

A century of preparing educators: The evolution and trajectory of Teacher Education Policy in Zambia (1924-2024)

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Abstract

Teacher education stands at the critical intersection of national development, pedagogical quality, and structural governance. Utilizing a historical-policy framework grounded in historical institutionalism and path dependency, this article offers a critical longitudinal analysis of the evolution of teacher education policy in Zambia over a one-hundred-year trajectory (1924-2024). The study reviews pivotal educational landmarks, including the colonial 1925 *Memorandum on Native Education*, post-independence initiatives such as *Education for Development* (1977) and *Educating Our Future* (1996), and contemporary legislative frameworks up to the 2024 universal free education mandates. Methodologically, the study employs qualitative thematic content analysis of authoritative policy blueprints, triangulated with institutional statistics and secondary historical scholarship. The analysis identifies three distinct policy eras: colonial-era vocationalization under missionary and state duress, post-independence expansion and nationalization, and a modern era grappling with market deregulation and state-driven massification. The paper argues that while Zambia has successfully expanded institutional access and legalized professional standards through the Teaching Council of Zambia, contemporary policy remains bound by path-dependent structural constraints, particularly a persistent rural-urban digital and infrastructural divide. By exploring how early institutional tracks continue to shape 21st century educational reforms, this study provides critical insights for contemporary policymakers and educational administrators navigating the balance between quantitative expansion and qualitative standards in Sub-Saharan Africa.

Keywords: teacher education, policy evolution, Zambia, historical institutionalism, path dependency, professionalisation

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1. Introduction

The quality of an education system is fundamentally tethered to the caliber, preparation, and professional status of its teaching fraternity. Within the Sub-Saharan African context, the structures governing how teachers are trained, deployed, and regulated are rarely neutral; rather, they represent historical battlegrounds where colonial agendas, post-colonial nationalist ambitions, and contemporary global development mandates intersect. In Zambia, this institutional trajectory spans a definitive century. The year 1924 marked a critical structural rupture, wherein the British Colonial Office assumed direct administration of Northern Rhodesia from the British South Africa Company (BSAC), fundamentally shifting education from an unregulated missionary enterprise to a formal apparatus of state policy (Hambulo, Simuchimba & Matandiko, 2025; Hambulo, 2025). Over the subsequent ten decades, the mandate of the Zambian teacher has been repeatedly reimagined: initially conceived as an instrument for basic native literacy and moral subjugation (Hambulo, 2007; Carmody, 2004; Simuchimba, 2009), then re-engineered as a catalyst for post-independence nation-building (Mwanakatwe, 1968), and ultimately reframed within modern discourse as a professional agent navigating mass enrollment and digital transformation (Chiti & Phiri, 2023).

To fully comprehend the depth of this evolution, it is necessary to recognize that policy trajectories do not emerge in a vacuum. Instead, they exhibit traits of historical institutionalism, where early structural decisions create path-dependent mechanisms that lock in institutional habits and resource allocation patterns for generations (Pierson, 2000). Prior to the formalization of colonial rule in 1924, the territory's educational arena was a fractured mosaic of competing Christian denominations. Each mission society established its own embryonic training outposts, viewing the local teacher primarily as a frontline catechist whose primary function was evangelical conversion rather than pedagogical excellence (Snelson, 1974). The transition to direct British imperial control shattered this ad-hoc arrangement, establishing a centralized state bureaucracy that viewed the teacher through a utilitarian lens. This historical pivot initiated an enduring structural tension that has persisted through to 2024: the delicate balance between the immediate, quantitative demand for classroom instructors and the qualitative imperative of professional training standards.

While contemporary scholarship has frequently examined isolated periods of Zambian educational reform, such as the immediate impacts of universal free education or the logistics of mass teacher recruitment drives, there remains a critical lacuna in longitudinal policy analyses that trace the thematic and structural continuities across the full 1924-2024 trajectory. Much of the existing literature treats the colonial, post-colonial, and contemporary liberalized eras as disjointed historical segments. This fragmentation obscures the deep-seated continuities, such as the persistent geographical disparities in infrastructure between the urbanized Line of Rail and remote rural provinces, which trace their roots directly back to colonial-era economic planning. Understanding this complete trajectory is not merely an exercise in retrospective historiography; it is essential for contextualizing the persistent structural tensions regarding quality, equity, and governance that plague the contemporary Sub-Saharan educational landscape.

