



The Higher Education Policy in Zambia: An Analysis

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ABSTRACT

After a long struggle in educational reforms, HE in Zambia is undergoing changes mainly because of the rapid expansion in 2017. Higher education is presently undergoing a succession of crises due to the government subventions dropping in real terms as a result of a slowdown in economic growth, while student enrolment is expanding incredibly quickly as a result of increased demand for tertiary education. Universities are critical to the development of any nation. In underdeveloped nations, they are frequently the only institutions capable of generating highly trained labor, transferring technology, and creating new knowledge. With rising globalization, it is logical that when such institutions are under decline or stagnation, research and international attention take center stage. This study used the hexagon model of policy analysis to examine the fit and feasibility of the Zambian higher education policy. This paper reviews the higher education policy in Zambia, with a particular focus on the present-day global needs of Higher education and the current needs of both the society and individuals, along with the extended higher education financing. Additionally, prior to reaching conclusions, this research examines the issues influencing access to and the quality of higher education. As resources become scarce, political interference in the resource allocation process becomes more common. Using the hexagon model of policy analysis, this study contends that the adoption of a clear method for allocating resources within a supportive higher education policy framework is necessary. It proposes, as a way forward, that the ultimate objective of enhancing efficiency and effectiveness in African higher education resides in a transparent resource allocation system that rewards success, despite substantial public funding. There is need to increase public funding, treat the business sector as a partner, strengthen industry-academia contact, and encourage research.

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1. Introduction

Higher education allows people to consider the critical social, economic, cultural, moral, and spiritual concerns humanity faces. It aids in the development of the country by disseminating specialized information and skills. Being at the top of the educational pyramid has a significant impact on the number of people that graduate (Bogue, & Kimberely, 2003.; Shattock, M., 2012; Brown & Carasso, 2013 Callender & Scott, 2013; Sutin & James 2016).

Zambia does not have a long history of formal education, as formal schooling began with the establishment of the University of Zambia in 1966. In fact, this is a public university with limited capacity and yet as the population of Zambia kept growing to over 18 million currently, there is and will be a continued desire for expanded higher education access. Public institutions have limited resources that can accommodate certain numbers. This is where private higher education comes in handy. As far as higher education in Zambia is concerned, the liberalization of the higher education

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sector has allowed private higher learning institutions to start in the country. The number of private higher learning institutions currently stands slightly above 32 and is regulated by the Higher Education Authority of Zambia (HEA). These are the ones recognized by the Ministry of Higher Education and the Higher Educational Authority. The first and the oldest private university in Zambia is Cavendish University. There is always the need for higher education policy under which the higher education institutions are running for their operation. Hence, there seems to be a weakness in periodic reforms and revisions on it. In addition, the need assessment of contemporary society and the students through the Policy is a crucial step for higher education development.

In this background, this study has been carried out to analyze the higher education policy of Zambia so that the weaknesses, problems, and challenges of the Policy can be explored, and the results of the research could be helpful for the formation of a better higher educational policy in the future.

1.1. Zambia Policy Context

Zambia is a landlocked nation with a total surface area of 752,614 square kilometers. Situated on a high plateau in Southern Africa, it takes its name from the Zambezi River. In the last decade, Zambia has experienced strong economic growth over the past decade, following DR Congo, as Africa's second-largest copper producer. Zambia is estimating to increase the population of over 18 million people (according to the 2010 population and household censuses) by 2050 and is one of the world's most rapidly growing communities. The 2010 census indicates that 45.4% of the population was under the age of 15 years (CSO 2017). Further, Zambia has been divided into ten provinces, primarily urban, with Lusaka and Copperbelt, while the rest are predominantly rural (CSO 2017). The provinces are further divided into 74 districts (CSO 2017). Furthermore, since 1991 Zambia has been a multi-party democracy and, since it became independent in 1964, has maintained relative peace. According to the 2010 Zambia Census of Population and Housing (CSO, 2017), there were then 18,092,666 people in Zambia. The highest number of people in Lusaka Province was 2,191,225, followed by the Copperbelt Province, with a total of 1,973,313, making it the country's two most populated regions (CSO 2017).

