



EDUCATION FACT SHEET - ZAMBIA

In Brief	<p>SUMMARY</p> <p>Zambia Population: 16.6 million (2016) Zambia Size: 752,618 sq km/290,587 sq mi</p> <p>National curriculum: There is a national curriculum with formal exams taking place at the end of Grades 7, 9 and 12. Children have to pass these exams to advance to the next grade, or to go on to tertiary education.</p> <p>Literacy: 83.0 (2010) Youth Literacy: 88.7 (2010) Female Youth Literacy: 86.5 (2010) (EFA Review 2015)</p> <p>Years of Public School: 12 Primary: 7 Lower Secondary: 2 Upper Secondary: 3</p> <p>Language of Instruction: Local language through grade 4, then English</p> <p>High School Leaving Exams: Yes Date of Exams: November each year</p>
Education Overview	<p>Low Government Investment, High Primary Attendance</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Govt investment in education %GDP – 1.09% (World Bank, 2015) – 4th lowest in world. • Teacher:pupil ratio – 48:1 – high compared to Southern African Development Community (SADC) average of 38:1. • Entering primary school having attended pre-school – 14.8% (EFA, 2013) • Completing primary school – 99%. Primary education is free apart from uniform, stationery, etc. • Transition to lower secondary school – 89.4% in 2014 • Completion of lower secondary school - 62.4% in 2012 (Zambia is a high performer compared to other SADC average of only 34%)

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Transition to upper secondary school – 33% in 2013 (decreased sharply from 50% in 2007 and remains a huge challenge) • Completion of upper secondary – 28% • Numbers of university students – 229 students per 100,000 inhabitants making it one of the lowest in Sub-Saharan Africa. <p>(UNESCO Figures, 2016)</p>
<p>School System</p>	<p>Progression Dependent Upon National Exams, Rationing Space</p> <p>Years in School 4 years optional pre-school from age 2-6 (almost 100% private provision) 7 years in basic primary (for children ages 7-13) 2 years in lower secondary and 3 years in upper secondary (from approximate age 14-18). <i>NB: Lower and upper secondary are gradually being combined into the same school.</i></p> <p>Progression from one level to another depends on national exams and is not automatic. The process is overseen by the government at the end of Grades 7, 9 and 12. In fact, the Grade 7 exam allows the rationing of the limited space available by pushing out children who do not achieve the required marks. Although it is possible to retake a year, many children from poorer families lose incentive to continue.</p> <p>An alternative to secondary school is provided by Technical Education, Vocational and Entrepreneurship Training Authority (TEVETA). Courses are provided but access remains difficult for many and there is a criticism that their courses do not provide the skills necessary for the workplace.</p> <p>Primary education is free apart from uniforms and stationery. The government in its National Implementation Framework of 2015 (NIF III, 2015) has committed to providing free secondary education to Grade 12 but in 2018, this has still not been implemented.</p>
<p>Language of Tuition</p>	<p>Children are taught in their local language for the first four grades. After that, they are taught in English. Children in community schools are more likely to spend their time talking in their local languages despite the language of tuition being in English. This results in their English being less fluent. Government and private schools tend to be more insistent that English is observed during the school day. All students who complete Grade 12 will be fluent in English.</p>

School Leaving Exams

Grades for University Admission

The six highest subject scores, including English Language, from each student is the basis of the scoring system for the Zambian national examinations (ECZ), administered at the end of Grade 12. This grading system is the basis for admission at Zambian universities. The gold standard is gaining 6 points. Most students take eight subjects, although infrequently a student will take nine subjects. Students taking fewer subjects may have been forced into this situation if the subjects could not be tested at the school on the day. In order to be awarded the school certificate, a student needs to have achieved a minimum of five passes at credit grade or above. 28% of children starting in the government school system complete grade 12 and approximately half of those students are awarded the school certificate.

The iGCSE grading system is an international testing system administered through the University of Cambridge (UK). Some schools, all private, adopt this examination system instead of ECZ. The iGCSE scoring system is also included as a comparison to the ECZ grading system. The iGCSE in Zambia usually consider the best six subjects. There is also a GCE O-level grading system also administered by University of Cambridge (UK). The same structure is used.