This article addresses this gap through a rigorous historical-policy analysis approach. By interrogating foundational policy blueprints, legislative frameworks, budgetary statements, and commission reports through the analytical lenses of historical institutionalism and path dependency, this study maps the evolution of teacher education in Zambia across distinct, overlapping epochs. In doing so, it illuminates how historical policy decisions continue to cast long shadows over modern efforts to cultivate a 21st century teaching force, offering a systematic perspective on how the past informs current challenges and future trajectories in Zambian education.

1.1 Theoretical Framework: Historical Institutionalism and Path Dependency

To move beyond a purely descriptive chronological narrative of Zambia’s teacher education policy, this study utilizes the analytical lens of historical institutionalism (HI) and the core concept of path dependency (Pierson, 2000; Mahoney, 2000). Historical institutionalism posits that policy choices made during crucial foundational moments termed critical junctures, establish structural trajectories that constrain future legislative and administrative possibilities. In the context of educational governance, institutions are not merely neutral instruments for functional output; they are carriers of historical legacy, embodying power relations, cultural biases, and resource distribution models that resist disruption. A central mechanism of this framework is path dependency, which operates on the principle of increasing returns. As a specific policy path is pursued, the relative benefits of maintaining that path increase over time due to high sunk costs, institutional learning, and the entrenchment of bureaucratic habits, making alteration progressively costlier. This study conceptualizes the formalization of direct British colonial administration in 1924 as a foundational critical juncture that established a path-dependent logic of skewed infrastructural allocation and segregated teacher roles. By applying this framework, the article argues that subsequent post-colonial expansions, including the contemporary New Dawn administration's mandates, are constantly negotiating or pushing against these deeply embedded structural "tracks." The analysis traces how early colonial decisions regarding teacher certifications and rural-urban resource distribution created self-reinforcing mechanisms that continue to shape 21st-century educational reform in Zambia.

2. Methodology

Research Design and Document Selection - This study is designed as a qualitative, longitudinal historical-policy analysis. It systematically traces the evolution of teacher education policy in Zambia across a one-hundred-year trajectory (1924-2024). Given the historical nature of this inquiry, the primary empirical foundation relies on textual data. To ensure a systematic and rigorous approach to document selection, a purposive sampling strategy was employed. Documents were selected based on three criteria:

- Authenticity and Authority: Official state publications, legislative acts, and gazetted national policies.
- Relevance: Direct bearing on the training, recruitment, qualification standardisation, or professional regulation of primary and secondary school teachers.
- Historical Proximity: Material originating within the specific policy eras under investigation.

The institutional and historical documents selected for analysis are mapped below across the designated period boundaries.

Policy Era / Boundaries	Key Document Types	Selected Primary Sources Analyzed
Colonial Foundation (1924-1964)	Imperial Memoranda, Commission Reports, Departmental Bulletins	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 1925 <i>Memorandum on Educational Policy in British Tropical Africa</i> • 1929 Jeanes School Operational Records • 1953 <i>Binns Report (African Education)</i>
Post-Independence Nationalisation (1964-1991)	Legislative Acts, National Philosophy Blueprints, Reform Papers	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>The Education Act of 1966</i> • <i>1977 Educational Reform: Education for Development</i> • UNIP Production Unit Circulars
Liberalisation & Professionalisation (1991-2010s)	National Education Policies, Statutory Regulatory Acts	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>1992 Focus on Learning</i> • <i>1996 Educating Our Future</i> • <i>The Teaching Profession Act No. 5 of 2013</i>
Contemporary Trajectory (2010s-2024)	Development Plans, National Budgets, Ministry Statistical Reviews	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>Eighth National Development Plan (8NDP) 2022-2026</i> • <i>2022-2024 National Budget Speeches</i> • <i>2023 Educational Statistical Bulletin</i>

The rationale for selecting these specific period boundaries rests on political and economic transformations that disrupted existing path-dependent cycles.

- 1924 represents the transition from corporate governance (BSAC) to state imperial administration.
- 1964 marks the transition to sovereign national governance.
- 1991 signifies the structural shift from a single-party command economy to a liberalized multi-party system.
- The 2010s-2024 window encapsulates the modern regulatory era and the introduction of universal free basic education under a new political dispensation.

