



DEMOCRATISATION AND THE CHALLENGE OF EDUCATIONAL PROVISION IN
ZAMBIA.

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INTRODUCTION.

The wave of democratisation sweeping across Africa is a political movement with prospects for fundamental changes in the affected societies. In education, the movement affords educationists an opportunity to relate educational development to the type of society being established. This relationship has not been vigorously followed in the past. Educationists are aware that efforts to develop education by the governments, donors, individuals or communities did not squarely address the pertinent question of the type of society within which educational development was being undertaken.¹ The dominant paradigms in education both at theoretical and, policy and planning levels have been:

(1) Human resources development. The paucity of educated and skilled human resources in most African countries in the sixties made this paradigm the primary goal for education policy and development. The theories of human capital and modernisation set the agenda for human resources development as the global objective of educational development in developing nations.² Quantitative educational expansion to meet the much needed manpower was the cliché of educational policy, planning and development.

(2) Equality of educational opportunity. Educational provision in the period following political independence was generally egalitarian. The aim was quantitative expansion of educational systems in order to extend opportunities for formal and non formal education to the greatest numbers possible in the society. Regionally sponsored education conferences like that held in Addis Ababa in 1961 established quantitative targets to be achieved by the African countries.³

Extension of educational opportunities to more people was also politically expedient because it complied with the need to meet the rising derived demand for education. The government's ability to extend opportunities for education to more people

1 The only exception is Tanzania where the government embarked upon the program of establishing education for self reliance following its policy of Ujamaa see: Nyerere, Julius. Education for Self-Reliance.

2 For detailed discussion of the theories see:

3 Equality of educational opportunity influenced educational policies throughout the sixties. Research and other scholarly work in this area include:

enhanced its legitimacy. Looked at this way, educational provision had economic, social and political objectives to fulfill,

(3) Quality of education. The quantitative expansion that took place after independence gave rise to the problems of quality of education. Steps had to be taken to train and retrain teachers, and the school curricula had to be reviewed. The aim was to give emphasis on different types of skills and knowledge.

(4) Vocationalisation of the school curriculum. The mounting problem of unemployed school leavers in the seventies resulted in the search for the link between education and production. The principles of education for production, diversified curriculum and skills training of all descriptions were established to address the problems of relevance in education.

(5) Equity and efficiency. The emergence of economic slump, population growth, and increasing inequalities led to critical reviews of financing of education strategies. Throughout the eighties, education developments focused on cost recovery through user charges, student loans, and education fees. Free educational provision was replaced by cost sharing schemes with the beneficiaries of education. Priorities for targeting state resources shifted from tertiary and secondary levels to the primary sector. Sophisticated quantitative economic analysis using cost-benefit techniques have been employed to justify shifts in priorities of resource expenditures among different education sectors.

Since the sixties, the development of education in most African countries tended to concentrate on different aspects of these five paradigms. Experiences from Zambia would indicate that very little effort was made to relate education to the type of society that the country was developing into. Most of the discourse on education have tended to be thematic. The focus of government policy and intellectual debates in education have tended to be on the most critical problems identified in different sectors of the educational system.

The current democratisation process it is hoped, might help to fill the gap in analytical discussions on education-society relationship. Additionally, democratisation might also contribute to the advancement of the normative dimension in the discussions on education in African countries. Normative discourse attempts to link education to existing or presumed values of the society and how they affect its aims and distribution, the way we ought to educate, the contents of the education provided and the type of individuals the educational system is producing.

This paper attempts to relate education to the

democratisation process in Zambia. Its aim is to seek an answer to the question: How should educational provision in the new democratic society be understood? The discussion will mostly be at a conceptual analytical level. The aim at this stage is to provide a theoretical framework within which to open a dialogue on the relationship of education and democracy in a developing country. My assumption is that no attempt has so far been made to analyse the relationship of education to democracy in Zambia.

The paper is divided into three sections. The section on the Background to Democratic Change in Zambia provides the context of the topic and discusses the values and principles upon which the democratic process was based. The next section examines the education policies of the previous and the current governments in the context of democratic values and principles outlined earlier. The last section analyses the necessary preconditions of education and democracy in the country.