Table 1. Zambia Educational System

Education	School/Level	Grades	Age	Years
Primary	Basic School	1-7	7-14	7
Middle	Junior Secondary	8-9	14-16	2
Secondary	Senior Secondary	10-12	16-19	3
Vocational	Vocational			1-3
Tertiary	Bachelor			4-5
Tertiary	Master			1-2
Tertiary	Doctorate (Ph.D.)			3

Ministry of higher education in Zambia (2019b)

In Zambia, higher education comprises all post-secondary education, training, and research at institutions such as universities, Technical Education, Vocational and Entrepreneurship Training (TEVET) institutions, and colleges. It also includes structured learning activities undertaken in a workplace leading to a recognized qualification. This system provides opportunities for learning either through the academic or skills pathway.

The academic pathway consists of universities, colleges of education, and other similar institutions offering programs leading to qualifications from Level 6 (Diploma) to Level 10 (Doctorate) on the Zambia Qualifications Framework (ZQF). Conversely, the skills training pathway consists of trades training institutions and colleges offering programs ranging from Level 3 Certificate (Trade Test) to Level 6 (Diploma).

The Zambian education system shows that the transition rate from primary through secondary to tertiary education is very low. It is estimated that only 12% of Secondary school leavers access university education. Currently, the skills development subsector, TEVET, represents an alternative

stream to the academic pathway offered by university education and other colleges. There is a large pool of youths who are not absorbed into university education and present a reservoir of candidates for the TEVET system.

Higher Education in Zambia has faced several challenges that hinder it from adequately developing human capital with the requisite skills necessary for the development of a knowledge economy that fosters sustainable development. As such, there is a need for an efficient and well-coordinated higher education system to ensure that it creates a skilled domestic workforce necessary to drive economic transformation. This situation analysis identifies the challenges and their underlying causes, which include limitations of existing legal, institutional, and administrative frameworks: quality and relevance; access and participation; equity and inclusiveness; as well as efficiency and effectiveness.

1.2. Zambia Education Policy

In 1996, the Government of the Republic of Zambia adopted a National Education Policy titled *Educating Our Future*. This Policy, together with the TEVET Policy of 1998, guided the education and skills development sector. These two policies provided measures that guided interventions at primary, secondary, and tertiary levels and interventions in skills development.

Furthermore, in 2006, the Government launched the national Vision 2030, whose aspiration was to make Zambia a prosperous middle-income nation by 2030. The country also developed the Sixth National Development Plan (SNDP), which was recast in 2011 to develop the Revised Sixth National Development Plan (R-SNDP). The vision and the plan promulgated the aspirations of the country and highlighted education as the central stage for development. This was done through the recognition of human capital development as the key driver of the development process for the country.

In 2017, the Government developed the Seventh National Development Plan (7NDP), which had five pillars that would lead to development outcomes intended to improve the livelihood of Zambians and contribute to economic and social development. These pillars are;

- Economic diversification and job creation;
- Poverty and vulnerability reduction;
- Reducing development inequalities;
- Enhancing human capital development;
- Creating a good governance environment for a diversified economy.

While education and skills play a key role in all the development outcomes above, the higher education policy particularly focuses on Development Pillar Number 4 on "Enhancing Human Capital Development." The realization of this development outcome will be through a combined effort by various cluster members and key stakeholders. This policy will, therefore, contribute to the attainment of the national plan through education and skills development, and this will be attained through an integrated effort with all stakeholders

The Government aspires to deliver education in a seamless process for the learner from inception (Early Childhood Education) to tertiary level (Technical Education, Vocational, And Entrepreneurship Training (TEVET), teacher education, and university education) through various modes of delivery. The Policy, therefore, addresses the key factors that have affected higher education and skills training in the last decade. It also analyses the performance of the sector and outlines the policy objectives and measures that will guide higher education and skills training going forward.

