manpower and the economic effects beginning to be felt by the gradual closure of Zambia's borders, resulting from Southern Rhodesia's white-ruled regime's move toward unilateral independence from British rule.

Again, problems were apparent in the plan's implementation and the government was unable to provide what was needed for primary education in the rural areas. Few rural primary schools were built and many of the old dilapidated colonial facilities remained in disrepair. Teachers' houses, a bone of contention among those forced to teach in the rural areas, remained non-available or below standard. Rural schools likewise would receive adequate teaching resources only after the politically more influential urban schools had received theirs.

The First National Development Plan, 1966-1970

Following the dramatic successes of the TDP, UNIP was prepared to spend 360,000,000 Kwacha (about \$1.4 = 1 K) in an ambitious plan to carry out the following objectives:

1. Increase national per-capita income from K120-K200 by 1970.
2. Increase employment from 300,000 to 400,000 jobs by 1970.
3. Diversify the economy away from mineral production to agriculture (FNDP, 1967).
4. Increase opportunities for education and training at all levels to reduce the nation's dependence on foreign-trained manpower.

The the all encompassing breadth of the FNDP seemed not to have daunted the government's determination to transform the educational system into a model to promote the values of Zambian Humanism (Mukupu, 1970), the philosophy being actively promoted by UNIP which placed human need, equity, tolerance and community self-help before greed and Western-influenced individualism. Primary and secondary education would be expanded. New teacher training colleges would be built to serve regional needs. Technical colleges and technical high schools would be built and the old ones revitalized. Bursaries would be provided for children of poorer families to help provide equitable access to the University of Zambia. More resources would be put into educational broadcasting, since this had already demonstrated its ability to reach teachers

and children learning in the rural areas. A national library service was instituted, largely to service the demand for reading materials in the urban areas. An attempt was also made to reach some rural villages with a mobile library loan service. However, a shortage of resources and lack of motivation on the part of the administration meant that this important service was never really properly established.

Although there was a sincere attempt made to provide something for everyone, the government again gave in to stronger urban political pressures. The urban areas were given a special dispensation and urban children allowed to go straight through seven years of primary education without sitting the grade IV selection examination, a right previously only granted to a few elite private fee-paying primary schools. Parents in the urban mining centers, well known for their social problems, were faced with a growing child delinquency problem and demanded that the government change the rules (Mwanakatwe, 1974).

The introduction of compulsory primary education, again in response to political pressures, began to distort what had been planned. The resulting uncontrolled rise in demand meant that there were insufficient schools and teachers to provide the services which were now mandated by law. However, the ever-alert and willing planning section of the Ministry of Education once again came to the rescue. They recalculated that the projected figure of 160,000 new primary school places by 1970 was in fact based on an incorrect projection and that really only 130,000 new

places needed to be provided (Kelly, 1988). This enabled the government to achieve the following primary education goals and helped to stave off any immediate political repercussions. By carefully reallocating resources: a) All seven-year-olds would be able to enter grade I by 1970. b) All children entering primary school after 1968 in the urban areas would be able to complete the full seven-year cycle of primary education. c) Seventy-five percent of the children in rural schools would be able to progress from grade IV to grade VII. d) Thirty-three percent of all primary school graduates would be able to enter Form I, or the first year of secondary school.

But problems there were! The FNDP proved to be soundly conceived but overambitious. Management and administrative support, which were never very strong even under the Colonial administration, continued to constrain the execution of Zambia's educational plans. Log jams developed in offices which had been given a key role in implementing the FNDP. Insufficiently well-prepared management, for many were ex-teachers with little or no management training and experience, meant that the system was unable to react sufficiently quickly to meet the challenges of an ambitious national plan. The need to revitalize an educational administration still hamstrung by the previous British Colonial model, had been ignored. This, an administration still served by a civil-service mandarinat protected by tenure and patronage, and not immediately accountable to the new political forces now striving to bring about national change. However, in the rural

areas at least, something important was happening. The self-help spirit which had fueled the successes of the TDP was now institutionalized into an arrangement whereby the government (GRZ) jointly agreed to build schools with any community able to organize a parent-teacher organization willing to provide labor and other basic inputs. Many primary schools in the rural areas during this phase in Zambia's educational history, owe their existence to this important and promising alliance between state and community interests.