A BACKGROUND TO DEMOCRATIC CHANGE IN ZAMBIA

Zambia's transition into the Third Republic was a great historical event in the young nation. Some commentators on this event termed it a "search for national independence and emancipation from oppressive hands of a single party regime."⁴ The change was indeed a contest to remove Kaunda's one party system through peaceful political means. The transition was however not just a change of political figures from Kaunda's handpicked political favourites to the peoples' choice. Rather, the leap into the Third Republic carried a promise for a complete and far reaching re-arrangement of the society and the people's lives. Atwood perceptively captured Zambia's political transition as "a dramatic wave to realise pluralism, openness and accountability to state matters".⁵ Zambia's Third Republic it should be stated was designed out of the most basic values of modern politics rooted in western liberal and democratic ethics.

The values upon which the Third Republic was established are: individual freedom; rule of law; fundamental human rights; justice; right of the opposition and pressure groups to exist; equity; merit; accountability; transparency; and openness of the governors to the governed; equality of opportunity for all

⁴ A Journal of Philosophy of Education Society of Australia. Vol.24, No.1,1992 p.17.

⁵ Atwood, J.B. in Weekly Post.30th August to 5th September,1991.

citizens and limited government. These values were propagated far and wide by all forces that constituted the Movement for Multiparty Democracy (M.M.D.). The M.M.D. which is currently the ruling political party was a coalition of workers, trade unions, students, intellectuals, activists, peasants, and other groups. The repeal of article 4 of the Republican Constitution on 17th December, 1990 and the defeat of the United National Independence Party (U.N.I.P.) in the 1991 general elections were the cardinal expressions of the peoples' will for a new political and socio-economic arrangement embracing the liberal and democratic values of life.

Zambia's Third Republic represents the ascendancy of the people's will for a new democratic political order. The current political setup that has developed, does not represent the supremacy of any political party or group of leaders. In fact individual freedom is inimical to all types of supremacy other than the people's will and is wary of the dangers found in all forms of power and authority. Under the current democratic system, people have a moral right to criticise their leaders. Should they feel dissatisfied of the leaders' performance, they can dislodge them from power through the ballot box. In other words, in a democracy, the mandate to exercise political power arise from the people.

The expression of the people's will for a new socio-economic and political order that gave rise to the Third Republic has been heralded by the MMD as a new political era of democracy. This is what it claims to be the "new culture". As an opposition political party then, the MMD did all it could to express its commitment to and alliance with the peoples' will. When unveiling their future plans, the MMD leaders assured the Zambian people that they would work hand in hand with them to lay the foundation for a new Zambia. The MMD presented itself as the only political party credible enough to realise the fulfillment of the peoples' will for democratic change. In its words:

The hour has come for the MMD to do that. Like you we have suffered for many years under UNIP. But we have been planning and waiting for the day when we could help to rebuild our once proud country. Together we will do it brick by brick until every man, woman and child in this country can live and own proper housing. Only MMD has the will and skill to do it.6

The triumph and popularity of the MMD throughout the period of transition into the Third Republic could be attributed to its commitment to the peoples' will for change. It did this by

drawing peoples' attention to democratic values outlined earlier. This was done so successfully that MMD was able to win the majority of the electorate on its side. The following statement from a voter sums it all:

In the circumstances, though I am opposed to drug trafficking and I am doubting about the moral qualities of the candidate put forward by the MMD in my constituency, I will still vote for them as I feel the question of personality is not as serious as one for the need of change of government.⁷

Change of government including the system that it represented is what Zambians wanted as one handicapped tailor put it; "we are tired of the same faces (i.e. of UNIP leaders). We cannot eat peace and unity which our leaders always talk about."⁸ Such sentiments indicate that the Third Republic was born out of the peoples' expressed will and conviction to bring about a new democratic system of government.