Scoring System for ECZ and iGCSE

<i>ECZ %</i>	<i>Grade/ Points</i>	<i>Description</i>	<i>iGCSE/GCE%</i>	<i>Grade/ Points</i>	<i>Description</i>
85 - 100	1 – A*	Distinction	90 - 100	1 - A*	Distinction
75 - 84	1 – A	Distinction	80 - 89	2 - A	Distinction
70 - 74	2 – B*	Merit	70 - 79	3 - B	Merit
65 - 69	3 – B	Merit	70 - 79	3 - B	Merit
60 - 64	4 – C*	Credit	60 - 69	4 - C	Credit
55 - 59	5 – C	Credit	60 - 69	4 - C	Credit
50 - 54	6 – D*	Satisfactory	50 – 59	5 - D	Satisfactory
45 - 49	7 – D	Satisfactory	40 – 49	6 - E	Satisfactory
40 – 44	8 – E	Unsatisfactory	30 – 39	7 - F	Fail
Below 40	9 – F				

A-levels were removed from the school curriculum during the 1970s when ECZ exams started and have never been reintroduced. The first year of many degrees includes A-levels, though students are not tested through formal A-level routes.

Available Schools

Uneven Quality of Schools

The government funds basic day primary schools and secondary schools. There are also boarding schools in each province which select the cream of the students and there are two national schools, one in the capital and one in Southern Province. These two schools invite candidates to join them traditionally based on their Grade 9 results but, increasingly, on their Grade 7 results, having expanded their intake. These boarding schools are low-cost schools. The tuition fees are the same as the tuition fees for any

	<p>secondary school. They keep boarding fees as low as possible. Even so, it is impossible without some form of sponsorship for the most disadvantaged to attend these schools.</p> <p>The Zambian government has sought to expand the school system, creating 600,000 new places since 2000, largely through community schools. These schools are frequently set up in communities themselves where government schools don't exist (especially in rural areas). Community schools vary in quality hugely. Many are staffed by teachers who themselves only completed Grade 7. Most schools only go to Grade 7, although some go on to Grade 9 and a tiny minority to Grade 12.</p> <p>Private Schools an Alternative but Not Necessarily Better Quality</p> <p>Private schools fall into three categories:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Low-cost private day schools – similar to community schools. The charges are low, but it doesn't mean that they are better or worse than community or government schools. Once in the private system, however, it can be difficult (costly) to transfer out if it suddenly becomes unaffordable. 2. Local private schools (mainly boarding) tend to be better quality schools with mid-range fees. They generally attract Zambian middle-class families. 3. International private schools (mainly boarding) typically draw students from ex-pat and wealthy Zambian families.
<p>Tertiary and University System</p>	<p>Too Few Government Universities</p> <p>A number of tertiary colleges are available for students interested in teacher training, nursing, public health, A-levels and skills-based training/apprenticeship opportunities to prepare them for the workplace. Access still remains inequitable and opportunities aren't widely publicised. Teaching can be poor leading to disillusionment. Programs are also criticized for being unresponsive to the labor market.</p> <p>University takes four years (subject to universities remaining open – they are often closed due to student riots or teacher strikes). As there are no A-levels in secondary school, the first year for many subjects is dedicated to studying for A-levels.</p> <p>There are eight government-funded universities. They now all offer student loans. Some are converted teacher training or nursing colleges. Only two of the universities, University of Zambia (UNZA) and Copperbelt University (CBU), are considered elite universities but they both suffer from many challenges. However, the number of loans granted is extremely low (3800 in total compared with around 300,000 graduating from secondary school with their high school certificate - and of those, roughly 70% would require a loan). Moreover, very recent changes to the loan system means that the loan only covers tuition fees. This means that the poorest are again disadvantaged and unlikely to go to university even with great Grade 12 results). One of the newer universities, Mulungushi University, was established relatively recently as a public private partnership. It is still quite small but there are plans to expand it. Private universities are rapidly increasing in number - currently around 35. Generally, they are not as well-respected in the job market as UNZA and CBU, although University of Lusaka and Cavendish University are relatively sound, with better facilities than UNZA and CBU. However, Cavendish offers very few scholarships and University of Lusaka offers no financial aid. On average it takes a student five years to gain a graduate-level job (Oketch et al., 2014) after graduating. All universities are overseen by the newly formed Ministry of Higher Education.</p> <p>UNZA and CBU demand high grades from their students to be considered for their courses. To study natural sciences, students would expect to have 6-7 points in the Grade 12 exams, especially if they wish to be considered for a loan. Girls are considered who have 8 points to try to even up the gender gap at the universities.</p> <p>The government has recently switched from a bursary system to a loans system. The process for obtaining a loan seems similar to the old system. It is unclear to the students the terms for paying back the loan.</p>