Analytical Approach and Data Triangulation - The collected documents were subjected to qualitative thematic content analysis. The analysis followed a multi-stage coding process. First, documents were read chronologically to establish an initial timeline of policy intent. Second, textual segments were coded around recurring structural dilemmas: quantity versus quality, centralization versus deregulation, and manual/vocational versus academic/digital orientation. To enhance the validity of the findings and guard against subjective bias, data source triangulation was rigorously applied. The policy rhetoric contained in primary government blueprints was systematically cross-referenced against three secondary layers:

- ‘Quantitative indicators’ drawn from contemporary Ministry of Education statistical bulletins (e.g., teacher recruitment numbers, pupil-teacher ratios, institutional accreditation lists).
- ‘Archival data and historical synthesis’ from established secondary scholarship (e.g., Snelson, 1974; Mwanakatwe, 1968; Kelly, 1999).
- ‘Independent research reports’ published by regional academic bodies and civil society organizations.

By juxtaposing official policy pronouncements with actual statistical outcomes and historical critiques, the study identifies the structural gaps between policy formulation and practical implementation.

Methodological Limitations - While this methodology offers a robust macro-perspective of policy trends, it has distinct limitations that must be acknowledged. First, the study relies heavily on documentary sources, which inevitably reflect the ideological biases and administrative priorities of the ruling authorities that produced them—whether colonial administrators or post-colonial political regimes. Second, there is an uneven availability of colonial-era data; detailed records concerning early indigenous teacher-catechists are often fragmented or heavily filtered through a missionary paternalistic lens. Finally, historical-policy analysis is inherently interpretive. While triangulation minimizes subjective skewing, the reconstruction of past policy motives remains an exercise in critical historical reading rather than an active empirical measure of contemporary classroom practices. This paper evaluates policy intent, structure, and governance rather than micro-level pedagogical execution within individual classrooms.

3. The Colonial Foundation of Teacher Preparation (1924-1964)

Prior to 1924, formal teacher training in Northern Rhodesia was characterized by structural fragmentation and institutional laissez-faire. Left almost entirely to the discretion of competing Christian missionary societies, the preparation of educators was driven by an evangelical, rather than pedagogical, logic. Early "teachers" served primarily as native catechists designed to spread biblical literacy in local languages to facilitate conversion (Snelson, 1974). Because the British South Africa Company (BSAC) viewed the territory through a strictly extractive commercial lens, state funding for social infrastructure was non-existent. This ad-hoc arrangement, however, reached a critical juncture in 1924 when the British Colonial Office assumed direct administration of the protectorate. Heavily influenced by the transatlantic findings of the Phelps-Stokes Commission reports, the colonial state sought to centralize and formalize native education to serve imperial governance.

This historical pivot initiated a path-dependent policy trajectory that established the baseline structures of Zambian educational governance. The landmark 1925 memorandum, *Educational Policy in British Tropical Africa*, codified the "dual-control" system, bringing fragmented missionary schools under the financial, supervisory, and regulatory oversight of the newly formed Department of Native Education (Colonial Office, 1925). Through this mechanism, the state sought to standardize teacher preparation, recognizing that systematic schooling required a disciplined, predictable, and uniform indigenous teaching force.

The establishment of the government-run Jeanes School at Mazabuka in 1929 represented the operationalization of this early policy trajectory. The "Jeanes" philosophy, imported from the racially segregated context of the American South, focused on training itinerant teacher-supervisors who could improve rural community life through practical agriculture, rudimentary hygiene, and basic industrial skills. This policy direction explicitly locked in a differentiated, racially stratified curriculum. While European children within the territory received an academic education designed to preserve administrative dominance, African teacher preparation was strictly vocationalized and deliberately constrained. It was explicitly adapted to keep the indigenous population anchored to rural agrarian economies, preventing the rise of an urbanized, politically conscious African intelligentsia that might challenge imperial hegemony (Kelly, 1999).

As the colonial political economy shifted toward industrial copper extraction in the 1930s and 1940s, the rapid concentration of populations in mining townships exposed the structural limitations of this rural agrarian training model. The Copperbelt's booming urban economy demanded a more academically competent cadre of educators. The 1953 *Report on African Education* (the Binns Report) highlighted the acute shortage of qualified African teachers and urged the immediate consolidation of small, inefficient missionary training centers into larger, state-funded institutions (Colonial Office, 1953). Consequently, the late colonial period witnessed the rise of prominent, consolidated teacher training centers such as Chalimbana and Mufulira, which offered structured certification tracks, including the Primary Teachers' Lower (PTL) and Primary Teachers' Higher (PTH) certificates.