The triumph of the peoples' will for a new political system however, raises fundamental questions of how to fulfill it. The challenge is how to transform all areas of life, education, economy, culture, politics etc. in order to shape a new democratic Zambia for all generations to come. This challenge is real and the following statement from Hughes which reflects it is true namely:

The achievement of political democracy important though it may be is only a step towards the democratic ideal. Having taken that step we are confronted with the need for taking new and more difficult ones... achievement of social justice, the release of the potentialities of the commonman, the development of social discipline to replace the discipline of poverty, the replacement of ignorant and irrational prejudice by informed scientific understanding.⁹

Democracy does not end on the close of the polling day and announcement of the victors. For a young country like Zambia venturing into democratic development the next steps after winning the peoples' mandate to rule are crucial. These steps involve the democratisation of all sectors of the society to bring them in line with democratic values. Such steps are

7 Weekly Post November 2-7, 1991.

8 National Mirror, June 23rd, 1991.

9 Hughes, A. G. Education and the Democratic Ideal. (London: Longman Gren and Company, 1951, p.40)

necessary because earlier structures or institutions including the values that defined and justified their existence and operation might not be suited for a new democratic environment.

The transition into a democratic society needs the fulfilment of two extremely important conditions. First, there is need to identify and define the values within which the democratic re-arrangement of society has to be understood by all. President Chiluba's "new culture" and Ronald Penza's emphatic concern with terms like liberalisation, privatisation and the enabling environment are examples of efforts aimed at establishing new values for the democratic society. However, Chiluba and Penza's efforts may be well intended but they often lack clarity about what the concepts mean.

The second condition in the transition to democracy is the transformation of existing institutions and establishment of new ones. The current steps of privatising state corporations in Zambia (regardless of their weaknesses) is an example of institutional transformation. The decentralisation program embarked upon by the Ministry of Health is another example of the institutional changes necessary in establishing a democracy.

In education, the questions that still remain are: (1) what difficult steps of changing the educational system should be taken in this period of transition to democracy? (2) What does this require in terms of new values and institutions within which the educational system is to be organized? Before these questions are answered it is important that reference is made to the UNIP government's education policy and the MMD government's current direction in education. This background will help to provide the basis within which to discuss the necessary preconditions of educational provision in a democracy. The conceptual clarity of the relationship between education and democracy is in itself a major challenge to educational provision in the country. I consider it a challenge because it has not been attempted although it is a necessary precondition for sound educational provision in a democratic society.

DEMOCRATISATION AND EDUCATIONAL PROVISION: THE NECESSARY PRE-CONDITIONS.

The greatest weakness in the UNIP and MMD education programs is the glaring absence of the democratic ideal. At the heart of democracy is a deep commitment to the belief that children should be afforded opportunities to mature into independently thinking adults capable of identifying and critical analysis of problems that may confront them in life. This belief is the foundation of the development of education in a democratic society. At the centre of this ideal is a recognition and commitment to the

critical role of education in a democratic society.

Both the UNIP and MMD education policies have not clearly spelt out how the educational system will serve and further advance the development of a democratic society. The contribution of education to the development of a democratic society has been a major preoccupation of political leaders with strong commitments to the creation of such systems. Thomas Jefferson, Benjamin Rush, Noah Webster and Horace Mann to use the American society are examples of such leaders. In Zambia, the MMD's rhetoric on democracy is very good but the greatest problem is translating it into practical programs for democratic change in different sectors of the society. This problem is more pronounced in education.

A discussion of educational provision in a democracy should be seen against a background of an educational environment that is undemocratic. There are many attributes of this environment today as pointed out at different sections in this paper. On the whole, the characteristics of the condition of education can be summarized in one sentence. That is, all forms of educational provision whether through primary schools, secondary schools, higher education, literacy classes, and non-formal learning programmes, have become so impoverished and ineffective that teaching and learning has remained constrained.

The credibility of the educational system is at stake. Education as a value is under serious scrutiny. The decline in the quality of teaching and learning has produced a crisis of confidence in education. For most children, primary education has become a futile adventure because it neither leads to permanent literacy nor contributes to a better future. Newspaper reports abound that point to the abandoning of schools by children in preference to selling germistones, catching fish, street vending etc¹⁰. Such economic ventures are deemed important in a harsh economic environment than being in school.

Poverty, it should be admitted, has exacerbated the low educational opportunities of the poor. Illiteracy which results from lack of access to education, wastage in the educational system and poor internal efficiency of the system denies most individuals opportunities for effective participation in national affairs. This is undemocratic. Lack of access to quality education capable of developing an individual's potential is an infringement of people's basic human rights. It is against this perspective that educational provision should be taken as part of the democratisation process. The creation of opportunities for

10 For detailed discussion see Lungwangwa G. and Tucon P. Street Children in Zambia. (Lusaka: Institute For African Studies, University of Zambia 1992).

equitable quality education for all citizens is in itself an exercise of democratic reconstruction of society.