By the end of 1970 only part of what had been planned had in fact been achieved. Only 58% of those targeted for entry into primary school had access to a grade I place. However, if looked at in global terms, nearly 90% of the total planned primary enrollment had been achieved--this, on top of prevailing administrative inefficiencies and political constraints. The rapid strides thus made toward the achievement of UPE do deserve praise but not before drawing attention to the main beneficiaries of this progress. For, despite an attempt to encourage rural self-help at the primary level, the urban areas were again better able to progress toward the attainment of UPE. In the rural areas only a small proportion of the 75% scheduled to progress from grade IV to grade VII actually achieved this for a variety of reasons. A shortage of well-trained and committed teachers and teaching resources like books meant that children were quickly bored and soon dropped out of school. In addition, parents unable to spare children from rural household chores withdrew children or kept them

away from school during important seasonal events like harvest time, the fishing season, etc.

The Second National Development Plan, 1972-1976

The SNDP was drawn up after the sobering experience gained through trying to achieve the educational goals set during the previous FNDP. At this point in Zambia's educational history planners and policy makers were prepared to be more cautious about making predictions for the achievement of UPE. The new plan provided for a reasonable expansion at the primary level but more resources would need to be provided to help those already in the system to complete a full seven-year primary education cycle. The objectives of the SNDP were likewise less ambitious:

1. Provide sufficient new primary streams to keep pace with population expansion.
2. Provide sufficient new upper primary streams to achieve a progression rate of 80% from grade IV to grade IV by 1976 (SNDP, 1973).

These objectives were premised on the assumption that by 1977 there would only be a projected increase of 20,000 seven-year-olds ready to access grade I. This meant building only 100 new grade I classes if the class size were kept at the then current ratio of 1:40. This in turn would mean a projected increase of classes from Grades I-IV of from 18,730 to 22,942 by 1976.

Changes would now include identifying and carrying out curriculum needs, developing new courses like Zambian history, geography and languages. A look would also be taken at finding ways of optimizing the use of existing school facilities. Changes in the school term and the teaching day would also be instituted to try to make more efficient use of time on task.

There were, however, a number of problems. In order to make better use of school facilities the government began to introduce a double-shift system. Teachers who were previously expected to teach only one four-hour shift per day were now forced to teach two. The doubling of the teaching load resulted in an added burden on teachers already complaining about low pay and poor conditions of service. By 1971 10,000 lower primary classes were on a double shift system. In the rural areas where teachers had always felt neglected the situation grew worse. Housing remained substandard and school facilities in general remained inadequate, or worsened. Teachers expected to take on a double load now began to vote with their feet. Many threatened to leave and left if they were not transferred to the urban areas. Some unable to find work outside of teaching resorted to farming and other more gainful rural occupations at the expense of their pupils. The administrative bottlenecks which began to restrict the implementation of the FNDP grew worse as purely political criteria began to be applied to promotions and civil service changes (Mwanakatwe, 1974).

Perhaps more important were the sudden changes which began to take place in Zambia's economy during this period. After the

collapse in world copper prices which began in 1973-4, Zambia's economy, always overdependent on the price of her mineral resources, showed a dramatic downturn. By 1975 the decline in revenues gained from copper, Zambia's principal earner of foreign exchange, had tumbled by 40%. The resulting rampant inflation and recession which set in showed itself in the rising cost of educational provision per student due mainly to the way learning was still being delivered. A heavy dependence on face-to-face teaching methods meant that as inflation began to rise and teachers began to demand increases in their salaries to correspond to the rapid rise in cost of living, so too was raised the portion of the educational budget paid out by the government to salaries. In fact, teachers' salaries had now risen to absorb about 96% of the budget allocated to the primary sub-sector.