Despite these structural expansions, teacher education policy remained constrained by institutionalized racial segregation and a patriarchal bias that heavily favored male candidates. On the eve of independence in 1964, the nation inherited a deeply lopsided system characterized by a massive deficit of highly qualified local educators, a total absence of a domestic university-level teacher training pipeline, and an overwhelming, fiscally draining reliance on expatriate personnel (Mwanakatwe, 1968). This structural imbalance formed the historical "track" that the post-independence state would spend decades attempting to dismantle.

4. Post-Independence Expansion and Nationalisation (1964-1991)

The transition to political sovereignty on 24 October 1964 shattered the colonial political order but left its underlying institutional architecture intact. The newly formed United National Independence Party (UNIP) government, led by Dr. Kenneth Kaunda, inherited a profound human resource crisis generated by decades of colonial path dependency; the minimalist colonial policy had left the country with fewer than one hundred university graduates and a severe deficit of professionally certified local teachers (Mwanakatwe, 1968). To break the dependency on expensive, ideologically misaligned expatriate personnel, the state embarked on an aggressive policy of rapid educational expansion. The *Education Act of 1966* served as the primary legislative vehicle to democratize access, dismantle racially segregated school boards, and unify teacher salary structures to enhance the status of the profession (Government of Zambia, 1966).

This sudden boom in school enrollments placed immense structural strain on existing teacher training institutions, forcing post-independence policy into a persistent crisis of quantity. The state rapidly established new primary teacher training colleges in Kasama, Mansa, and Solwezi to ensure a more equitable geopolitical distribution of facilities. Concurrently, the government collaborated with the newly founded University of Zambia (UNZA) in 1966 to initiate degree-level secondary teacher preparation through the School of Education (Kelly, 1999). However, because the social demand for education consistently outpaced the institutional supply of

graduates, the Ministry of Education was forced to deploy an overwhelming number of untrained monitors into rural classrooms. To remediate this quality deficit, emergency policy interventions were staged, including the expansion of the National In-Service Teachers' College (NISTCOL) at Chalimbana to upgrade underqualified staff through distance-learning modules (Carmody, 2004).

By the mid-1970s, global macroeconomic shocks which were precipitated by the collapse of international copper prices following the 1973 oil crisis severely constrained national budget allocations for public infrastructure. This economic downturn coincided with a growing ideological conviction within UNIP that the inherited Western, capitalist model of schooling was generating an elitist mentality unsuited to Zambia's agrarian realities. The culmination of this intense debate was the publication of the seminal 1977 policy document, *Educational Reform: Education for Development* (Ministry of Education, 1977).

Rooted in the national philosophy of *Zambian Humanism*, the 1977 reforms attempted a radical break from inherited colonial paths by bridging the chasm between academic learning and productive manual work. For teacher education, the policy mandated a profound curriculum reorientation. Teacher training colleges were directly instructed to integrate "Production Units" which were predominantly agricultural cooperatives and technical workshops into their core pedagogical frameworks. The policy dictated that a teacher was no longer merely an academic instructor, but an ideological vanguard responsible for fostering self-reliance and community development (Lungwangwa, 1989). Trainee teachers were subsequently assessed not only on lesson delivery but also on their leadership within these college production units.

Despite these lofty egalitarian ambitions, the deepening macroeconomic crises of the 1980s, combined with strict IMF-imposed Structural Adjustment Programmes (SAPs) and austerity measures, choked capital funding. The state could no longer afford to sustain college production units, and the real value of teacher salaries plummeted. By the close of the Second Republic in 1991, the teacher education sector was characterized by severely dilapidated college infrastructure, acute shortages of learning materials, and deteriorating real wages that profoundly undermined teacher morale (Kelly, 1999). The failure to sustain these reforms demonstrated how macroeconomic dependencies could paralyze state efforts to break out of historical institutional tracks.