There are many factors that justify the link of educational provision to the democratisation process. The most important justification concerns the requirements of citizenship in a democracy. Democracy requires citizens who are highly literate, accurately informed, and rigorously trained in the processes of rational and critical thought. It is only after the intellectual strength of the individuals have been developed to the fullest through an educational system of high quality that they can be in a position to make democracy work.

Democracy cannot co-exist with illiteracy. Provision of quality education at all levels is a means of perpetuating and strengthening democracy. Individuals with good quality education will always try to strive for the survival of democratic values. The democratic virtues of accountability, dialogue, participation, transparent government, justice, rule of law etc. can only be realised by an educated and literate citizenry capable of defending these values at every turn. Education as an instrument for advancing democracy can only be realized when it is provided in a proper mix of quality, equity and efficiency starting from the lowest levels.

For democracy to work effectively the educational system has to cultivate the people's ability to think critically. This can only be realized if educational institutions are in positions of developing the learners' intellectual powers to the fullest extent possible. What this implies is that all schools and other educational institutions whether private or public should strive to maintain the highest level of quality education. This is the only way in which they can stand up to the requirement of cultivating critical thinking in all the citizens. Additionally, it is the only way in which the central goal of democracy, that is, "freedom and the opportunity and capacity for free expression" can be achieved.

Making the development of quality education accessible to all the goal would contribute to the realisation of some of the following aims of education in democracy: (i) development of individual freedom; (ii) improvement in the quality of civic and political life through the existence of an enlightened public; (iii) reduction in inequality among individuals and groups by eliminating illiteracy and other forms of deprivation; (iv) improving the economy and economic opportunity by raising the nation's intelligence and skill; and (v) development of the nation's cultural life by broadly diffusing the fruits of liberal education.

The most important pre-condition of educational provision in

a democracy is identification and definition of concepts within which it is undertaken. Individuals should understand the criteria that define how the education is provided. Earlier efforts embraced equality of educational opportunity as the defining concept of educational provision. This concept has been found limited in democratising education for the benefit of specific categories of people. In particular, and as stated earlier, the educational deprivation of women, girls, the handicapped, the urban and rural poor has not been adequately provided for.

The trend in a number of countries now is to translate the goal of democratising education in concrete terms. Such terms focus on measures to reduce specific inequalities. To this end, equity has become a higher objective in educational provision than equalization which is untenable. Equity as an educational policy objective is in line with distributive justice. As a moral principle distributive justice demand that in a democracy institutions should be organised in such a way that they meet the needs of the least advantaged in society.

Attending to the educational needs of disadvantaged groups is a pre-condition for democratic governance because democracy requires popular participation. In a democracy, the state should not be used as a tool for the purposes of any one group but must serve and be responsive and accountable to all. Extending educational opportunities to disadvantaged groups is one of the surest ways of achieving one of the cornerstones of democracy namely popular participation and the opportunity to form and accomplish self appointed goals. From the analysis, equity is an important concept within which educational provision should be defined in a democracy. However, equity alone is not sufficient. Quality and Efficiency are other concepts which are cardinal to educational provision in a democratic society.

Quality and efficiency are central concepts in understanding educational provision in a democracy. The need to develop general thinking skills in the citizens implies that education should not be an exercise in pedantry. Educational institutions in a democratic environment have to actively develop the best intellectual skills in the learners. Such skills are diverse. They range from basic skills of learning how to learn like reading, writing, speaking, listening, calculating and problem solving to high order cognitive skills embracing ability to comprehend, interpret, evaluate, analyse, or synthesize. Skills like these are sine qua non to democracy. The development of these skills on the other hand presupposes a certain level of quality and efficiency in the educational system.

Quality in education depends upon two related aspects; (i)the nature and amount of resources at the disposal of the educational system and (ii)the manner and rate at which the

resources are utilised to bring about desired outputs and outcomes. The resources entering the educational system constitute the inputs. Utilisation of the resources represent the educational process. Outputs are what the learners have achieved and acquired whether they be attitudes, behavior, skills, knowledge etc. Outcomes are the long term impact of the products of the educational system on society.