Above all, Zambia's educational direction cannot go any other way than learning from its own experiences and gaining from what is happening around the world regarding the establishment of new universities and developing higher education. Zambia should follow a standard procedure, making a clear policy on higher education and promoting strict adherence to the policy. Then, the country should develop strategic planning for the development of higher education by answering the "what," "why," and "how" questions of higher education (Bogue et al., 2003).

1.3. The Legal and Institutional Framework

Zambia runs a fragmented Higher Education system that lacks coordination mechanisms. While on one hand Government, through the Ministry of Higher Education, provides policy direction, different line Ministries (General Education, Justice, Agriculture; Finance; Tourism; and Health) and Cabinet Office, on the other hand, provide Policy and legal oversight to institutions of learning in specialized areas such as education, law, agriculture, accounts, tourism health, and public administration. The laws governing higher education are covered under the following pieces of Legislation:

Table 2. Legal and Institutional Framework

Category	Year
Higher Education Act No. 4	2013
Zambia Qualifications Authority Act No. 13	2011
Technical Education, Vocational and Entrepreneurship Training Act No. 13	1998
National Institute for Public Administrators (NIPA) Act No. 15	1998
Teaching Professional Act No. 5	2013
Zambia Institute of Advanced Legal Education (ZIALE) Act No 9	2011
Tourism and Hospitality Act No 13	2015

Higher Education Act No. 4 of 2013; Zambia Qualifications Authority Act No. 13 of 2011; Technical Education, Vocational and Entrepreneurship Training Act No. 13 of 1998; National Institute for Public Administrators (NIPA) Act No. 15 of 1998; Teaching Professional Act No. 5 of 2013; Zambia Institute of Advanced Legal Education (ZIALE) Act No 9 of 2011; The Education Act No. 23 of 2011) and among others.

1.3.1. Administrative Framework

At the administrative level, there exist overlapping responsibilities among different regulatory and quality assurance institutions dealing with the higher education system. The definition of responsibilities is vital to avoid the gaps, conflicts of interest, duplication of regulatory activities, increased bureaucracy, fragmentation of efforts, and inefficiency in systems and functions. There is, therefore, a very strong need for better coordination and separation of mandates for regulatory authorities that have overlapping jurisdictions. The system requires an integrated, multi-sectoral, and multi-disciplinary approach, decentralized decision-making bodies, and the participation of different stakeholders, including private higher learning institutions.

Further, the Zambian qualifications landscape has for many years been uncoordinated as many players have been awarded qualifications using varying standards not easily comparable within Zambia, in the region, and internationally. Recognition of Zambian qualifications internationally has been negatively affected as many graduates from Zambia have been subjected to bridging examinations even when the qualification they possessed was of more superior quality.

In order to mitigate these challenges, the Government established the Higher Education Authority (HEA) to register higher education institutions and accredit learning programs and Zambia Qualifications Authority (ZAQA) to register, accredit and validate qualifications. The Authorities, however, have not been able to fully carry out their mandate mainly due to inadequate human resources, financial challenges, and limitations in the respective legal frameworks.

1.3.2. Financing of Higher Education

Government financing of higher education has increased over the years. The Government has introduced a new financing strategy to improve operational efficiency in public institutions. Currently, funding to public Higher Education Institutions is through a combination of direct government funding and user fees. Financing is also ideally supposed to be sourced through research and consultancy. Public Higher Education Institutions, however, have depended on direct Government funding. In addition, revenue from research and consultancy has remained low. This is

mainly due to low investments in these two areas as well as inadequate accountability mechanisms, especially for resources earned through consultancies and other internally generated interventions.

Given the limited availability of public resources and the legitimate competing demands of other sectors of the economy, it is clear that government budgetary allocations alone will not be sufficient to ensure quality higher education. This has been as a result of a lack of sufficient private sector participation in the financing of university education.

This funding challenge has affected Research, Innovation, and Development in higher learning institutions. This constraint has also contributed to poor quality in teaching and training, low research output, and uncoordinated consultancy and community services, which are core functions of higher education institutions.

