

Zambia
Education Budget Brief
2019

Highlights



The relative share of the education sector budget is at its lowest level in five years at 15.3 per cent in 2019 from 20.2 per cent at peak in 2015.



To attain higher middle income status Zambia needs to invest in its young population so as to increase the average years of schooling from the current 6.6 to about 13.5. To achieve this, the Government needs a financing strategy accompanied by solid budget action to achieve classroom parity for secondary and primary levels from the current ratio of 1 to 9.



2019 allocation to Early Childhood Education has declined by 88 per cent because of no allocation for ECE infrastructure due to austerity measures. **Without an increased allocation for ECE infrastructure a considerable number of children will continue to be ill-prepared for grade one as currently only 32 per cent of grade one entrants have ECE experience.**



Prudent use of financial resources is critical to the improvement of educational outcomes which are currently poor. Despite massive investments in the sector, education outcomes are poor. For instance, a recent study by the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) and the Examination Council of Zambia revealed that 15-year-old Zambian students achieved only 5 per cent and 2 per cent of the minimum international level of proficiency in reading and mathematics respectively. **The Government needs to enhance its public financial management system to improve expenditure efficiency.**



Despite the education budget being output-based, there is no visible link between allocations and the direction of output indicators. **Budget outputs should be reviewed annually and be in order of priority considering fiscal challenges.**

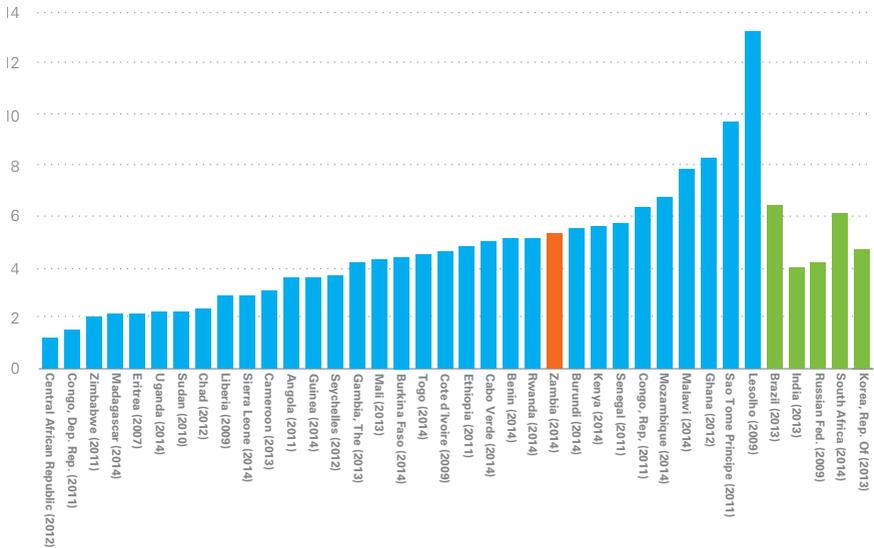
Introduction

The 2019 National Budget was approved by the National Assembly on 21st December 2018. The total National Budget stands at K86.8 billion, which is 28.9 percent of projected GDP. This budget comes at a time when the Government has undertaken austerity measures to decelerate the debt burden. Consequential to this, the education sector allocation has reduced from 16.1 per cent in 2018 to 15.3 per cent in 2019.

In terms of the proportion of GDP allocated to education, Zambia is in the upper ranks of African countries. In 2014 for instance, 5.2 per cent of GDP went to the education sector.