The effect of the debt burden on Zambian education has been well documented by Prof. Michael Kelly in a recent report (Kelly, 1987, p.2):

The Zambian case is of particular interest because the recession had the effect of throwing the entire economy into a state of almost total disarray and collapse. It is instructive to know the extent to which education survived during such a period and the mechanisms used to ensure that it did so.

The high social value and popular support for education in Zambia meant that the government had no choice but to try to continue to provide at least those aspects of the educational service which were most visible to the consumer. This was achieved by providing more classrooms in which to house children to meet the

increasing demand for more places, especially in the urban areas where the demand exceeded supply. To achieve this under the growing constraint of the fiscal squeeze, what went on less visibly in the classroom was allowed to deteriorate. School books and other resources were not renewed, extracurricular activities were discontinued and savings were initiated in management and supervision and wherever possible to reduce the burden on the budget. Triple shifts were begun for the first time and teachers were again forced to carry the burden. The primary level, less politically influential than either the secondary or higher levels, suffered most. The overall quality of what was being taught at the primary level dropped to such an extent that many children leaving grade VII were barely able to read or write. In some secondary schools a program of remedial learning was initiated to help children reach the levels required to cope with the demands of a more academic syllabus.

Despite the twin pressures of a constricting fiscal reality and the growing demand for enough education to meet the demands set by an expanding population, the government has been able to provide at least the semblance of educational services to fend off popular political reaction from an electorate always demanding more educational resources.

Another strategy which Zambia was forced to adopt was to turn increasingly to foreign aid and foreign assistance. For many years Zambia has prided itself at being less dependent on foreign assistance than many of her less fortunate neighbors. Aid for

education is now being sought from more diverse sources and is being used for a wider range of purposes. Now, instead of using aid for capital development and training, it is being used to cover operating costs including supplements for teacher's salaries, etc. (Sikwebele,1989). Unfortunately, Zambia's forced reliance on foreign aid to cover her educational expenditure is increasing her dependence on foreign donors and may be restricting her freedom to make independent choices about the future of her education system.

The Third National Development Plan, 1979-1983

The TNDP was more carefully planned to take into consideration Zambia's changing economic reality. Unlike previous development plans which conveyed the optimism of a newly independent country, the TNDP purveys a new realism which addresses some of the curricular concerns raised by the distinguished group of Zambian educators convened to formulate guidelines for an educational reform at the University of Zambia (UNZA), in early 1975.

The UNZA Reformers listed the following educational concerns:

- a) Zambia's educational system encourages young people to seek white-collar employment to the exclusion of jobs requiring manual and technical skills.
- b) The system is mainly geared to the passing of examinations and not enough to lifelong knowledge.

- c) The system responds to society's reward system and encourages individualism and social-class stratification based on educational attainment and income.
- d) The curriculum is overacademic and theoretical and too little attention is given to practical skills.
- e) The system is too heavily influenced by foreign cultural values and has deprived itself of Zambian cultural values. Cultural education should be seen as creatively building on Zambian traditions (MOE, 1975).

Unfortunately, a declining economy meant that few of the Educational Reform recommendations were implemented in spite of the thoroughness with which this exercise was undertaken. Almost two years of consultations at the "popular grass-roots" level produced a report whose social and practical recommendations were farsighted and insightful but not very practical. Some of the curricular recommendations have only been partially implemented, albeit very slowly. Many of the changes have been poorly integrated at the primary and secondary levels, with many of the practical innovations merely being tacked on to the existing syllabus (Clarke, 1979).

Aside from the qualitative issues which the TNDP attempted to address, the period 1975 to 1985 was characterized by an impressive quantitative expansion of primary education. The total primary school enrollment increased from 872,392 in 1975 to 1,348,689 by 1985, an increase of more than 52%. Gross enrollment ratios increased from 90% in 1975 to 95.5% in 1985. During the

same period the primary school-age population increased by about 46% so the gains in the gross enrollment ratio, impressive as they are, suggest an exceptional ability by the system to meet the demands of rapid population growth despite existing economic constraints. This impressive growth was achieved by using a number of strategies already mentioned previously, such as planned physical construction, increasing class size, more use of multiple session teaching across all grades, etc. This latter factor may have accounted for most of the dramatic increase in the enrollment ratio.