1.3.3. Discipline, Human dignity, and Ethics

It has increasingly become clear that the national tenets of Zambia as a Christian nation are being compromised through adopted behaviors, moral debasement, and lack of guidance, especially in the youth. The higher education and skills sector play a major role in providing skills to develop members of society that can contribute to national development. However, more should be done to ensure that graduates are not only equipped with the knowledge and skills necessary for work but also with the ethics and moral standing to ensure patriotism, human dignity, and discipline. The higher education system currently is characterized by student riots, lecturer unrest, and confrontational and sometimes violent interactions as opposed to peaceful dialogue (Ministry of Education ,2019).

In addition, the Higher Education Act No. 4 of 2013 provides for the establishment of a tribunal to investigate and consider disciplinary cases of various categories of staff in Higher Education Institutions, and according to the Act, all supervising officers have to refer disciplinary matters to the tribunal. This has provided challenges in discipline, as there are delays in imparting discipline and also takes away the authority of supervising officers over their direct reports. This has resulted in gross indiscipline and lawlessness in the institutions of higher learning.

There is a need, therefore, to build frameworks that will support the promotion of national identity patriotism, ethical conduct, human rights, dialogue, entrepreneurial, and leadership skills. This will help to not only improve discipline but also develop well-rounded graduates that will ably contribute to the national development process.

In this background, this study has been carried out to analyze the higher education policy of Zambia so that the weaknesses, problems, and challenges of the Policy can be explored, and the results of the research could be helpful for the formation of a better policy in the coming days.

2. Methodology

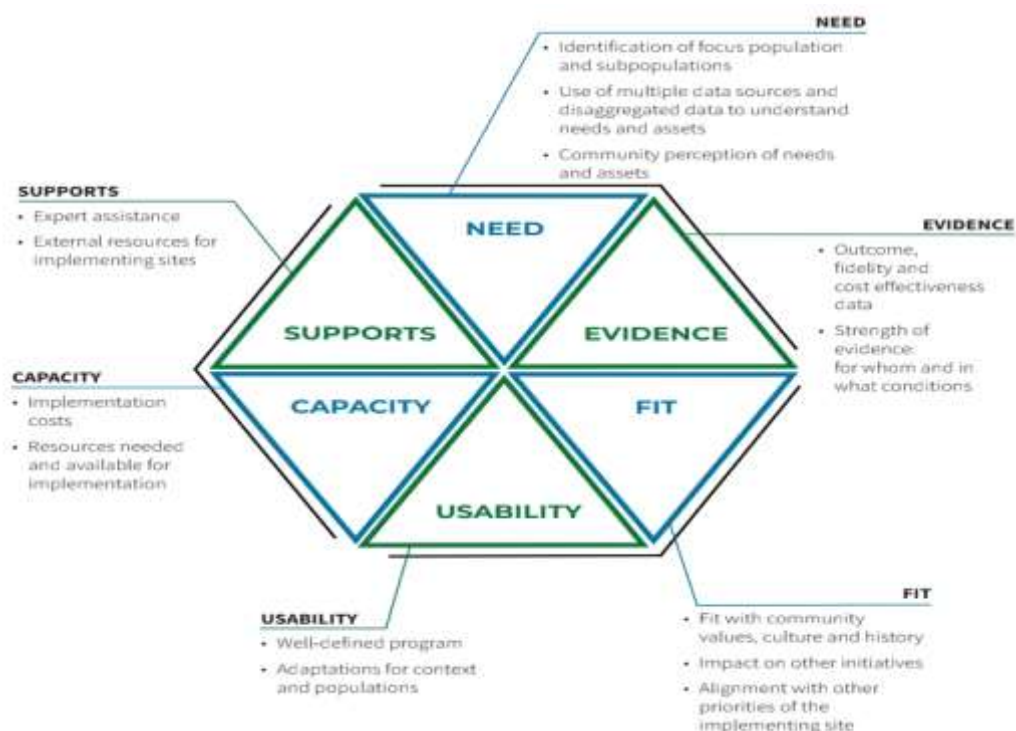
Program indicators (Metz & Louison,2018) analyze the extent to which new or existing programs or techniques that will be implemented provide evidence, implementation supports, and usefulness in a range of specialties.