Chart 1:
Country Comparison for Education Expenditure Relative to GDP



Source: World Bank Education Statistics (EdStats), most recent years

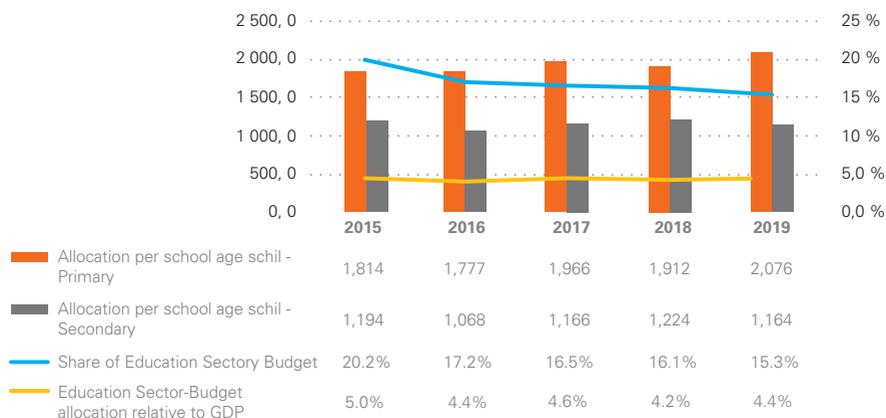
Education sector budget analysis

The provision of education in Zambia is spearheaded by two ministries: the Ministry of Higher Education covers higher (tertiary) education and the Ministry of General Education is responsible for policy formulation and implementation for the provision of early, primary and secondary education. A total of 76 per cent of the education sector budget has been appropriated to the Ministry of General Education, 12 per cent to the Ministry of Higher Education and 12 per cent for education sector infrastructure. The relative share of the 2019 education sector budget is at its lowest in the last five years with the highest level having been in 2016 at 20.2 per cent (education sector expenditure was 17 per cent against a budget of 22 per cent). In terms of per school-going age allocation (per capita); at primary education level the allocation has increased by 14 per cent from K1,814 in 2015 to K2,076 in 2019 and a decline of 3 per cent has been recorded at secondary education level. This means that the secondary education budget is not responding to pop-

ulation growth. This poses a significant risk to Zambia's economic ambitions as education is an important source of human capital formation generating technical skills and creating the manpower required for sustainable economic development.

The decreasing allocation to secondary education is further hampering the already low transition rates to, and participation in, secondary education especially for girls and other vulnerable groups like Children with Special Education Needs (CSEN) who are most marginalized.

Chart 2:
Evolution of Education Budget



Source: Constructed by UNICEF from Appropriation Act and budget speeches (2015-2019)

The allocation over the years has contributed to the attainment of universal primary education. However, the quality of education remains low: only 45 per cent of Grade 4 pupils have the required competency in literacy and only half have the required competency in numeracy. When international assessments were applied on Zambian children in public schools only 5 per cent and 2 per cent of 15-year-old students met minimum proficiency levels in reading and mathematics respectively¹. With this trend in learning outcomes, Zambia will likely fall short of meeting the target 4.1 of SDG Goal 4.

Further, completion rates at Grade 9 and Grade 12 remain at 72 per cent and 32 per cent respectively². This means not all children who start school get to finish primary, let alone secondary, education. Infrastructure gaps remain a huge challenge and the ratio of secondary schools to primary schools is 1 to 9. The overall learning outcomes for Zambian children indicate a learning crisis. Learners are leaving the education system without acquiring basic literacy and numeracy skills.

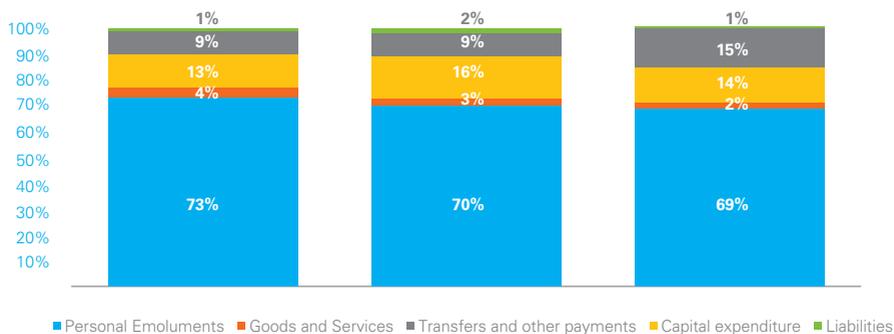
1 Program for International Student Assessment – PISA, 2017

2 2017 Education Statistical Bulletin

As can be seen in Chart 1 above, the budget allocation is skewed towards primary education. Per child allocation in primary is double that of secondary. The share of personal emoluments has been on the decline;

a four-percentage-point decrease has been recorded from 73 per cent in 2017 to 69 per cent in 2019. Primary education, however, has a significant share of its budget going to personal emoluments.