Interestingly, the growth in gross enrollment rates has not been matched by increases in the net enrollment. Although the data used to calculate these figures may not be very reliable, it seems that the net enrollment ratio has been stagnant since 1975 at about 78%. That is to say, only 78% of the children in primary school were actually within the correct primary school attendance age. This may be in part due to continuing pressure from a backlog of children who were previously waiting to access primary school. These children entering grade I at an older age denied access to the new cohort of waiting seven-year-olds. Age-specific enrollment rates show that only about a third of the pupils admitted to grade I in 1983 were registered seven-year-olds.

The Basic Education Movement

The Educational Reform recommended extending the seven-year primary cycle to nine years of "basic education." In effect, basic education would stretch the primary syllabus to include the first two years of secondary school, thus giving children who did not have a chance of entering secondary school at least two more years of schooling. The assumption was that nine years of basic education would prepare children in a better way for life and for the job market than only seven.

During the past five years the basic education idea seems to have caught on and a number of communities have extended their primary schools through self-help efforts. The government has attempted to speed up the recommendations made in the TNDP for a universal basic education by encouraging communities to turn their primary schools into "basic schools" to relieve the growing pressure for more junior secondary school places. Basic schools effectively extend the primary cycle by two more grades (8 and 9) which are meant to be equivalent to Forms I and II of junior secondary school. Basic schools are now increasing rapidly. In 1982 only seven basic schools existed. By 1983 24 more were opened and another 29 in 1985. In 1986 and 1987 another 52 were opened. Through self-help community action basic schools now provide 292 grade VIII classes and 219 grade IX classes. The 123 basic schools in existence provide about a fifth of the national junior secondary places (Kelly, 1988).

However, for administrative and management reasons basic schools are having problems. The ministry has hardly made any attempt to provide these schools with a suitable curriculum or the appropriate teaching materials. Their relationship to the existing junior secondary system is also ambiguous. Are grades VIII and XI an extension of the primary school, or are they part of secondary education? Will graduates from the basic schools be treated equally with those who complete two years of secondary education at secondary schools, or will they be looked at as second-class equivalents?

By virtue of their limited size basic schools will not be able to match library, laboratory and other resources which better resourced secondary schools can offer. On the teaching level many basic schools suffer from a shortage of teachers trained to teach at the required level. Thus many such schools have tended to use their best primary teachers to teach the two top grades without the necessary training. Consequently, many have difficulties offering the range of options and academic levels which are being provided by existing secondary schools. Unless some of these problems get more serious attention from the government, the future of this promising innovation may be in jeopardy.

Gender and Access to Primary Education

One of the positive outcomes of the educational expansion which occurred during the mid '70s and early '80s was the apparent

increase in girls accessing primary education. One of the most important pieces of legislation written into Zambia's constitution at independence barred discrimination on sexual grounds to those wanting to be educated. From the outset both boys and girls were permitted open access to the system at all levels. However, as in other developing countries, this did not mean that an equal number of girls and boys were sent to school. Recent research carried out at Harvard by the BRIDGES Project (Anderson, et al., 1988) suggests that where resources are scarce and where access to education at the primary level is constrained by a shortage of facilities, families, especially in the rural areas, will tend to favor sending sons to school before daughters. After enough boys have been able to access school the number of girls in school will tend to increase. In Zambia the same seems to have happened. Enrollment figures show that the proportion of girls has increased at the grade I level from 43.7% in 1975 to 47.1% in 1985. At the grade VII level the increase during the same period has been from 38% to 41.8%. More importantly, across the full primary spectrum the proportion of girls entering school increased from 45.4% in 1975 to 47.1% in 1985. Thus, among the 7-14 year age group there has been a marked drop in numbers of girls remaining out of school, especially in the rural areas. These trends all seem to be happening in spite of the severe economic recession and the drought recently suffered by rural households in the rural areas. The latter would normally encourage the opposite trend. However the degree to which education is being valued even by hard-pressed

rural communities suggests that many families are now seeing the importance of providing both sons and daughters with an education.