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According to Metz and Louison (2018), implementing site indicators analyze how much a new or current initiative or practice matches with the implementing site in the following domains: public need, fit, and capacity. The assessment offers suggested criteria and requirements for a strong fit, fit, and capacity for the identified program or practice.

Each programme indicator is reinforced by an implementing site indicator, which assesses linked constructions. Assessment of a program for example, must be done in light of an implementing site only examining one of these pairs would provide a limited understanding of fit and feasibility. The

program and implementation site indicators in the discussion guide are rotated to guarantee a full examination.



Source: Metz & Louison, (2018). Hexagon policy analysis model

2.1. Objectives of the Study

The general objective of the study is to analyze the Higher Education Policy of Zambia. Specifically, the objectives of the study are as below:

- i) To analyze the Higher Education Policy of Zambia in line with:
 - a) Addressing the need, problems, and challenges of higher education in Zambia,
 - b) The innovation in higher education in Zambia
 - c) Developing higher education institutions of Zambia in a new (public, private, and cooperative model) three-pillar Policy of education funding
- ii) To suggest appropriate recommendations for further strengthening it.

2.2. Sources of Data

The study had used both primary and secondary sources of the data. The primary source of data included the policy level stakeholders of the Ministry of Education, University Grants Commission of Zambia, and some of the leading private universities in Zambia. For the secondary sources, some policy documents, as well as the higher education policy of Zambia, were used. Further, the related Acts and Regulations of the MoHE and Universities, as well as some related books, journals, articles, previous research reports, online reports, and websites, were used as the source of secondary data.

3. Results of the Study

The study results indicated that access and quality of higher education in Zambia are the major issues of higher education. Further, the findings show that the present status of higher education has made strides in increasing access to higher education through the construction of new infrastructure, converting some colleges into universities, alternative modes of learning, and promotion of private-sector participation in the provision of higher education in Zambia. This has led to an increase of 9.8%

in enrolment rates from 17,526 in 2010 to 19,235 in 2020 in the number of students enrolled in public universities.

Despite the increasing number of universities being built and the corresponding increase in enrollments, access to higher education has been a big challenge over the years. This is attributed to inadequate infrastructures such as student dormitories, lecturing facilities and laboratories, and inadequate lecturers/professors. Additionally, strategies to promote private sector participation in the provision of tertiary education has resulted in the increased number of registered private institutions and establishment of new private universities around the country. The number of public institutions has also been increased with additional ones under construction. For example, in 2016, a total number of 126,434 candidates sat for examinations at grade 12 level, and only about 12% were absorbed into universities. Despite enrolments in universities increasing significantly from 5,985 in 1996 to 91,969 in 2017, this increase remains insufficient to meet the demand for University Education. In TEVET, enrolments have also increased and reached 40,108 learners in 2017. However, the mushrooming of un-registered privately-owned universities and TEVET colleges suggest that the demand for higher education continues to outstrip supply. Embracing alternative modes such as E-learning is one of the keys to attaining SDG4.

As the Policy valorizes Science and Technology, the proper management and development of it along with the traditional technology sector is one of the challenges of the Policy to address. The higher education policy has focused on technical and vocational education, which is good in the overwhelming context of current general education. However, it is very hard to establish such HEIs or convert HEI imparting general education to technical education both financially and administratively.

The Policy has proposed the concept of a National Distribution Grid for the appropriate distribution of the institutions, as per population, urbanization, geography, and national need, but in its strategy, the institutional arrangement has not been spelled out clearly. It also does not mention the ways to enhance the management and institutional efficiency of higher education in the country. Though the Policy highlights merit and capacity to higher education, it addresses the middle and upper-middle class by focusing on technical and vocational education. Due to the lack of additional investment in such education, education run by the private sector is much expensive. Therefore, economically backward people cannot afford access and participation in higher education.

