



# **Country mapping report: School leadership in Zambia**

*September 2024*



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## About VVOB and the African Centre for School Leadership

[The African Centre for School Leadership \(ACSL\)](#) is a coalition of partners in Africa committed to the promotion of effective school leadership by bringing together organisations that offer professional development services, research, and policy advice on effective school leadership. The ACSL coordinated by VVOB – *education for development*, the Association for Development of Education in Africa (ADEA), and Education Sub-Saharan Africa (ESSA).

[VVOB – education for development](#) is an international non-profit organisation with over 40 years of experience in quality education. Through capacity development, VVOB provides support to ministries of education in Africa, Asia and South America to improve (initial) professional development of teachers and school leaders in early childhood, primary, general secondary, and technical and vocational education.

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## List of abbreviations

ACSL	African Centre for School Leadership
PD	Professional Development
CPD	Continuous Professional Development
INSET	In- service Training
UNZA	University of Zambia
M&E	Monitoring and Evaluation
TCZ	Teaching Council of Zambia

## 1. Introduction

The quality of school leadership plays a crucial role in understanding the current global learning crisis (Muralidharan & Singh, 2020). Despite many countries committing to providing inclusive and quality education under the United Nations Sustainable Development Goal (SDG 4), progress towards achieving this goal by 2030 has been slow. According to UNESCO (2020), nearly two-thirds of 10-year-olds lack the ability to read or understand basic texts, underscoring the urgent need for swift and effective action to prevent the global learning crisis from becoming a lasting disaster for future generations. The World Bank (2018) identifies several key factors hindering educational progress, including unprepared students, poor teaching quality, and inadequate school leadership.

Leadership practices of school leaders significantly impact student achievement and are therefore a critical aspect of students' daily lives (Branch et al., 2012; Crawford, 2017). School leaders are tasked not only with overseeing day-to-day operations but also with selecting and supporting teachers, managing budgets, maintaining facilities, and cultivating positive relationships with the broader community (Grissom et al., 2021; Miller, 2013). A safe and supportive school environment is essential for students to thrive academically, emotionally, and socially. School leaders who prioritise student wellbeing create a nurturing atmosphere where students feel valued, respected, and supported in their academic and personal growth. School leaders also have a positive impact on learning outcomes when they focus on developing, supporting, and evaluating the quality of teaching. By providing teachers with the necessary resources, training, and professional development opportunities, school leaders can enhance teaching practices and ultimately improve student learning. Furthermore, effective evaluation processes help identify areas for improvement and ensure that teachers are meeting the needs of their students. Investing in school leadership improvement yields significant returns, as leadership effects extend over the entire school. Successful school leaders have the capacity to bring out the best in the entire teaching staff, creating a collaborative and supportive environment where everyone is committed to continuous improvement. This, in turn, has a direct impact on student outcomes, as teachers who feel supported and valued are more likely to be engaged and effective in the classroom (Day et al., 2016).

Figure 1: Theory of Change of the African Centre for School Leadership



To ignite and promote the potential of school leadership in improving educational quality in the continent, the African Centre for School Leadership (ACSL) was initiated in 2021 as a catalyst for this essential transformation. As reflected in the Theory of Change (*Figure 1*), the Centre partners and collaborates with key stakeholders to build supportive school leadership systems to promote effective school leadership in schools in Africa. Effective school leadership support systems will help school leaders create positive instructional environments for teachers throughout their lifecycle in school. Improved school environments and improved conditions for teaching and learning in schools will, in turn, result in improved students' learning, wellbeing and reduced gender and equity gaps.

To lay the foundations for the Centre, an exploratory scoping review of the empirical research on school leadership in Africa was carried out by Bush et al. (2022). The study offers insights on what constitutes effective school leadership on the continent, based on empirical research. The resulting working paper provided insights about key competencies and practices that are associated with effective school leadership, the features of effective and scalable Professional Development (PD) for school leaders as well as on how local, national, and regional policies promote or inhibit school leaders' leadership practices in Africa. Based on the findings, recommendations were made with regards to activities that the ACSL could undertake to promote school leadership.