The Problem of Repetition

The highest number of repeaters occurs at grade IV and grade VII. The average repeater rate for the grade IV transition period had been declining from 2.7% in 1978 and 1.6% for 1983. At the grade VII transition point repetition had risen from 6.6% in 1978 to 7.2% in 1983, reflecting the growing demand for children to move on to secondary school. The overall number of repeaters in any one year at the primary level is about 20,000, which suggests a significant level of inefficiency at this level. Repeaters at the grade VII level raise the class size and lower efficiency. This is particularly marked in the urban areas where the demand for a place in secondary school is high.

The pressure to stay in school to repeat grade VII may be due to the following factors (Kelly, 1988, p. 132):

- a. The quality of what is being offered in the primary school is low.
- b. What is being taught at the primary level bears little relationship to what goes on outside school.
- c. What is being examined in primary school de-emphasizes survival skills and overemphasizes ritualistic, mechanical learning of irrelevant facts.

- d. The prime reason for being at primary school is to prepare for an examination to gain entry into secondary school.
- e. There are still insufficient places at grade VIII to absorb all grade VII leavers.

Concluding Statement

In spite of all the difficulties Zambia has had to face during the first 25 years of her independence from British rule, her educational record is one worthy of pride. Especially significant have been Zambia's largely successful but unsung attempts to provide universal primary education for a rapidly expanding population while at the same time providing enough secondary and higher education to satisfy her post-independence needs for more and better trained manpower. A succession of well-conceived national development plans which gave priority to primary education from 1964 to 1985 have attempted to revitalize, adjust and expand the educational system left by her colonizers to suit her changing labor needs and a growing population. If these plans have failed to bring about the changes intended, it was not for a lack of clearly defined educational goals, or for want of trying. Severe financial constraints imposed by Zambia's debt burden and by the catastrophic fall in world commodity prices, especially the price of copper, after 1974, produced a recession which has had disastrous effects on Zambia's ability to finance existing and new

public sector activities. These, combined with the serious management inefficiencies of her public sector administration, more than any other factors contributed to her inability to complete the ambitious but necessary improvements planned for her national education system.

The World Bank's "Education in Sub-Saharan Africa" report (World Bank, 1988), while a concise and well written statement of the problem from an economist's perspective, fails to sufficiently distinguish between the few but important African educational successes, at all levels, and the many failures. In trying to be nonspecific and global in its recommendations the report fails to understand the important contribution made by differences in cultural, historical and geographical background and how these socio-historical factors may be impacting the way African education is developing. The culturo-historical differences between one country and another may be a significant factor in evaluating the success or otherwise of each African region's educational achievements. If the Bank's report needs deserves criticism it is because it fails to identify key problem areas at the micro-level like:

- a. The need to give more attention to how learning takes place and how different classroom learning practices may be making an important contribution toward educational quality and learning outcomes.
- b. Not much is said about what make a good teacher and how one produces motivated and effective teaching in the

African context. Research still to be published and undertaken by the BRIDGES Project seems to suggest that the presence of an effective and motivated teacher may be a more important factor in determining educational outcomes than even books, buildings and other educational resources (McGinn, et al., 1969).

- c. Very little is said about the gender access problem in Africa and the issues constraining and preventing women's access to education in African countries. If women's contribution to national development is to be recognized as important, then more needs to be said about encouraging governments to implement educational policies which will make it easier for girls to enter and stay in school, like, appropriate changes in the curriculum, more women teachers, etc. (Hyde, 1989).
- d. Insufficient emphasis is given to informal and nonformal educational strategies as alternatives to formal education, especially for educating and training marginalized groups like remote rural communities, women and the urban poor.

