THURSDAY, 15 JUNE, 2017

MINISTERIAL STATEMENT

ON THE

IMPLEMENTATION OF THE FAST TRACK TEACHERS EDUCATION PROGRAMME

BY THE

HON. MINISTER OF GENERAL EDUCATION, DR WANCHINGA

Mr Speaker, thank you for giving me an opportunity to address the House on the topical issue on how the Ministry of General Education is implementing the Fast Track Teacher Education Programme for the benefit of the nation. Let me preface my statement by giving a brief background on why this particular subject is of great concern to the ministry and the country as a whole.

Sir, the teaching of mathematics, science and technical subjects is characterised by a number of factors such as inadequate numbers of children who take up these subjects in schools and being able to pursue them to completion. There is also the challenge of the inadequate number of teachers in schools who teach these subjects. Further, we have inadequate infrastructure for the teaching of these subjects. We also have the usual challenge of phobia, particularly among the child who is not willing to take up mathematics. However, in recent times, we have seen the girl child taking up technical subjects.

Mr Speaker, the impact of inadequate numbers of children graduating from our secondary schools is that it will be very difficult for us to answer to a number of national objectives, which include diversifying our economy, value addition and moving from our dependence on copper mining to other sectors which require the input of technological knowledge. This is the net effect.

Sir, therefore, when the Ministry of General Education recognised the need to accelerate the output of teachers from teacher training colleges, it implemented the programme called the Fast Track Teachers Education Programme.

Mr Speaker, Zambia has about twelve teacher training colleges, which are inadequately producing the teachers our educational system desperately needs. Let me also give you a few statistics concerning our educational sector so that this statement can be put in the right context.

Sir, this country has about 1,003 teachers at primary and secondary school levels. We also have about 851 secondary schools and about 3,300 primary schools. Out of these schools, only about 1,054 secondary schools are able to have laboratory facilities. Out of that number, only about 357 have some kind of laboratory space for the teaching of science and mathematics.

Mr Speaker, we also have what we call temporal structures for those schools which are unable to have full structures. We also have situations where some schools have put aside normal classrooms for the teaching of science.

Sir, the Ministry of General Education, through the National Science Centre, which is based in Kabulonga, also produces mobile laboratories which are distributed for the teaching of science in various schools. This is the background to the teaching of science and mathematics.

Mr Speaker, we are all aware that countries that have developed significantly are those that have invested heavily in the teaching of science and mathematics.

Indeed, the so-called tiger nations in the far East were able to rise to where they are now because of the heavy investment in science and technology. The Fast Track Teachers Education Programme was aimed at ensuring that Zambia has adequate stock of young people who could take up technical skills training, which this country badly needs, such as engineers, technologists, nurses, doctors and civil engineers. This programme of producing teachers at a fast rate was launched in 2012.

Mr Speaker, the Fast Track Teacher Education Programme for teachers is a modular distance education programme which enables teachers to attend residential school during holidays. During normal teaching periods, teachers are supposed to be at their bases practicing skills in which they were trained. The programme is currently being implemented at the University of

Zambia (UNZA), the Zambia Open University (ZAOU), the University of Lusaka (UNILUS) and DMI-St. Eugene University. Initially in 2012, when this programme was rolled-out, we started with 600 teachers for science and mathematics who were admitted at UNZA. This was followed by an additional 250 teachers in 2014.

Sir, ZAOU was allocated 167 and an additional seventy-nine teachers were allocated during the same period. In 2015, 2,000 teachers were allocated to various institutions to undertake training in science and mathematics and the breakdown is as follows:

DMI-St Euegene University

Courses	*No. of Teachers*
Primary Diploma	400
Primary Degree	400
Secondary Social Science	400
Secondary Science	400
Secondary Mathematics	400

Mr Speaker, between 2015 to date, 165 teachers have graduated from ZAOU, sixty-six from UNILUS, 340 from UNZA and 400 teachers from DMI-St Eugene University. However, currently, we have 2,000 teachers who are upgrading their skills in various areas and focusing on science and mathematics education who still remain sponsored by the Ministry of General Education. We have an additional amount of 1,600 teachers who are also undertaking mathematics and science education at DMI-St. Eugene University. The fast track programme has not only helped to upgrade the qualifications and competences of teachers, but has also