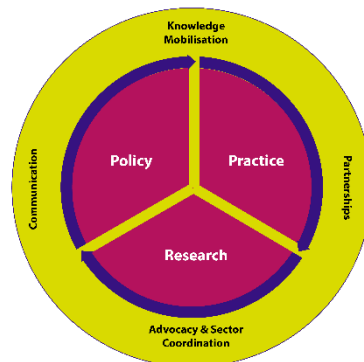
To further strengthen the foundations of the African Centre for School Leadership, VVOB (2023) used the Delphi method to consult experts in the field and across Africa. The experts reached a consensus that effective school leadership should enhance student well-being and equity, reduce dropout rates, and improve overall education quality by elevating teacher quality and supporting their development, motivation, and retention. They agreed that successful school leaders must be able to set the school's direction, manage it as an organisation, and create a positive and safe learning environment. The experts also emphasised the need for more female school leaders in Africa to promote gender equality. They noted that in some African countries, hierarchical influences hinder distributed school leadership. They observed that teaching experience is often the primary requirement for school leadership advancement, and while there is limited evidence on the impact of PD, effective preparation and development of school leaders positively affect education quality. The experts agreed that PD should include various activities like peer observation, mentorship, work tasks, feedback systems, and on-the-job training, with a focus on gender-responsive and transformative pedagogy. They stressed the importance of close collaboration between PD providers and governments for sustainability. Finally, they highlighted the significance of national policies in raising awareness about leadership and the crucial role of district or regional leaders in shaping the educational landscape.

In line with UNESCO GEM Report (2023), the Centre promotes leadership at various levels in the education system includes educational leaders at decentralised levels of national education systems (middle tier) as well as school leaders, both in-service as well as aspiring school leaders. Nevertheless, the partnerships and activities of the Centre focus on school leaders within schools, defined as school principals, headteachers, school heads, their deputies, or anyone who has the responsibility to drive the overall strategic direction and operations of a school, including instructional processes and systems.

Further through its activities, projects, and partnerships, the Centre, guided by recommendations from Bush et al. (2022) and experts in VVOB (2023), focused its efforts on three countries—Rwanda, Kenya, and Ghana—during its foundation phase. The Centre collaborates with partners and emphasises four focus areas (Figure 2):

- **Policy:** development or re-development (reform) of effective school leadership policies and guidelines.
- **Practice:** development and delivery of professional development programmes for school leaders.
- **Monitoring, Evaluation and Research:** research on the effectiveness and impact of school leadership and school leadership professional development. Indicators and tools for consistent monitoring and evaluation of professional development initiatives on school leadership.
- **Knowledge mobilisation, advocacy, communication, and sector coordination:** mobilisation and dissemination of evidence, insights, learning; advocacy on school leadership; coordination of partners and stakeholders involved in promoting school leadership.

Figure 2: Focus Areas of the ACSL



To ensure that support in each focus area is well-designed and aligned with country-specific needs, it was crucial to gain a comprehensive understanding of the status of school leadership and school leadership development in each country. A country mapping exercise was conducted to assess progress and practices in school leadership. Additionally, the Ministry of Education in Zambia requested ACSL's support to examine school leadership practices in Zambia.

This report begins by detailing the methodology, which includes a description of the tool used for information collection, the data collection process, and a discussion of limitations. It then presents the findings, organised around policy, practice, monitoring, evaluation, research, knowledge mobilisation, advocacy, communication, and sector coordination, providing an overall picture of school leadership in the country. Finally, it concludes with a summary of findings and recommendations related to policy, practice, gender mainstreaming, monitoring, evaluation, research, knowledge mobilisation, advocacy, communication, and sector coordination.



## 2. Methodology

The country mapping exercise was designed to collect information regarding the status of Zambia’s school leadership support systems in terms of the following: School leadership policies and support systems, PD programmes, providers, content, delivery modalities, monitoring and evaluation, beneficiaries, etc. The data generated is instrumental for the Centre and partnering countries and institutions to identify good practices and areas for support. The mapping will be a starting point for the ACSL to collaborate with governments in building effective school leadership support systems. Overall, the mapping aims to reach the following objectives:

1. Map the progress of countries in school leadership and school leadership professional development (PD).
2. Undertake a review of policies and practices on school leadership and school leadership PD to identify successful practices, innovative approaches, and gaps.
3. Inform the development of a roadmap for the ACSL support on school leadership and school leadership PD. The roadmap will outline key action points to advance school leadership agenda in these countries, highlighting priority areas and countries where support is most needed.