Efficiency on other hand focuses on the possibility of increasing the desired outputs and outcomes of education without increases in the quantities of resources used. Efficiency means maintaining all outcomes of education through appropriate utilisation of available resources.

Quality and efficiency in education largely depend on: (i) willingness to commit more resources to education; (ii) improvements in the education of teachers both at pre-service and in-service levels; (iii) motivation and retention of teachers through better conditions of service; (iv) better management and supervision of the educational system. Looked at this way democracy calls for a commitment to raising education as a priority sector in national development. This is what democratic leaders first do. In Zambia, the critical role of education in the society is being flouted with impunity by those in power.

Equity, quality and efficiency are concepts that have a potential of providing indicators of how well the education system is doing. The concepts have an in-built demand for accountability on the part of those who are in charge of the educational system. When all individuals understand the criteria of educational provision, its distribution, operation, and benefits should become a subject of debate and critical evaluation.

The accountability that is necessary and relevant in educational provision in a democracy involves: (i) the accessibility to education of all groups of people including the disadvantaged; (ii) the flexibility of the educational system to respond to the special educational needs of any group that requires it; (iii) the quantity and quality of inputs for education whether this be money, books, equipments, buildings, desks, teachers etc.; (iv) the equitable distribution of all inputs both geographically in different areas and socio-economically among different categories of people; (v) the effective utilisation of all inputs going into the educational system; (vi) the quality of the outputs from the educational system; (vii) the efficiency with which the outputs are produced; (viii) the outcomes of the educational investments whether this is in form of the enhancement of democracy itself or economic and social development.

From the foregoing discussion, the provision of education in a democracy require close monitoring of all the indicators that

enhance accessibility to education; effective participation in education by all groups; high achievement levels and high attainment levels of set goals. It is by doing such close monitoring that democratic values like justice, and participation can be achieved. Looked at this way educational provision in a democracy is part and parcel of democratisation of society. Equity, quality and efficiency are concepts that can meaningfully contribute to an establishment of a system of educational provision that is democratic and enhances the democratisation of society.

The pre-conditions outlined so far require their own structures of institutional arrangements within which strategies to realise them can be met. In addition, new structures are needed because democracy entails giving people the choice of how and where to educate their children as stated earlier. It also entails creating conditions for people to participate in the ownership and provision of education. Structures of educational provision that are relevant to a democratic society have to be established in Zambia. Such structures involve democratisation of the educational system. This in turn involves devolution of power and control over education through partnership between the state and other agencies and through privatisation.

UNIP'S EDUCATION POLICY.

UNIP's education policy adopted since independence is not difficult to identify. It was rooted in the principle of EQUALITY OF EDUCATIONAL OPPORTUNITY FOR MANPOWER PRODUCTION. The policy was amplified in several documents produced by UNIP itself and the government. The implementation of the policy was done on stringent government control and direction. Educational provision followed the general path of nationalisation of all institutions with a greater bias towards a welfare state. The education Act of 1966 laid the framework for government power and control over education. The Act gave the government the legal mandate to establish a centralised national system of education with restricted participation in its provision by other agencies.

UNIP's political philosophy of the supremacy of the ruling party and its government formed the basis of its education policy. The system of educational provision was dictated by UNIP'S pursuit for power and control over all sectors. The educational system that emerged from UNIP'S structural re-arrangement of institutions was rooted in the political objective of nationalisation. There is a lot of evidence to support this point.

At the primary level the government adopted an aggressive policy of expropriating schools owned by private agencies. In

particular, the central objective was to change the colonial legacy of minimum government involvement in education. The position as inherited from the colonial period was that the total number of primary schools in 1963 were 1769. Out of this number 1169 or 66.1 per cent were controlled by aided voluntary agencies. Private schools were 67 or 3.9 per cent. In terms of student enrollments, schools managed by voluntary agencies controlled 56.4 per cent of the total enrollments in primary schools. Local education authorities and the government controlled 43.6 per cent of the primary school enrollments. This educational arrangement was, however, radically changed by the UNIP leaders.