Chart 3:
Education sector budget by economic classification



Source: Constructed by UNICEF from Volume II Output based Annual Budget (2017,2018,2019)

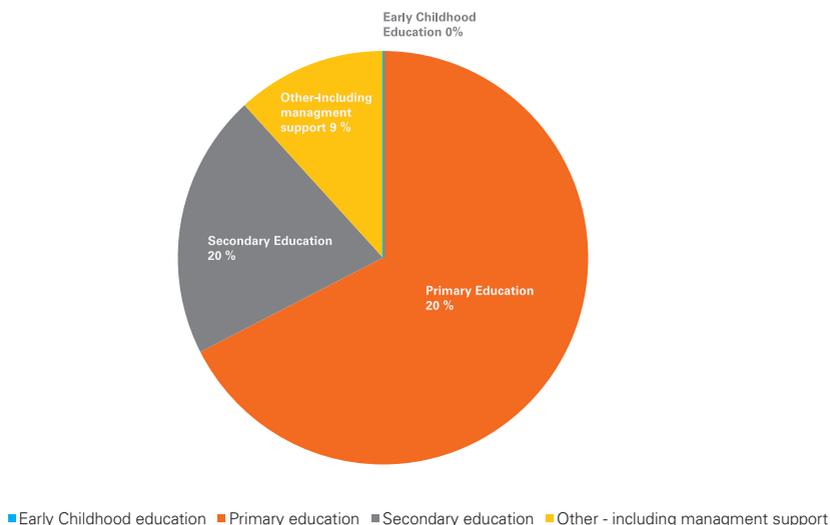
Sharing the General Education Budget

A significant share of the general education budget goes to personal emoluments and this has increased from 85 per cent in 2017 to 90 per cent in 2019. For primary education, the share of personal emoluments is even higher at 97 per cent, leaving little or nothing for other key ingredients of quality education. The budget for primary school grants has declined by 28 per cent in 2019 from the 2018 level while secondary school grants declined by 21 per cent. The high share of personal emoluments makes it impossible to have adequate investments in aspects that enhance quality education such as Teaching and Learning Materials (TLMs), Continuing Professional Development for Teachers and School Managers, access to Early Childhood Education (ECE) and secondary education.

In 2019, primary education accounts for two thirds (69 per cent) of the general education budget, while secondary education is second at 22 per cent and ECE has 0.13 per cent. The skewed distribution of public resources towards primary education has serious

implications for progression to secondary education and consequently to tertiary level. With the budget for education infrastructure on the decline in the last three years, this is unlikely to change. An alternative to bridging the shortage of secondary schools is to move to a low cost school design so as to have more classrooms for the same amount of allocation. Additionally, access to secondary school education could be expanded through alternative modes of education delivery such as technology-based rural schools, open learning centres, distance education etc. The consistent under resourcing of the ECE sector is worrying. This trend implies that children are enrolling in Grade 1 with no ECE experience resulting in low school attendance and performance. These learners are likely to repeat a grade, drop out of school, or be in constant need of remedial or special education. This state of affairs perpetuates inefficiencies in the education system.