In addition to these objectives, the practices collected from Zambia will be shared with other countries at pan—African level. In order to meet the objectives of the mapping exercise, a series of open-ended and few closed ended questions were compiled in a template (See Annex 1 for more details).

### 2.1. Country mapping template

The country mapping template was developed by the ACSL team. To ensure that the information captured is comprehensive the template was also shared with WISE Agile Leaders of Learning Innovation Network (ALL IN) for review. The template is structured around the four focused areas of the Centre (See Annex 1 for more details). For each focus area the template focused on the following:

#### 1. Policy development

The mapping template looks into the school leadership policies, standards, and guidelines in various countries. The section on policy included questions about the provision for school leadership in educational policies and strategies, professional standards of effective school leadership, existing policies supporting school leadership development, guidelines/frameworks on school leadership, and educational strategies/plans to support school leadership development. It also addresses the question of gender mainstreaming in school leadership, the structure of educational leadership from national to school level, the autonomy of school leaders, other leadership positions at the school level, and the promotion of school leadership approaches. Additionally, it seeks data on the percentage of female school leaders across different levels of education, support for school leadership from parents and the wider community, and ongoing key educational policy developments or reviews, particularly those involving school

leadership support. Specifically in Zambia, a question was added after consultation with the MoE to explore how disability is mainstreamed in school leadership policies.

## **2. Professional development (PD)**

The mapping template also focuses on gathering information about school leadership professional development (PD) offerings and support systems in various countries. It includes questions about career pathways for school leaders, government agencies responsible for school leadership PD, their roles and responsibilities, integration of school leadership PD in government planning and budgeting, and gender mainstreaming in PD offerings. It also seeks details about other partners involved in PD programmes at national and/or regional levels, their areas of support, and comprehensive information about PD offerings implemented in each country, including content/focus, target group, reach, provider, delivery method, PD approach, accreditation, duration, and funding sources.

## **3. Monitoring, Evaluation and Research**

Considering Monitoring & Evaluation (M&E) and Research in the context of school leadership, the template looks into how school leadership in schools and PD offerings are monitored and evaluated, and how policies and strategies have influenced the implementation and impact of school leadership and development. Additionally, it seeks information on available research/studies on the impact of school leadership and development, with references where applicable.

## **4. Knowledge mobilisation, advocacy, communication, and sector coordination.**

The mapping template includes questions about how knowledge on school leadership and development is shared and disseminated, and how various partners involved in school leadership development are coordinated. It also looks into the existence of platforms for coordination of school leadership PD, such as technical working groups or taskforces.

## **2.2. Mapping process**

This template is designed to be completed by relevant representatives from ministries of education or other government implementing agencies, CPD providers, development partners, universities, etc. It is recommended that one person takes the lead in completing the template to facilitate follow-up by the ACSL team if there are any questions. However, it is important to fill out the template in consultation with other relevant partners supporting school leadership to ensure that the information provided is comprehensive and validated.

In Zambia, the mapping exercise was led by a task team appointed by the Ministry of Education's Permanent Secretary. The task team adapted the template provided by ACSL to gather countrywide data on the status of school leadership. The template was distributed to all ten Provincial Education Officers who oversaw the data collection in their provinces. The responses from all the ten provinces were consolidated by the task team members and submitted to ACSL for processing.

Based on the analysis and recommendations in this report, a co-creation session is expected to be organised at the country level to identify gaps to be addressed and opportunities for collaboration with the ACSL to develop a roadmap to strengthen effective school leadership in the four countries.

### **2.3. Limitations**

The analysis of the findings captured in this report, are to be considered with the following limitations: The report focuses on information collected between 2023 and 2024 regarding school leadership policies, professional development, monitoring, evaluation and research, gender mainstreaming, knowledge mobilisation, advocacy, communication, and sector coordination. However, this data may not provide a comprehensive overview of the subject. The data was collected using a template, which may have limitations. The interpretation of the questions could vary depending on the context, and the inclusion of closed-ended questions may have restricted the ability to provide specific answers. In addition, although the data was collected by multiple parties and validated at different level, there is a possibility that some information may have been overlooked or omitted.

