

NEWS ON THE GO

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Zambian constituents of the International Labour Organization (ILO) have adopted a “Roadmap towards a human-centred digital future in education,” which calls for the formulation of National Strategy on Digitalization in Education across all sectors for more inclusive and equitable digitalization of teaching and the teaching profession in the country.

Emerging from a workshop on “*Teaching and the teaching profession in a digital world – Zambia*”, ILO constituents recommended the formation of a joint technical committee to anchor and spearhead ICT integration in teaching and learning, with input and support from different education sector stakeholders.

The workshop, which was jointly funded by the ILO and the Deutsche Gesellschaft für Internationale Zusammenarbeit (GIZ), discussed the state of digitalization in the Zambian education system, focusing on primary and secondary schools, as well as Technical Education, Vocational and Entrepreneurship Training (TEVET) institutions. In addition, the workshop highlighted the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on education, particularly in relation to the use of technology for teaching and learning.



The workshop had as a basis a study conducted by renowned local researchers Mr. Gabriel Konayuma, Dr. Alice Shemi and Ms. Twaambo Chiinza, which examines the state of digitalization and teaching in Zambia, based on an analysis of existing literature and data, as well as interviews with key informants from various institutions in the education sector.

“The workshop adopted key principles to guide the digitalization of education in the country: Technology and digitalization offer powerful tools to make education more accessible, inclusive, relevant, effective and cost-efficient. But technology and digitalization will only make a difference if they are strategically deployed. An education digitalization strategy should therefore keep in mind. First consideration should be given to the education goals of Zambia. Investment in digitalization should be made only where learning can be augmented and transformed, not just substituted through technology. Digitalization should also respond to the needs of pandemic preparedness,” the constituents stated.

“Equality and equity of access should be an overriding principle of digitalization. This should include gender equality and access for persons with disabilities. Teachers and education personnel are the key to a successful digitalization. They require the necessary training and support for an effective digitalization, as well as decent work. This requires the establishment of clear competency frameworks. Teacher training institutions need to be well-equipped and have strengthened capacities to provide necessary digital competences,” read the recommendations in part.

“A holistic approach to digitalization should be taken, with tight collaboration across all relevant government entities and stakeholders, including private sector and private education providers. Policies related to ICT and education should be coordinated and implemented with clear timelines and financing plans. Digitalization should be driven through careful review of experiences, practices and data generated through monitoring and measurement,” they stated. “Digitalization in education needs to be coordinated with infrastructure investment, in particular for schools and training institutions, and teacher resource centres and other training providers for teachers. Such investments should be underpinned by innovative financing and revenue generation plans.”

The constituents made specific commitments on initiatives they would launch in coming months to strengthen digitalization and teaching.

“The Government should look into formulating a National Strategy on Digitalization in Education, led by the Ministry of Technology and Science together with other line ministries and stakeholders. It should also seek to invest more in digital infrastructure, curricula for teacher training and learners, capacity building for policy makers and stakeholders, and scaling up of education broadcasting services,” they stated.

Teacher unions committed to establishing a joint technical committee together with the Government and other stakeholders to support government efforts. While, the private sector agreed to scale up advocacy for digital learning, increasing collaboration with public sector and less privileged private schools, and providing advisory services for ed-tech creators and users, including virtual training for teachers.

Earlier during the official opening of the two-day workshop held at Protea Hotel in Chisamba, ILO Head of Public and Private Services, Sectoral Policies Department, Mr. Oliver Liang acknowledged the significance of digitalization in the education sector and how it affects teaching and the teaching profession.

Mr. Liang emphasised the role of tripartism in empowering teachers and the teaching profession.

He mentioned that the global dialogue on teaching and education recognised the significance of digitalization and the need to support education systems especially in underserved and unserved communities.

Mr. Liang further stated that despite the many advantages of technologies, digitalization also had its challenges such as infrastructure, data cost, data privacy, and ethics.



Mr. Liang speaks during the workshop

And Ministry of Technology and Science Assistant Director in charge of Skills Development, Ms. Precious Lisulo, emphasized the need for digitalization of teaching and the teaching profession in Zambia.

She stated that since the education sector was the most hit from the Covid-19 pandemic, digitalization of the education sector was a very critical agenda to be implemented as it focused on the delivery of education and training to the learners. She further mentioned that there was need to develop proper strategies that would guide the digitalization process in Zambia and help realise the objectives and aspirations of the Vision 2030 and the Eighth National Development Plan.

Meanwhile, GIZ Senior Education Policy Advisor, Mr. Erfan Diebel, said digitalization had impacted the education system worldwide and intensified through the pandemic of COVID-19.

Mr. Diebel commended the partnership between ILO and GIZ in implementing the project.

“To understand better the opportunities and challenges of digitalization, Zambia was chosen as one country amongst seven to conduct a study on teaching and teaching profession digitalization in a digital world,” said Mr. Diebel.



Mr. Diebel speaks at the workshop

The workshop was organized through a joint ILO-GIZ initiative on teaching and the teaching profession in a digital world: COVID-19 and beyond (2021-2022), which is present in Côte d'Ivoire, Kenya, Rwanda and Zambia in Africa and Bosnia and Herzegovina and Germany in Europe. The workshop was attended by representatives from the Government, Workers' and Employers' Organizations, international and development agencies, Non-Governmental Organizations, and academia.

In addition, the workshop also provided a forum to discuss input to the Transforming Education Summit, which will take place during the 77th UN General Assembly in September 2022 in New York. The Summit seeks to mobilize political ambition, action, solutions and solidarity to transform education; to take stock of efforts to recover pandemic-related learning losses; to reimagine education systems for the world of today and tomorrow; and to revitalize national and global efforts to achieve Sustainable Development Goal 4 on quality education. Teachers and digitalization of education are two main "Action Tracks" of the Summit.



Researchers Dr Shemi and Mr Konayuma present at the workshop.

Part of the participants at the workshop



Participants play games during the workshop

Participants pose for a group photo after the sessions