Although Open and Distance Education are the means to extend and expand higher education in the present-day world, however, the basic physical infrastructure needed to operate the distance and open mode of education in Zambia has not yet been developed fully as some institutions such as the University of Zambia are currently able to access e-learning resources from partners like Astria Learning. This is a continuous process so that challenges such as resistance to new technology and/or change, travel/accommodations costs being faced in institutions can eventually be eliminated or reduced to enhance quality education, enable full participation, and meet the growing student population. E-Learning systems such as the Astria Learning Management System enable students from various regions to access the same high-quality lectures featuring asynchronous tools with offline functionality for inclusion and synchronous tools such as built-in web conferencing to bridge the distance.

As the innovation in Higher Education is concerned, the research, development, and innovation (RDI), as well as the establishment and operation of Higher Education Authority, are the milestone for the overall quality enhancement of the HEIs and their education in the country. As Zambia Qualification Authority (ZAQA) system has already been established, it is necessary to operate it with a functionally autonomous system. Higher Education Authority, which the Policy proposed to establish, has accommodated national issues, prioritized resources with research and innovation.

In relation to imparting innovative higher education, the Policy has a focus on the coordination by the Higher Education Authority to conduct the seven different types of studies; which is very new and

needy to start these studies soon; however, the institutional arrangements to conduct these studies in the universities are yet to determine.

3.1 Discussion

In this study, it is aimed to analyze the higher education policy in Zambia. The results of the study show that access, quality, and relevancy of higher education are very important aspects where access relates to the rights, quality to the value, and relevancy to the need. In most cases, access and quality are the issues of higher education (MoHE, 2019). As Damtew & Philip (2004) argue that African higher education faces multiple challenges such as access and quality of higher education, this study shows that some African countries like Zambia have made much progress with regard of increasing access and quality of higher education. Although, the relevancy of higher education is still in shadow and needs to work more to address the contemporary needs of both the nation and the student (individual).

The above "fair access" viewpoint originates from liberal concerns about encouraging access to HE among persons from disadvantaged backgrounds who are thought to have high levels of potential and aptitude (Kettley 2007, p. 335). Everywhere in the twentieth century, this worry has been articulated at various times and in various ways. Robbins (1986) indicated that the meritocratic principle that HE should be provided for all those who have achieved the appropriate entry qualifications and who wish to pursue such courses. To address the challenges of fair access, the respondents in this study argue that the HE policy is helpful and if well implemented Zambia can attain fair access to HE like many other developing countries globally.

Regarding its efficiency, the HE Policy has provisioned a calendar for students' admission examination and results. Therefore, it is expected that with its implementation, the date for the class beginning, the duration for admission, examinations, results, and convocation will be pre-determined. However, its management could be the least efficient due to the efficiency of the internal governance system (Government of the Republic of Zambia, 2013). The same findings show in this study that the policy has proposed the formation of the Higher Educational Authority of (HEAZ) to ascertain ZQA activities. The MoHE has been doing this function even today but not compulsory. As per the rule to get ZAQA Certificate, higher education institution applies with self-study report together with institutional position, internal policy-wise management, and curriculum, programs for teaching and research, physical infrastructure. Along with these, there should be at least 50 percent full time teachers, and academic and professional posts created by the institutes should be approved by the affiliating university itself. The executive and department heads should be the full-time faculties of the institution. The HEI should produce minimum of 2 batches outgoing bachelor students or at least of five years of classes run. Regarding vocational studies, they should have been abided by the minimum requirements of the Vocational Council.

Furthermore, the Policy has spelled out to tie up research and innovation with higher education as an inseparable organ of HE. It has provisioned to tie up research programs of the universities/HEIs with national needs and opportunities. This is to enhance capacity for educational research and innovation. Damtew and Philip (2004) argue that without restructuring the non-functioning centers, only the establishment of new centers yields not much result. Rather, it becomes better to lessen the number of such centers in a country like ours and strengthen them first with both human and financial resources. However, the results show that that the HE policy does not clarify whether the centers would be under the mechanism of university or outside of it.