### 3. Findings

This section is organized to provide a comprehensive summary of the data collected through the country mapping template on school leadership support systems in Zambia. It covers the following areas: school leadership policy, professional development, gender, and disability mainstreaming in school leadership, monitoring, evaluation, and research, as well as knowledge mobilization, advocacy, communication, and sector coordination.

#### 3.1. Overview of School Leadership in Zambia

Instructional Leadership is the predominant approach promoted in Zambia. This leadership style emphasises the role of school leaders in fostering effective teaching and learning environments, ensuring quality instruction, and driving academic improvement. School leaders have a range of responsibilities, including overseeing school operations, interpreting, and implementing policies, managing staff, ensuring standards of practice through Continuing Professional Development (CPD), and mobilising and managing resources. In practice, school leaders operate with a degree of autonomy but still receive instructions from higher authorities. Schools do not act independently but follow policies, guidelines, and frameworks as such certain decisions can be made locally while others need consultation as guided by policies - For example, finance expenditure is limited to thresholds in line with the ministry of Finance guidelines. At the school level, the autonomy of the headteacher is limited. Decisions are typically made in consultation with various stakeholders such as the Parent-Teacher Committee (PTC), student councils, and the board. Spending government funds also requires consultation with stakeholders.

In Zambia, the structure of educational leadership spans from the national to the school level. At the national level, leadership is overseen by the Minister of Education, who is supported by the Permanent Secretaries and Directors. Provincial Education Officers and District Education Board Secretaries provide leadership at the provincial and district levels, respectively. At the school level, leadership is primarily led by Headteachers, who oversee the day-to-day operations of individual schools. School leaders, such as Headteachers or Principals, in Zambia operate with semi-autonomy. While they have the authority to make certain decisions locally, others require consultation and adherence to policies and guidelines. Notably, financial expenditure is limited to predetermined thresholds and often necessitates consultation with relevant stakeholders.

In addition to the Headteacher or Principal, there are several other leadership positions at the school level in Zambia. These include the Deputy Head, who oversees academic affairs, as well as Heads of Departments (HODs) and Senior Teachers, who supervise professional activities and provide mentoring. There are also School In-service Coordinators who coordinate CPD activities within schools.

#### **Support from Parents and the Wider Community**

Parents and the wider community in Zambia support school leadership through various avenues. This includes participation in Boards of Institutions, PTC, School Boards, and Parent-Community Committees

(PCCs). These bodies collaborate with school leaders to enhance school governance, address community needs, and promote educational excellence.

### 3.2. Policy

The main policy document guiding education in Zambia is "*Educating Our Future: National Policy on Education*" (1996). This document provides a framework for the implementation of education at the national level. Key actions highlighted in the policy include decentralisation to district education boards, cost-sharing of education, increasing the number of teachers, fostering partnerships, and ensuring the provision of teaching and learning materials (TLMs) and infrastructure. Regarding the role of headteachers, the policy emphasises their importance in creating and maintaining excellence within schools. Headteachers are expected to be instructional leaders who inspire teachers and learners alike, fostering an environment conducive to effective teaching and learning.

The 2013 Teacher Profession Act provides for mandatory In-Service Training (INSET) for registered teachers and School leaders. This has provided for a functional INSET credit scheme which is crucial for a sustainable CPD strategy. This should serve to enhance the importance of CPD and should be linked to professional competence and to teachers' career progression.

The professional standards for effective school leadership in Zambia outlines the proficiency levels expected of novice, proficient and distinguished school leaders (Teaching Council of Zambia, 2019). The standards are developed around six areas of practice:

1. **Culture:** The responsibility for creating an institutional environment with a clear vision, clear goals and high standards for learners, staff, and other members of the school community.
2. **Teaching and Learning:** Responsibility for ensuring teaching methods and content meet expectations to achieve desired outcomes for learners.
3. **Institutional management:** Responsibility for leading and managing institutional operations, programmes, and activities, including monitoring and evaluation, in order to enhance institutional performance.
4. **Partnership and Network:** Responsibility for strengthening communication and relationships with stakeholders in the community, with other institutions, and with other educational leaders to support and enhance institutional performance.
5. **Professional Improvement:** Responsibility for developing own professional best practice, knowledge, and competences through engaging in systematic and managed professional learning.
6. **Research:** Responsibility for undertaking research, supporting others to undertake research and utilising research findings to improve teaching and learning and institution performance.