In Zambia we have the case of a country which, having done all if not more than is being recommended in the World Bank's Report, is still unable to meet the internal demand for more and better education. Clearly, in this case external forces working beyond Zambia's control must and should take as much of the blame for what is happening to constrain educational growth as internal

factors like inherited and inappropriate institutional structures, weak management practices and a very high population growth rate.

Countries like Zambia with a history of dependence on technical assistance from international donors like the World Bank may be permitted to express more than a modicum of skepticism when presented with yet another formula for educational success. It is difficult to expand, adjust and revitalize if the debt burden imposed by the world's lending community on borrowers, is such that many countries are now unable to even provide more immediate priorities like food, shelter, or jobs for their rapidly growing populations.

Zambia's fragile but positive attempts to encourage a move toward a community-supported education system are well documented. Since 1964 the village-level self-help movement has played a key role in building many new primary schools, especially in the marginalized rural areas. Similarly, recent trends toward the implementation of "basic schools" show that Zambia has continued to make sincere and creative efforts to diversify away from state-funded education by looking toward local communities to provide some financial support and local initiative for the implementation of educational change. Furthermore, Zambia's enlightened and already implemented open-access policies have also encouraged parents to send their daughters to school in increasing numbers. This trend has resulted in large numbers of rural girls accessing primary school, a trend that is still relatively new in most African countries (Dall, 1989).

However, more can still be done to improve Zambia's already positive start toward the goal of universal basic education. Policies should be implemented to prioritize educational expenditure where this will have most impact on national development, and more especially in the development of Zambia's important food-producing agricultural sector and the rural areas. Evidence suggests that scarce funds may best be spent in promoting a more efficient use of existing resources to improve the quality of Zambia's existing primary and basic education. However, little impact will result from even the best planned educational expenditure if nothing is done to improve the management aspects of an educational bureaucracy unable to respond to the challenges of economic and social change. The public sector, which has always played an important role in colonial and post-colonial African development, cannot easily be replaced by the private sector, given the comparative weakness of most of the African continent's still emerging private sector. Merely to suggest that the problem be wished away to the private sector is to fail to understand Africa. Unlike Latin America and Southeast Asia, where historically the private sector has evolved over time in response to well-defined internal needs, Africa's contemporary private sector is still by and large a fragile offshoot of colonially inspired foreign investment. It would be, I think, a serious mistake to entrust the future of African education to the fickleness of fragile private institutions which still owe their allegiance principally to foreign-controlled interests. Africa's education is much too

important a part of each country's present and future national identity to be sold to the highest private bidder for a "pot of borrowed gold."

Some Tentative Policy Recommendations

If one were to select a set of affordable and implementable policy options as a way to begin to address many of the complex problems constraining Zambia's educational development, some of the following would be worth considering:

- a. Perhaps, the key issue for Zambia and other African countries is one that currently needs to be addressed in most of the Third World, and that is the issue of the foreign debt burden. International donor agencies and foreign governments to re-examine their lending policies to find a way of relieving countries like Zambia from being overwhelmed by their debt payments which now exceed their productive capacity to repay. Only a quick relief of this burden will make it possible for Zambia to give serious attention to improvements in her educational system.
- b. The community school integration which has continued to be a creative post-independence tradition in Zambia should be actively encouraged. Financial sharing of the cost of education by local communities should be given a boost through innovative tax and other creative government incentives to the consumer.
- c. More resources should be allocated to improving primary and basic education so that every Zambian child can eventually be given the chance to complete at least nine

years of quality formal education. Those unable to access formal education should be provided with nonformal alternatives which would seek to bring practical skills to their living and working environments.

- d. Attention should be given to carrying out a management reform of the Ministry of Education and other public service management systems. A less bureaucratic and more responsive management system where policy implementation is based on informed decision-making would be a desirable outcome. Modern management information tools may also contribute toward a solution of this difficult problem.

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