

Major Activities and Achievements

The Danish Agency for Development Assistance (DANIDA)

Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Denmark

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Objectives/Activities	Achievements
Improve the status of primary school teachers	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • First national conference of primary teachers organised under PSSPE • National Association of Primary School Teachers formed • Primary teacher educators in staff exchanges with UNZA staff • Broad stakeholder involvement
Establishment of national knowledge and experience base	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • UNZA undertook attachments to primary schools • Research undertaken jointly by college of education and UNZA staff • National documentation centre established at UNZA
Staff development at UNZA and in the colleges	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Exchange of staff • UNZA staff attached to primary schools • College staff undertook study and teaching in the university
Restructuring validation/accreditation procedures	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • For academic purposes all colleges of education will be associated with UNZA from 2005 • All primary school teachers will receive a university award

Sustainability

Application was made to UNESCO on two separate occasions for the appointment of a UNESCO Chair in Primary Education at UNZA to promoter sustainability. Unfortunately, the programme has not yet received a positive response to the request.

Support to Primary Education Project (SPEP)

Danida's Support to Primary Education Project (SPEP), initiated in 1996, came to an end in December 1999. Assistance to the education sector in Zambia continues to be provided through six Areas of Support, which together form the Sector Programme Support. All six Areas of Support are set within the *Basic Education Sub-Sector Investment Programme* (BESSIP), the major thrust of Government education policy in the short- and medium-terms. The nature of Danida's support builds upon the experience gained during the SPEP, with all four of the SPEP components (Teacher Education, Special Education Needs (SEN), Rehabilitation, and Curriculum Development) being extended in an expanded programme covering the five-year period, January 2000-December 2004. In addition, three new areas of support have been introduced. Support will seek to enhance the role which women play in the sub-sector, especially in the Teacher Training Colleges and in rural primary schools; a new Area of Support focusing on early childhood development will provide an additional focus to the SEN initiative, which itself is renamed the *Inclusive Schooling Programme*; and Danida support will seek to enhance the status of primary education in general and of primary teachers in particular through the creation of a professional support structure.

A Professional Support Structure for Primary Education

Primary education, despite the importance it is officially attributed, is not generally regarded as a prestigious professional field. Its practitioners enjoy low status in society, their salaries are poor, and there are few career opportunities within primary education. The result is often that the most talented and ambitious primary school teachers, who could otherwise have made an impact on the development of the sub-sector, feel tempted to leave the primary sector in order to pursue more remunerative careers in secondary education or elsewhere. UNZA, as with many other institutions in similar situations, works almost exclusively in the secondary sub-sector, to some extent adopting the view that the university is an inappropriate location for the study of primary education.

The status of the primary school teacher in Zambian society has changed considerably since Independence. In the early post-Independence years, teachers were few and highly respected in their communities. They had been exposed to the world of learning and were charged with the important task of imparting knowledge to future generations. The salaries and conditions of service accorded to teachers were reasonable and commensurate with their role.

This is clearly no longer the case in Zambia. The explosion in the number of schools and teachers, together with drastically reduced public revenue since the seventies, has led to a crisis in education. With current salaries below subsistence level, some teachers tend to neglect their duties, or take up additional income generating activities in order to survive.

It is felt that the low status of the primary school teacher contributes to low quality education. The Area of Support *A Professional Support Structure for Primary Education* seeks to address this issue.

The Area of Support seeks to:

- raise the status of primary teachers and of all those involved in primary education
- provide increased opportunities for professional growth to those involved in primary education
- to create a professional support structure for primary education.

The Area of Support relates directly to some of the objectives contained within the BESSIP component *Teacher Development, Deployment and Compensation*. A major reason for the poor quality of primary/basic education in Zambia appears to be the quality of the teachers themselves. Entrants tend to be poorly qualified and the more able see better career prospects within the secondary field or in employment outside the education sector. One way of retaining the best teachers and of reducing the attrition rate among primary teachers is to raise their status.

The Area of Support has at its heart the intention of reducing inequality between teachers at the various levels of the education system and, by improving the quality of education on offer, reducing inequalities in educational provision. One of its major strands concerns the involvement of teachers in the decision-making process.

A Professional Career Structure for Primary Education is a **national** TED/Danida initiative, based at the University of Zambia. Locating the Academic Secretariat at UNZA is significant in at least two major respects:

- It is felt by many working in this field that all teachers completing a course of professional training should receive a University award
- Traditionally, UNZA has been reluctant to acknowledge primary education as a field worthy of university study and there is a resultant lack of capacity which needs to be addressed.

It is recognised, however, that there is a danger that the programme will come to be viewed as a University programme, rather than simply a national initiative based at UNZA. It is important that all three major stakeholders – PTTC staff, Teacher Resource Centre staff and UNZA staff – become equal partners in the implementation process.

The Area of Support has been designed to allow a participatory process to guide the ultimate nature of the programme. However, the first year of the programme will focus on the establishment of a national, regional and international network concerned with primary education in general and primary teacher education in particular. In subsequent years of implementation, there is likely to be a concentration of activities leading to the development of appropriate university-validated courses, a developing relationship between the PTTCs, the Resource Centres and UNZA, and on the establishment of primary education within the structures of the University.