The UNIP leaders championed a system of educational provision which was dependent on state control almost at the exclusion of other agencies. For example, by 1989 government primary schools totalled 3,431 or 98.2 per cent and voluntary agency schools were only 62 or 1.8 per cent. The UNIP government successfully elevated itself to a position of the major provider of primary education in the country. The situation that prevailed at the primary level was repeated at other levels too. In 1989 the number of government secondary schools in the country was 398 or 82.9 per cent compared to 47 or 9.8 per cent and 35 or 7.3 per cent schools controlled by private and aided agencies respectively.¹¹

The situation at the tertiary level is very well known. The government was the dominant controller of all tertiary institutions in the country. Even technical institutions that could have best been controlled by private industry which not only employs most of the graduates but has the latest technology to train better were state dominated. The justification for government control of education was stated in the following words: "It is a fundamental principle of Humanist Socialism that the state is responsible for the provision of education for its citizens."¹² Apart from minimising participation of other agencies in educational provision, government power and control over education was exercised through such measures as:

1. Establishment of a unified teaching service with the Teaching Service Commission and its commissioners appointed by the President as the employer of the

¹¹ For detailed discussion of education policy changes after independence see Lungwangwa, G. "Prospects of Private Entrepreneur Investment in Primary Education in Zambia". (Lusaka: The University of Zambia. 1993.)

¹² Ministry of Education. Education for Development: Draft Statement on Educational Reforms. (Lusaka: Ministry of Education 1976.) page 28.

teachers.

2. A centralised government controlled curriculum with very little participation in its development by other agencies.

3. Government controlled system of publishing and distribution of books for schools. The monopoly by government over book publishing for educational institutions led to lack of growth in the publishing industry in the country.

4. A highly centralised education system.

5. Establishment of a national examination council.

6. Free education for all students from primary to the university level and heavy subsidisation of the educational institutions managed by missionary agencies.

7. Promotion of a reward system of teachers tied to patriotism to the UNIP ideology and constitution demonstrated through passing the papers on these subjects in the Teaching Service Examinations.¹³

8. Control of childrens' minds through political education biased towards the UNIP ideology of Humanism and military drill in national service camps after school.

9. Promotion of national unity through the development of English as the medium of instruction from Grade 1 onwards.

It is very clear from the foregoing analysis that UNIP successfully established a system of educational provision that complied to its ideology and general approach to political and economic organisation of national affairs. The leaders of UNIP have on several occasions commended themselves for their achievements in education. They were right. Education reflected their ideology and political economic objectives based on the government regulation of all aspects of national life. However, to a critical analyst, the UNIP education policy and practice had very serious flaws.

First, the policy of Equality of Educational Opportunity was

¹³ For a discussion of the Teaching Service Examinations see: Lungwangwa, G. The Teaching Service Examinations in Zambia: The Teachers' Views and Preferences. (Lusaka: The University of Zambia, 1993.)

high sounding but in practice, the educational system tended to display sharp inequalities. The provision of education tended to be more responsive to the strongest in academic and economic terms. These were the most privileged children from well to do families living mostly in urban areas and boys. Equality of educational opportunity confined the government to the provision of education. Experience has shown that the government did not take special attention and responsibility for equally important aspects in educational provision namely:

1. Lack of access to the educational system by the underprivileged children.
2. Lack of effective participation in the educational system by girls as reflected in their poor achievement levels in the terminal examinations and lower participation rates in successive grades.
3. Lack of maximum benefit from the educational system by underprivileged children from the rural areas and the urban poor.

Equality of educational opportunity without special attention to gender and other forms of inequalities in educational opportunities is unequitable. The UNIP education policy did not address itself to inequalities that manifest through socio-economic backgrounds, gender, urban rural differences, physical handicaps, historical circumstances etc. Equality of educational opportunity as a conceptual policy guideline had to do more with the numbers game. Success was measured in terms of the quantities of individuals entering and leaving the educational system and not the mix of the numbers. Sometimes the quality and effect of the graduates from the educational system was not given serious attention. The UNIP system of educational provision was a victim of these weaknesses.