<p>Issues with the Education System</p>	<p>Uneven Quality of Schools</p> <p>The Southern and Eastern Africa Consortium for Monitoring Educational Quality (SACMEQ) monitors the quality of educational standards. Quality issues (SACMEQ-III, 2007) rank Zambia 13/14 in Southern Africa based on reading and mathematics. According to the UNESCO Education review in 2016, adult literacy has decreased from 69.1% in the period 1995-2004, to 63% in 2015. This is at odds with the EFA Review which puts adult literacy much higher (see summary figures). Experience would suggest the UNESCO figures are more accurate. At 63% literacy remains 10% lower than the SADC average.</p> <p>Teacher training is a priority, especially in STEM subjects where facilities are also very poor. Teachers’ living conditions are wanting and salaries are low, leaving teachers dispirited. An average primary school teacher’s salary is in the region of ZMW500 per month (around US\$50), especially if they are only partially qualified. Many teachers in community schools only attended school themselves up to Grade 7. SACMEQ said only 14.6% of teachers in secondary schools were qualified to teach (with a Bachelor’s degree level qualification).</p> <p>Most schools operate a shift system, some having three shifts of students per day leaving very little student-teacher contact time. In addition, they make money by offering tuitions after class.</p> <p>Poverty, Pregnancy Equal Poor Attendance</p> <p>Many children suffer from a period out of school, so it isn’t unusual for a 20-year- old to be completing Grade 12. There can be a variety of reasons but most commonly because parents fall on hard times and can’t afford the fees.</p> <p>A large number of girls become pregnant and drop out of school. Although they are allowed to return, readmission rates are low. Zambia has one of the highest numbers of teenage pregnancy and is well above the average for Sub-Saharan Africa.</p> <p>The Toll of AIDS</p> <p>UNICEF (2013) estimates that 1.4 million children are orphans; 24% of 15-19 year olds have lost at least one parent. AIDS accounts for roughly half of the orphans. It is hard for an orphan to stay in school unless they are sponsored by an NGO.</p> <p>Creaky Universities</p> <p>Both government universities attract the top students in Zambia yet they have poor infrastructure and living conditions, old academic resources and poorly qualified and unmotivated teaching staff. Students often riot because of issues with funding; teachers strike because they are often not paid.</p>
<p>Academic Calendar</p>	<p>Double Gap Year Effect</p> <p>The Zambian academic year runs from January to December for schools. Government universities run similarly but because of regular closures (due to strikes, riots, disease), but it takes two years before a student can be admitted with a loan to attend university, creating a double “gap year.” During this time, students become disillusioned as there is nothing for them to do - no jobs - and no guarantee of a university place. Many girls get pregnant during this time and many young people resort to drinking and taking drugs.</p> <p>Private universities often admit students in January and September, but even then, there is a time lag before students can enter university.</p>

SAT Test Centers	Two testing centers in Lusaka (American International School and International School of Lusaka) and one in Kitwe (Lechwe School).
ACT Test Centers	Two testing centers: American International School and International School of Lusaka, both in Lusaka.
IELTS/TOEFL	Not normally needed for Zambian students as their education will have been in English for at least eight years prior to applying to university.
Best time for Admissions Officers to Visit	<p>Students complete Grade 12 in November. Results are out in January/February the following year. Because young people are generally unemployed during the two years, it is possible for Admissions Officers to visit at any time. However, it might be better if they visit schools so that they get to see all the students. Exams take place in November, so around six months before exams is a good time.</p> <p>If students are studying A-levels, then any time from March through to September of the lower sixth would be good for a visit to give them time to prepare.</p>
HALI Contacts	<p>Our Moon Email: helen.leale-green@ourmoon.org.uk Phone: +44 7720 287904</p> <p>Kucetekela Email: florence.lutale@gmail.com Phone: +260 97 1594959</p> <p>Project Educate Email: project.educate1@gmail.com Phone: +260976026675</p>

Sources:

- EFA 2015. Zambia - Education for All 2015 National Review in conjunction with Ministry of Education, Science, Vocational Training and Early Education (MESVTEE). (UNESCO)
- OKETCH, M., MCCOWAN, T. & SCHENDEL, R. 2014. The impact of tertiary education on development: rigorous literature review. *London: Department for International Development.*
- SACMEQ-III 2007. Zambia - A study of the conditions of schooling and the quality of education. SACMEQ.
- UNESCO 2016. Zambia - Education Policy Review: Paving the Way for SDG4 - Education 2030. *In: UNESCO (ed.).*