5. Liberalisation, Professionalisation, and Regulation (1991-2010s)

The transition to multi-party democracy in 1991 under the Movement for Multi-party Democracy (MMD) catalyzed a profound paradigm shift from a state-controlled command economy to a liberalized, market-oriented system. This political-economic realignment fundamentally reshaped teacher education policy, shifting the state's role from that of sole provider to a regulator operating within a highly competitive educational marketplace. This new policy direction was articulated sequentially through two landmark national strategies: *Focus on Learning* (Ministry of Education, 1992) and the comprehensive blueprint, *Educating Our Future: National Policy on Education* (Ministry of Education, 1996).

While *Focus on Learning* (1992) prioritized the rehabilitation of an education system hollowed out by a decade of severe economic decline, *Educating Our Future* (1996) provided the definitive policy framework for modern teacher professionalisation. The 1996 policy explicitly recognized that the historical proliferation of uncoordinated certificates and localized diplomas had fragmented the profession, driving down quality and status. To resolve this, the document mandated the systematic upgrading of teacher qualifications. A major interim intervention during this transition was the introduction of the Zambia Teacher Education Course (ZATEC) model in the late 1990s, which combined one year of intensive college-based study with one year of school-based placement to rapidly address acute teacher shortages. While ZATEC successfully flooded classrooms with teachers, concerns over compressed training quality eventually led policymakers to phase out lower-level certificates entirely in favor of a standardized three-year diploma model (Ministry of Education, 1996).

Crucially, the deregulation of higher education under the wider market liberalization agenda triggered an unprecedented proliferation of private teacher training institutions across Zambia. While this rapid expansion

effectively absorbed the burgeoning social demand for higher education, it simultaneously created a highly fragmented and volatile regulatory environment. Serious concerns escalated within civil society and academic circles regarding the variable quality of physical infrastructure, non-standardized curricula, and questionable admission thresholds across both public and newly established private colleges (Namafe, 2005). The state responded to this quality crisis by progressively upgrading the status of its premier public institutions to act as benchmarks of excellence. For instance, Kwame Nkrumah Teacher Training College and Mukuba Teacher Training College were transformed into full public universities dedicated specifically to degree-level teacher preparation. However, this upgrading process introduced its own structural challenges, as these institutions initially struggled to retrain their existing lecturing staff from college tutors to university lecturers holding post-graduate doctoral qualifications.

The climax of this push for systemic professionalisation, accountability, and quality assurance was the enactment of the *Teaching Profession Act No. 5 of 2013* (Government of Zambia, 2013). This landmark piece of legislation fundamentally altered the governance of the sector by establishing the Teaching Council of Zambia (TCZ). For the first time in the nation's history, teaching was legally codified as an autonomous, self-regulating profession on par with older professions such as medicine or law. The Act legally empowered the TCZ to register and license all practicing teachers, accredit teacher training programmes across both public and private sectors, and strictly enforce a code of ethics and professional conduct standards (Government of Zambia, 2013).

By establishing strict, legally enforceable minimum standards, this policy intervention successfully curtailed the unregulated proliferation of private colleges. It formalised a rigorous regulatory framework that brought teacher governance in Zambia into direct alignment with regional Southern African Development Community (SADC) frameworks. Yet, as the subsequent era would demonstrate, this regulatory framework would soon face unprecedented stress when confronted with a new wave of state-mandated educational massification.

6. The Contemporary Trajectory (2010s-2024): Massification, Quality, and Digital Transformation

The contemporary era of Zambian teacher education policy represents an intense convergence of demographic expansion, state-driven human resource stabilization, and emergent regulatory friction. While the preceding decades established the legal parameters for professional autonomy through the Teaching Profession Act No. 5 of 2013, the period leading up to 2024 tested the structural resilience of these regulatory mechanisms. This section provides a critical, data-driven analysis of how contemporary policies have navigated the tension between rapid enrollment expansion, driven by the implementation of universal free education, and the structural preservation of pedagogical quality.

6.1 The Paradox of Massification: Universal Free Education and Teacher Recruitment Dynamics

The election of the New Dawn administration in August 2021 altered the fiscal and operational parameters of educational delivery in Zambia. By completely abolishing user fees from early childhood education through secondary level, the *Upgraded Free Education Policy (2023)* effectively dismantled long-standing financial barriers to access that had persisted since the structural adjustment era of the 1980s and 1990s. However, this sudden macro-policy shift triggered a profound structural challenge: an immediate, exponential expansion in student enrollment that threatened to overwhelm existing institutional capacities. To mitigate the resultant escalation in pupil-teacher ratios, the state initiated an unprecedented human resource expansion project.