These standards guide school leaders in their roles and responsibilities to ensure effective management and improvement of schools. Additionally, the Code of Ethics provides guidelines for professional conduct, ensuring that school leaders uphold ethical standards in their practice.

The Ministry of Education 2022-2026 Strategic Plan in Zambia includes strategies to support school leadership. The plan aims to build the education management skills of school heads and standard officers

in areas such as policy, planning, and education management at the local level. This focus on capacity building is crucial for enhancing school leadership and overall educational quality in Zambia.

Currently, Zambia is undergoing key educational policy developments, including the review of the Education Policy and the Education Act. These revisions aim to align educational policies with national priorities.

### **3.3. Professional Development**

#### **a. Career Progression Trajectory for School Leaders**

In Zambia, career pathways for school leaders are not clearly defined by a standardised framework. Progression often occurs on an individual basis, typically based on performance evaluations and qualifications. Several government agencies support school leadership professional development in Zambia. These include Chalimbana University, The collaboration University of Zambia and Zimbabwe Open University (ZOU) (UNZA-ZOU), University of Zambia (UNZA), and the Teaching Council of Zambia (TCZ). These agencies support the building the capacity of school leaders in administrative and management skills. Their roles encompass designing and delivering professional development programmes to enhance leadership effectiveness at various levels including schools.

#### **b. Integration of School Leadership Professional Development in National Planning and Budget**

The Education Leadership and Management training programme to strengthen effective school management is provided and planned for by the Ministry of Education in the national budget. At the school level, there is allocation for school leadership professional development in the school budget and plans.

#### **c. School Leadership Professional Development Provision.**

The provision and undertakings of PDs at a national level in are mostly guided by the same policies though focus areas in provinces vary depending on needs. In various provinces across Zambia, Professional Development (PD) offerings for educational leadership are tailored to different target groups and provided by a range of entities.

In the Copperbelt and Southern provinces, the focus is on Educational Leadership and Management, with delivery through a blended approach involving in-person and remote modalities. These programmes are accredited and funded by a mix of self-sponsorship, bursaries, and government support. In the Northern province, PD covers Leadership, Management, and related skills, delivered in-person, and accredited by local institutions like Chalimbana and the National In-service Training College of the TCZ (NISTCOL TCZ).

In Muchinga province, PD offerings aim to enhance leadership and teaching skills, with varying accreditation status and funding sources, including government support and self-sponsorship. Luapula province offers a Study Plan PD programme for teachers, accredited by the Higher Education and High Qualification Authority, and funded by the World Bank and local mines.

In the Western province, PD focuses on Management and Administrative Leadership Capacity Building, with ongoing programmes supported by government and NGOs. In Eastern and Lusaka provinces, PD targets serving teachers and school administrators, covering Leadership and Management, Instructional Leadership, and other areas, with accreditation from reputable institutions.

Finally, in the Central province, PD is provided directly by the Ministry of Education through continuous professional meetings, although it is not accredited. These diverse offerings reflect a concerted effort to address the specific needs of educational leaders across Zambia's provinces.

### **3.4. Gender and Disability Mainstreaming**

At the policy level, Zambia is working towards implementing gender equality protocols outlined in international conventions and standards. While there is no specific policy addressing gender mainstreaming in school leadership professional development, there is a practice of assigning female head teachers to girls' schools, promoting gender balance in leadership roles. Also, if the headteacher is male, it is often expected that the deputy head should be female, and vice versa.

Regarding professional development, short courses on gender-responsive pedagogies are available to all leaders.

Currently, there is no policy in place to mainstream disability in school leadership professional development offerings. However, inclusiveness is being promoted to ensure equal opportunities for all individuals, including those with disabilities. Training plans allow for this inclusion, although the extent depends on individual plans and priorities.