At the level of education - society relationship UNIP's system of educational provision was a "MILK IN THE BASKET" to use the title of Akashambatwa Mbikusita Lewanika's book. Little attempt was made to relate education to the out of school lives of the individuals. Those leaving tertiary institutions have, for example, not been followed to see where and how well they were deployed in the labour market. The needs of industry in terms of knowledge, skills and attitudes of the individuals to work were not well articulated in any meaningful way. The provision of education was not clearly related to the national development plans. What lacked in UNIP's approach to educational provision was to view education in both internal and external efficiency terms. The 1977 Educational reforms which attempted to do this have remained a white elephant in Zambia's history of education. They have never and probably will never be implemented. A waste of effort and resources the reform exercise indeed was.

Another weakness in UNIP's approach to educational provision was the denial of individuals a choice of how and where to educate their children within the country. For a long time, the individuals' choice for the education of their children was overseas or in schools elsewhere within the countries in Southern Africa. This was done at great financial and emotional cost to the families. UNIP's suppression of private schools in particular denied this country the opportunity to develop schools of high international standing similar to those found in neighboring countries. Furthermore, the suppression of private schools denied the educational system and consequently the people opportunities to benefit from private resources. This slowed the development of the educational sector.

Finally, the greatest weakness of UNIP's education policy was in its susceptibility to decline in quality. Because educational provision depended more on the government's ability to finance, its quality plummeted when resources became scarce. Past experience are that public expenditure for education was deeply sliced off as the burden of interest rates and debt service, high inflation rates, accelerated urbanisation, population growth and stagnated economy became severe¹⁴. These socio-economic forces led to almost a neglect of the educational system by the government. This was done through major cuts of government resources to education especially at primary and secondary levels.

The consequences of deep-cuts in public expenditures for education were: erosion in the quality of education, poor conditions of service for teachers, overcrowded classrooms, slow growth rate in educational institutions and lack of teaching and learning materials. Those affected most by the declining support for education were the urban poor, the physically handicapped, girls, children in rural areas and other categories of marginalised and vulnerable children. These weaknesses reflected the inherent contradictions of the UNIP education policy and practice. Fundamental changes are necessary if the educational system is to address social equity and serve democratic objectives in society.

THE MMD EDUCATION POLICY

Education featured prominently in the MMD promises for a better Zambia under its governance. Because the deterioration in education institutions and the accompanying decline in the quality of education was visible to all, improvements in the

¹⁴ See Kelly, M.J. Education in a Declining Economy: The Case of Zambia 1975-1985. (Washington D.C.: The World Bank, 1991).

educational system was key to MMD's political campaign for power. Zambian voters were promised rehabilitation of schools, supply of desks, books and other educational materials in schools, improvements in the conditions of service for teachers and a better match between school curricula and industry. Revamping and revitalisation of the system of education was the message that spread across the length and width of the country.¹⁵ Teachers heard promises and messages like the one below from Vernon Mwaanga:

.....many schools in Botswana both primary and secondary are run by Zambians. When the MMD government comes to power we are going to make sure that we call back all the Zambians that are working in the south by improving the conditions of service for the professionals. A teacher in Zambia is the lowest paid worker....The schools have no desks...¹⁶

There is no better guarantee of political support from frustrated and demoralised professionals than statements like these coming from people who were not in power. In fact a close analysis of the campaign leading to the October 1991 general elections would show that UNIP was no match to MMD. Every visible and invisible negative consequences of UNIP's twenty-seven years rule on people's lives was forcefully articulated by the MMD for the voters to judge whether the party still deserved their political mandate to continue ruling and "ruining" the country. Be that as it may, the MMD's educational program poses great problems to critical observers of education and democracy.

The key issues the manifesto raised on education were pre-school education for every child, universal primary education up to grade nine, specialised secondary schools, decentralisation of higher education, facilities for improving adult education, revamping of the teaching of science and technology, provision of library facilities, rehabilitation of the schools, extension of secondary education from "O" level to "A" level or form six; fee paying schools, voluntary agency schools with grants from government.¹⁷ These and other areas which the MMD outlined for improvement were in fact not new to the existing educational system. To a critical reader, the education section in the MMD manifesto sounds like an amplification of what UNIP was doing.

A major problem that emerges from the MMD statements on

¹⁵ Details of the future of education under the MMD were outlined in the National Mirror, 3rd June, 1991.