Zambian Teacher Recruitment Timeline (2022, 2023, and 2024)

Year of Teacher Recruitment	Number of Teachers Recruited by Government
2022	30,495 Teachers (Historic baseline injection)
2023	4,500 Additional Teachers (Targeted expansion)
2024	4,200 Additional Teachers (Systemic stabilization)

While this massive fiscal deployment successfully absorbed a significant historical backlog of unemployed, qualified diploma and degree holders, a critical historical-policy analysis reveals a distinct policy paradox. According to the *UNICEF Zambia 2025 Education Budget Brief*, the national average pupil-teacher ratio stood at 1:60 in 2022. Despite the historic injection of over 39,000 educators by 2024, the national average pupil-teacher ratio only improved to approximately 1:51. This statistical reality demonstrates the systemic friction inherent in massification; the rate of student enrollment expansion consistently outpaced the state's fiscal capacity to expand the teaching workforce. Furthermore, as noted by Ministry of Education planning data, closing the systemic gap entirely would require an additional 30,000 instructors to reach optimal baseline classroom dynamics. This reveals a persistent structural path dependency: the political imperative to democratize access continually outstrips the infrastructural and fiscal realities of the state.

6.2 *Regulatory Tension and Quality Assurance: The Role of the Teaching Council of Zambia*

The rapid influx of tens of thousands of newly deployed educators threw the structural relationship between the Ministry of Education and the Teaching Council of Zambia (TCZ) into sharp relief. Under Section 35 of the Teaching Profession Act of 2013, the TCZ is legally mandated to serve as the autonomous gatekeeper of professional entry standards, executing independent program accreditations and teacher licensing. However, the contemporary trajectory exposed an operational tension between the state's urgent political necessity for rapid deployment and the council's regulatory mandate for quality control. The TCZ responded by formalizing strict compliance protocols for the recruitment process, mandating that all applicants possess verified registration certificates and certified credentials from recognized public or private higher education institutions. This intervention exposed deep structural vulnerabilities within the expanded private teacher training market:

- **Credential Discrepancies:** Audits revealed localized variations in the quality of pre-service training, with several smaller private commercial colleges operating without standardized pedagogical infrastructure or adequate science laboratories.
- **Curriculum Fragmentation:** Despite the formalization of the three-year diploma minimum standard, the rapid growth of private provider enrollment created a volatile training environment where localized curricula sometimes diverged from national standards.

To counteract these quality deficits without halting recruitment momentum, policy shifted toward field-based stabilization. The *Eighth National Development Plan (8NDP) 2022-2026* prioritized the decentralization of Continuing Professional Development (CPD) frameworks. Rather than relying solely on pre-service institutional screening, the Ministry of Education and the TCZ expanded school-based mentoring networks and localized peer-training clusters to upskill newly deployed teachers directly within their field placements. This strategy represents a pragmatic policy compromise: treating professional quality assurance not as a static pre-entry filter, but as a continuous, field-based process.

6.3 *The Digital Divide and Curriculum Overhaul*

The contemporary policy trajectory was further complicated by the inescapable mandate of digital transformation, an agenda accelerated by the structural disruptions of the COVID-19 pandemic. The 8NDP explicitly positioned information and communications technology (ICT) integration as a foundational pillar for macroeconomic transformation. For teacher education, this necessitated an ambitious attempt to overhaul traditional pre-service curricula. Historically, ICT training within Zambian colleges of education was treated as a peripheral elective, heavily constrained by a lack of physical hardware and treated as a distinct technical skill rather than an integrated pedagogical modality. Modern policy guidelines leading up to 2024 sought to reposition digital competencies into mainstream teacher preparation. This shift moved the focus from basic computer literacy to modern pedagogical integration, training educators to:

- Manage hybrid learning environments,

- Deploy open educational resources (OERs),
- Utilize digital assessment tracking mechanisms.

Despite these progressive framework alignments, the structural legacy of uneven colonial-era economic planning continues to exert a powerful path-dependent influence. The implementation of digital teacher education policy remains profoundly bifurcated by a persistent rural-urban digital divide. While premier urban training institutions along the Line of Rail integrated digital management systems and hybrid training modules, remote rural training outposts and community schools remained severely constrained by a lack of basic electrification and broadband deficits. Consequently, contemporary teacher education policy in Zambia operates on dual, contradictory tracks: an urban tier advancing toward 21st century digital competencies, and a rural tier structurally bound to traditional, analog pedagogical modalities due to unresolved historical inequities in capital resource allocation.