The allocation and distribution of the national budget in the development of the Higher sector keep significant value in the overall educational development of the nation. This is impossible in the lack of an adequate amount of required budget. As most of the international practices and the trends of budget allocation are concerned, generally, 20 percent of the national budget is allocated for education, of which 45-50 percent is generally allocated for higher education (UNICEF, 2008; Government of the Republic of Zambia, 2013). This shows that developed countries spend

approximately the same amount of money on both school and higher (university) education. In this context, the following data for a recent decade has shown the picture of educational budget allocation in Zambia:

3.2. Conclusion

After a long struggle in higher education reforms in Zambia, the country has got the first comprehensive Higher Education Policy in 2019. Although the Policy has just come to exist, many of the statutory and institutional provisions are yet to establish/prepare. However, a new era in Zambia's HE has been started.

Any policy proves to be successful if it addresses the problems related to the concerned field. The recent Higher Education policy is in its threshold to prove itself a significant one. As in School Education, in HE too, the availability of educational institutions, access on them, the quality and relevancy of education, and their management are crucial. Zambia is a liberal republic, but the Policy has still provisioned of centralized structure in HE. In this regard, the demand of the time to open universities and educational institutions by utilizing local resources and ownership to decentralize the centralized structure is to be addressed.

The results of this study show that the solution of the problems existing in the universities should be sorted out from within universities themselves. The formation of Committees, Taskforce, Board, councils, or Commissions cannot be the proper solution rather than to deteriorate the situation of Higher education. The demand of time is to encourage the autonomy of the Higher Education institutions and to think on the mechanism, which ultimately promotes the professional health of from the journey to the access, quality, and relevancy to the Center of Excellence in Higher Education.

The regular and quality education on campuses, the major part of HE, automatically enhances the quality of Higher Education. For this, the improvement in the academic environment is the most, which finally demands autonomy and decentralization. For making the institutions autonomous, they are to be taken away from their mother organization gradually. At the same time, it is high time to stop the process of expanding of the colleges through affiliation in general subjects, or establishing the same nature of other universities that conduct general literacy education only rather the future universities should be developed as a complete organization in themselves to sustain the needy educational demand of not only the current days but for the future too as the population keeps on growing.

3.3 Recommendations of the Study

3.3.1 Policy Level

The Zambia government, through the MoHE, is recommended strongly to bring out the Higher Education Act as early as possible so that the higher education in the country could be managed and operated through a single, unified, consistent, and strong system.

The proposed National Distribution Grid for the appropriate distribution of the institutions, as per population, urbanization, geography, and national need, has to be established soon so that enhanced management and institutional efficiency of HE in the country could be fostered. For this, it is suggested to the MoHE to bring out the related statutory document as early as possible.

MoHE and other relevant stakeholders in Higher Education in Zambia are recommended to work together in close coordination to bring out all the Policy provisioned HE statutory documents to establish all the expected and proposed institutional mechanisms of HE development as early as possible.

3.3.2 Practice Level

Relevancy of HE relates to how standard and contextual it is. That is how standard the higher education of a nation is determined by how relevant it is to address the need of individuals as well as of society/nation.

The HEIs are suggested to establish and develop good governance in education governance in the country. For this, it is suggested to develop and strengthen the internal governance system.

MoHE and the Universities are suggested to expand technical higher education in the national priority sector. For this, the Zambian Government has to increase the HE budgets to rationalize financing, and the universities have to control and systematize the affiliation distribution to the colleges so that a healthy and sustainable development of HE in the country can be established.

As Zambia is a liberal democratic republic, the centralized institutional arrangements of HE that the Policy assumes do not match the governing essence of liberalism. Thus, it is advisable to liberalize the envisioned educational institutions as per the essence of the constitution of Zambia.

Universities in Zambia are autonomous entities. Thus, entitled to governance and rule, the inherent autonomy of the Universities should not be violated by any of the policy provisions. Therefore, it is suggested to MoHE, while preparing Integrated Higher Education Act, to condition and preserve the autonomy of the Universities.

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