### **3.5. Monitoring, Evaluation, and Research**

#### **a. Monitoring and Evaluation of School Leadership in Schools**

School leadership in Zambia is primarily monitored and evaluated through routine administrative and institutional processes. This includes ongoing assessments of school leaders' performance in areas such as instructional leadership, management of resources, and adherence to policies and procedures.

#### **b. Monitoring and Evaluation of School Leadership Professional Development Offerings**

Similarly, school leadership professional development offerings are monitored and evaluated through routine administrative and institutional mechanisms. The effectiveness of these programmes is often linked to school performance indicators, such as academic outcomes and disciplinary cases. Additionally, the number of disciplinary cases may serve as an indirect measure of the impact of leadership development initiatives.

#### **c. Influence of Policies and Strategies on School Leadership Implementation and Impact**

The impact of policies and strategies on school leadership and leadership development in Zambia has been somewhat limited. While there are policies in place, there have been no deliberate efforts to ensure

their full implementation. This lack of implementation has led to a gap between policy intentions and on-the-ground practices, affecting the overall effectiveness of school leadership in the country.

**d. Availability of Research on the Impact of School Leadership and SL development**

There is a growing body of research on the impact of school leadership and leadership development in Zambia. Some resource is available through [Google Scholar](#). These studies offer valuable insights into the effectiveness of school leadership practices and the role of leadership development in improving educational outcomes.

### **3.6. Sector Coordination and Dissemination.**

**a. Actors Involved in Professional Development and Educational Support:**

Various partners are involved in school leadership professional development at provincial and national levels in Zambia. These partners include UNESCO, the British Council, the World Bank, VVOB, USAID, UNICEF, Kalumbila Mine, Lumwana Mine, World Vision, Promoting Equality in African Schools (PEAS) Zambia, and the Zambia National Education Coalition (ZANEC). Their support spans areas such as funding, capacity building, resource provision, and programme implementation.

**b. Dissemination Strategies:**

In Zambia, knowledge on school leadership development is developed and mobilised through various channels. Exchange programmes are conducted across provinces, allowing school leaders to learn from each other's experiences. Research is also conducted to generate new knowledge and insights into effective leadership practices. Additionally, meetings and workshops are organised to share best practices and build the capacity of school leaders. The sharing and dissemination of knowledge on school leadership and development are carried out through various channels. CPD programmes like School Programme of In-service for the Term (SPRINT) provide opportunities for school leaders to enhance their skills and knowledge, where they use different channels including workshops, social media, and newsletters are also used to share information and best practices. Localised newsletters and publications from the TCZ and subject associations help disseminate knowledge to a wider audience.

**c. Existing Platforms for Coordination on School Leadership Professional Development:**

While there is no specific platform dedicated to coordinating partners in school leadership development, collaboration occurs through existing structures such as Project Coordinating- Committees (PCCs). Subcommittees within PCCs often discuss topics related to leadership, providing a forum for coordination and collaboration among different stakeholders. Although informal, these mechanisms facilitate the alignment of efforts and the sharing of resources to support school leadership development initiatives. However, there is room for more structured coordination among partners to enhance the effectiveness of school leadership development initiatives.



## 4. Conclusion and Recommendations

### 4.1. Policy

The education policies and plans in Zambia emphasise instructional leadership and decentralised decision-making, highlighting the pivotal role of headteachers in creating conducive learning environments and maintaining educational excellence. This emphasis is also reflected in the professional standards for school leaders, which outline the performance, knowledge, skills, competencies, and dispositions necessary for school leaders to enhance their professional practice, ultimately leading to improved learner achievements.

Moreover, the Ministry of Education's 2022-2026 Strategic Plan prioritises continuing professional development (CPD) for career progression, specifically aiming to enhance education management skills at the local level. However, there is a lack of clarity regarding the structure of career progression and the mainstreaming of gender and disability in accessing school leadership positions. To address these gaps, it is recommended to incorporate the following actions into the planned revision of the education policy and act:

- **Action 1: Include provisions for career progression:** This action involves incorporating clear pathways for career progression for school leadership roles within educational policies. These pathways should align with the expectations outlined in the professional standards for school leadership, providing guidance and benchmarks for advancement.
- **Action 2: Incorporate strategies for gender and disability mainstreaming:** This action aims to promote inclusivity by specifying measures to facilitate the advancement of women and individuals with disabilities to leadership roles. Strategies may include targeted recruitment and training programmes to address gender and disability barriers in school leadership.