Chart 4: 2019 General education budget by key sub-sectors



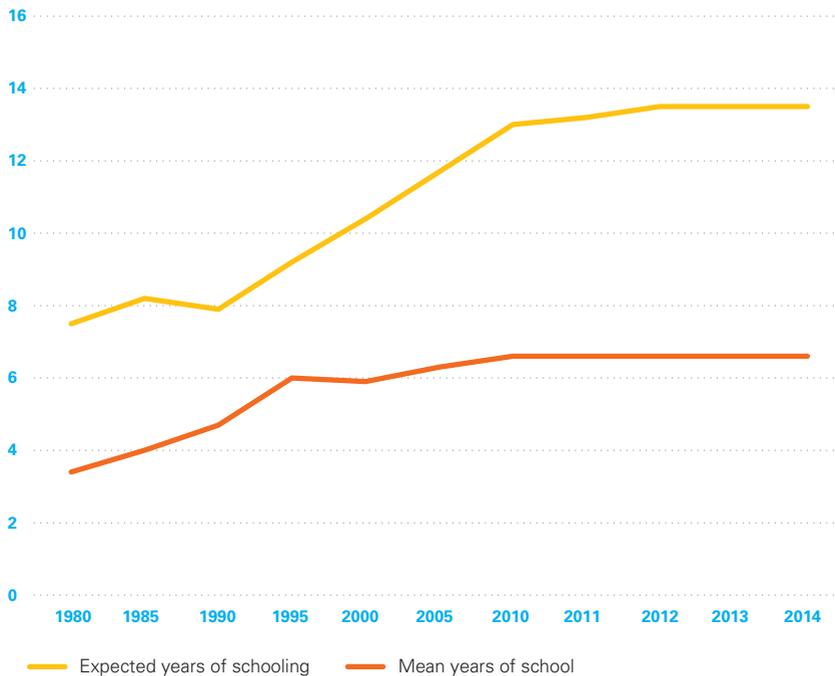
Source: Constructed by UNICEF from 2019 Volume II Output-based Annual Budget

How can budget allocation and execution improve education outcomes?

Zambia needs an educated population to support its economy. The Living Conditions Monitoring Survey shows that poverty is significantly higher in households whose head has lower education. The World Bank Human Capital Project indicates that children in Zambia can expect to complete 9.2 years of pre-primary, primary and secondary schooling by age 18 and that if the years of schooling are adjusted for quality learning, they are at

5.2. This signifies a learning gap of four years. The graph below shows that the mean years of schooling have remained static at 49 per cent of the desired level.

Chart 5:
Mean years of schooling against expected



Source: 2016 UNDP, Human Development Report

To reach the desired level of education of the population, the following need to be accelerated:

1. More resources are required to fund secondary school and early childhood education which have very limited access.

A solid base for human capital development will only be created if Zambia starts making significant investments in improving access and quality education throughout the entire chain. This can be achieved through the following:

- The scale-up of construction of low cost secondary schools, an initiative which has already commenced under the World Bank Zambia Education Enhancement Programme
- Explore alternative modes of secondary school education provision through e-learning, open learning centres, distance education or further still explore 'double shifting' without hampering quality standards.
- With the reduction in fiscal space, the Government firstly needs to explore areas where efficiencies could be gained with the available resources. One area that is a potential for greater efficiency gains is that of textbook procurement and distribution. The lack of adequate textbooks continues to be a huge obstacle in implementing the revised curriculum and improving learning outcomes at all levels of the education system. The Government needs to review the current textbook management system, particularly procurement and distribu-

tion. Furthermore, the Government needs to explore a more cost-effective way of providing learning materials - such as building the capacities of Provincial and District Resource Centres to develop and distribute low-cost textbooks/handouts to help improve learner book ratios.

- Explore a cross-subsidisation financing mechanism at secondary level where those who are able, pay the full cost plus premium to fund those who are not able. Through this mechanism, a proportion of boarding space in Government schools - i.e. 30 per cent of their space - should be for children from poor households, who should be subsidised at school level.

2. Improve human resource management

The education sector has staff country-wide, however, the distribution of staff favours urban schools in both numbers and experienced, qualified teachers. To reduce inequality through improved education outcomes in rural areas it is important that rural areas are not left for only new, inexperienced teachers.



United Nations Children's Fund

UN House

Alick Nkhata Road, Longacres

PO Box 33610

Lusaka

Zambia

Tel: (+260) 211 374 200

Fax: (+260) 211 253 389

Facebook: <https://www.facebook.com/unicefzambia>

Twitter: <https://twitter.com/unicefzambia>

Instagram: <https://www.instagram.com/unicefzambia>

Website: www.unicef.org/zambia