6.4 Practical Educational Implications and Stakeholder Significance

While this study utilizes a macro-level historical lens, the path-dependent policy trajectories identified carry profound, immediate practical implications for the day-to-day operations of contemporary Zambian education. Moving beyond theoretical governance, the significance of these findings manifests directly across three critical operational levels: practitioners, students, and schools.

Implications for Practitioners and Teachers - For classroom teachers and teacher educators, this analysis exposes the structural origins of the dual-track system, that is, analog versus digital, within which they are forced to operate. Pragmatically, this implies that professional development frameworks cannot adopt a one-size-fits-all model.

- *Targeted CPD Delivery*: Practitioners in resource-constrained rural outposts must be empowered with adaptive, offline pedagogical toolkits (such as localized open educational resources) rather than being evaluated on digital competencies they cannot structurally deploy.
- *Reframing Teacher Identity*: Furthermore, understanding that the contemporary push for accountability via the Teaching Council of Zambia (TCZ) is part of a century-long professionalisation drive elevates teacher agency. It shifts the practitioner's self-perception from an instrument of state massification to an autonomous, legally codified professional.

Significance for Students - The historical tension between rapid quantitative enrollment expansion and qualitative standardisation directly shapes the student experience.

- *Mitigating Learning Poverty*: For students, particularly those in bloated post-2021 classrooms, state-driven massification without corresponding infrastructural expansion manifests as increased pupil-teacher ratios and diluted individualised attention.
- *Equity in the Digital Era*: By highlighting how colonial-era geographical disparities persist in the modern digital divide, this study advocates directly for the student's right to equitable resource allocation. True educational equity for the Zambian student requires that universal free access is matched by a localized curriculum that prepares both rural and urban learners equally for a digital economy, preventing the further entrenchment of a multi-tiered socio-economic hierarchy.

Structural Transformations for Schools and Administrators - For institutional managers, school heads, and educational administrators, the findings underscore the necessity of decentralized operational resilience.

- *School-Based Mentoring Networks*: Because central fiscal allocations continually lag behind the classroom realities of universal enrollment, school administrators must actively champion the localized, field-based Continuing Professional Development (CPD) clusters highlighted in Section 6.2.

- *Strategic Resource Autonomy*: Rather than waiting for top-down infrastructural overhauls to bridge the technological divide, schools must institutionalize internal mentoring networks where senior teachers scaffold newly recruited, inexperienced educators. This shifts the school from a passive recipient of volatile macro-policy into an active, self-stabilizing site of quality assurance.

7. Conclusion and Future Trajectories

Tracing the trajectory of teacher education policy in Zambia from 1924 to 2024 reveals a century-long, cyclical struggle to define the professional identity, structural governance, and national mandate of the educator. Over these ten decades, the structural purpose of teacher preparation has evolved dramatically: from the restrictive, racially segregated vocational models of the colonial Department of Native Education, through the ideologically driven, production-oriented nationalisation frameworks of the Second Republic, to the liberalised, heavily regulated, and digitally focused landscape of the 21st century. Each era has layer by layer constructed the modern Zambian teaching fraternity, leaving behind an institutional legacy that is both structurally complex and deeply resilient. The major finding of this longitudinal analysis is that while Zambia has achieved remarkable success in expanding institutional access, domesticating the teacher curriculum, and legalising professional governance via the Teaching Council of Zambia, the historical tension between expanding access and maintaining quality remains an unresolved policy cycle. As the nation moves past the 2024 milestone, contemporary policy must explicitly reconcile these structural contradictions rather than treating them as temporary bureaucratic challenges. Future policy trajectories must move beyond the mechanical recruitment of teachers to focus intensely on the long-term sustainability of their preparation. This demands equitable infrastructure funding to bridge the rural-urban technological divide, the continuous refinement of pre-service curricula to align with global digital competencies, and the defense of rigorous accreditation thresholds against market-driven dilution. Ultimately, the past century demonstrates that the preparation of teachers is not merely a bureaucratic task, but a vital exercise in national sovereignty, defining the intellectual, ethical, and developmental limits of the Zambian state.

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