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¹⁷ The MMD Manifesto (Lusaka: MMD 1991)

education is lack of clear connection or relationship between education and the democratisation process in the country. A gross omission of the manifesto is that it never made any reference to the relationship between education and democratic change in the country. This was a big surprise for a party that championed democratic change in the country.

The MMD manifesto never made any mention of how the educational system would be brought in line with the democratic ideals that the party articulated in its political campaigns. The manifesto never identified the concepts within which educational policy and provision would be understood. Additionally, the manifesto also made no reference to the type of structures (i.e. democratic ones in this case) within which educational provision would take place.

Viewed from the inter-relationship of education to democratic change the MMD's education policy as reflected in its manifesto is vague and reflects more of what UNIP left. The education section in the MMD manifesto did not break any new grounds on the relationship between education and democratic change. The manifesto is even silent on whether the products of the educational system would be individuals committed to democratic beliefs and values and how these could further assist to change the society into a democratic one. The manifesto did not clearly spellout the type of democratic ideals, beliefs and values within which the educational system would be developed. The MMD as both a party and now in government has only succeeded in making promising statements about rehabilitation of schools and improvements in the conditions of service of the teachers. The following statement made by the MMD Minister of Finance is a case in point:

The MMD government will place a great emphasis on education. The state of our schools is not something to sing about. We are aware of the terrible conditions of service for teachers and other professionals. We are aware of classrooms that have no desks, no chalk, no windows and leaking roofs. This government in its first year in office will address these problems fully in every district of Zambia.¹⁸

There is nothing wrong with paying attention to the rehabilitation of schools per se. However, the point of contention to an educationist interested in education and democratic change is that the MMD is vague on this relationship. For example, it is not clear from the MMD's manifesto how the educational institutions are to be organized in order to achieve

¹⁸ Ministry of Finance. The 1992 Government Budget paragraph 219.

the democratic principles outlined earlier in this paper. It is also not clear how and or whether the educational institutions will be restructured in order to facilitate the teaching and learning of democratic values. A clear statement on education and democracy was crucial because it could have provided a sense of direction about where the system of education was going. The absence of such a direction created some confusion about where the education system was going. The following comment from a senior education official on the government's liberalisation policy is a case in point:

It should be observed that control of fees by the government clashes with the MMD government's policy of liberalisation, claim many officers and private schools' proprietors today. The truth is that no one quarrels with liberalisation so long as it does not breed negative effects. Liberalisation must be applied in moderate doses certainly not to all aspects of human development. Liberalisation is welcome in industry, commerce, trade, and other services except education¹⁹.

Statements like these represent an ideological conflict between democratic change and educational policy direction. Officials making such statements think that the educational system should not be influenced by the wave of democratic change cutting across all areas in society. Such views reflect a lack of guideline on the direction of education in the period of transition into a democratic society. The guideline and legislation should have come from the MMD's manifesto first and foremost.

The treatment the MMD manifesto gave to education and democracy was casual, and uninformed particularly on the relationship of education to democratic values and beliefs. What this shortcoming entail is that the MMD government has to work extra hard to establish a relationship between education and democratic change in the society. In view of such glaring shortcomings therefore, educational provision is still in search of a direction that is democratic and relevant to the peoples' aspirations for a democratic society in the Third Republic. In the meantime and in the context of democratic change, education is directionless.

¹⁹ Ministry of Education Guidelines: Registration and Administration of Private Schools (Lusaka: 1992).

CONCLUSION

This paper has focused on a topic that has been a vacuum in all the debates on Zambia's education. The author's contention is that there is no profound statement on education and democracy in Zambia so far. The proponents of democratic change failed to show in a meaningful way the relationship between education and the new democratic society. The point advanced by the writer is that in order for education and democracy to have a meaningful relationship in Zambia political leaders should make commitments to the democratic ideal of the right of every citizen to quality education. Additionally, equity, efficiency and quality should be the basis of educational provision. In addition, new structures that enhance the democratisation of the educational system should be established. Democratisation and educational provision are inseparable dimensions of a democratic society. In a democracy, education should be both democratic and contribute to the enhancement of democracy. This way the relationship between education and democracy will become much more meaningful and not superficial as is the case in Zambia today.