### 4.2. Professional development

Zambia has several government agencies dedicated to supporting professional development for school leadership, including Chalimbana University, UNZA-ZOU collaboration, University of Zambia (UNZA), and the Teaching Council of Zambia (TCZ). These entities play vital roles in enhancing leadership effectiveness through the design and delivery of professional development programmes. Moreover, the integration of school leadership professional development into national planning and budgeting processes underscores its importance, with initiatives like the Education Leadership and Management training programme receiving support in the national budget. Across provinces, tailored professional development offerings address diverse needs, with programmes focusing on areas such as educational leadership, management, and instructional leadership. While efforts to promote inclusivity are evident through short courses on gender-responsive pedagogies, there remains a gap in mainstreaming disability in professional development initiatives. Nonetheless, ongoing initiatives demonstrate a commitment to addressing the specific needs of educational leaders and fostering equal opportunities for all individuals in Zambia. To

address these gaps and further enhance professional development in school leadership, the following actions are recommended:

- **Action 3: Develop a structured CPD programme:** This action focuses on establishing a comprehensive Continuous Professional Development (CPD) programme tailored specifically for school leaders. The programme should align with professional standards and concentrate on developing leadership capacity in areas critical for improving educational outcomes.
- **Action 4: Scale professional development initiatives:** To ensure broader adoption of effective school leadership practices, this action involves expanding professional development initiatives across all provinces. Scaling efforts may include increasing funding, enhancing infrastructure, and leveraging partnerships to reach a wider audience.
- **Action 5: Implement gender mainstreaming measures:** This action emphasises the integration of gender perspectives into professional development initiatives. It involves designing programmes and resources that address gender-specific needs and promote gender equality in school leadership.

### 4.3. Monitoring, evaluation, and Research

School leadership in Zambia undergoes monitoring and evaluation primarily through routine administrative processes, assessing aspects like instructional leadership and resource management. Similarly, professional development offerings for school leaders are monitored, often correlating their effectiveness with school performance indicators. Despite existing policies, their impact on school leadership implementation remains limited due to a lack of deliberate efforts towards full execution. While research on school leadership impact is growing, there is still room for more comprehensive studies to guide effective practices. To address these aspects, the following recommendations are proposed to foster a culture of continuous improvement in school leadership:

- **Action 6: Develop comprehensive monitoring and evaluation frameworks:** Establish frameworks that go beyond routine processes to include stakeholder feedback, peer evaluations, and external assessments. This will provide a more holistic assessment of leadership effectiveness and identify areas for improvement.
- **Action 7: Bridge the gap between policy intentions and on-the-ground practices:** Prioritise the implementation of existing policies related to school leadership by providing adequate resources, training, and support. Establish accountability mechanisms to ensure compliance and regularly review policies to address emerging challenges.
- **Action 8: Encourage further research on school leadership impact:** Support research initiatives that explore the impact of school leadership and leadership development on educational outcomes. Disseminate research findings through various platforms to inform decision-making and improve practice.

#### 4.4. Knowledge mobilisation, advocacy, communication, and sector coordination.

School leadership professional development in Zambia is enriched by the active involvement of diverse partners spanning global organisations, local entities, and NGOs. These stakeholders contribute significantly through funding, capacity building, resource provision, and programme implementation, collectively bolstering educational support across provincial and national levels. Dissemination strategies encompass a wide array of channels, including exchange programmes, research initiatives, workshops, and dedicated CPD programmes, ensuring the widespread sharing of knowledge and best practices among school leaders. Although coordination among partners primarily occurs through existing structures like Project Coordinating Committees (PCCs), there is room for further enhancement through more structured mechanisms.

- **Action 9: Establish a school leadership dedicated sector coordination platform:** Create a platform for stakeholders to collaborate, advocate for policy reform, and conduct needs assessments. This platform can facilitate dialogue, knowledge sharing, and collective action to advance school leadership in Zambia.

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