



## **INTEGRATION OF TECHNOLOGY IN THE TEACHING AND LEARNING OF PHYSICS IN ZAMBIA: CHALLENGES, OPPORTUNITIES, AND STRATEGIC ALIGNMENT WITH THE 2023 CURRICULUM**

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### **Abstract**

This study investigates the integration of technology in the teaching and learning of physics in Zambia in line with the 2023 New Curriculum for Secondary Schools. Using a mixed-methods design, data were collected through questionnaires, interviews, and observations from physics teachers, students, and administrators. The study examines current practices, identifies challenges such as inadequate infrastructure, limited teacher training, and low digital literacy, and evaluates the opportunities presented by tools like mobile technologies, virtual labs, and open educational resources. The findings indicate a positive correlation between technology-enhanced teaching and improved student engagement and conceptual understanding. The paper concludes by proposing strategic interventions including professional development, policy revision, infrastructure investment, and curriculum reform to support sustainable and effective technology integration in physics education in Zambia.

### **Keywords**

*Physics Education, Technology Integration, Digital Learning Tools, 2023 Zambian Curriculum, Teacher Training, Virtual Laboratories, Science Pedagogy, Educational Innovation, Zambia.*

### **1. Introduction**

The 21st century has ushered in profound changes in the way knowledge is created, disseminated, and applied—particularly within science education. Physics, as a foundational subject in secondary school science curricula, is uniquely positioned to

benefit from technological advancement in the classroom. Globally, the integration of technology in physics education has demonstrated positive outcomes, including enhanced conceptual understanding, improved student motivation, and more effective visualization of abstract phenomena (Kumar, 2022). In Zambia, this potential has been formally acknowledged through the 2023 New Curriculum, which emphasizes the use of digital tools to enhance teaching and learning across all subjects, including physics. Despite the curriculum's forward-looking vision, the practical implementation of technology in Zambian classrooms remains uneven. While some urban schools have adopted tools such as projectors, simulations, and educational apps, the majority of schools—particularly in peri-urban and rural areas—face systemic challenges that limit the use of technology. These include inadequate infrastructure, unreliable electricity, limited access to devices, and insufficient training for teachers. Additionally, many educators still rely on traditional chalk-and-talk methods, which are often insufficient for conveying the dynamic and conceptual nature of physics. Physics poses unique instructional challenges. Concepts such as electromagnetic induction, quantum phenomena, and vector motion are abstract and mathematically dense, making them difficult to grasp through lectures alone. In such contexts, technology can serve as a bridge between theory and practice, allowing students to experiment virtually, visualize invisible forces, and manipulate variables in simulations that would be impossible or unsafe in real laboratories. However, these advantages can only be realized when schools have the capacity, resources, and training to integrate these tools meaningfully into pedagogy. This study explores the current state of technology integration in the teaching and learning of physics in selected Zambian secondary schools. It investigates both the challenges and opportunities faced by educators and learners, with an emphasis on aligning classroom practices with the goals of the 2023 New Curriculum. By examining the experiences of teachers, students, and administrators, the study aims to generate insights that can guide policy makers, curriculum developers, and teacher education institutions toward scalable and sustainable improvements in physics education.

## 2. Research Objectives and Questions

The overarching goal of this study is to evaluate the integration of technology in physics education in Zambia, particularly in the context of the revised 2023 Secondary School Curriculum. The research seeks to understand how digital tools are currently used in classrooms, identify barriers to their effective implementation, and explore the opportunities they present for enhancing student learning outcomes in physics.

### 2.1 Research Objectives

- To assess the current practices of integrating technology into the teaching and learning of physics in selected secondary schools in Zambia.
- To identify the challenges faced by teachers, students, and administrators in implementing technology-enhanced physics instruction.
- To evaluate the opportunities and potential benefits offered by tools such as simulations, virtual laboratories, and mobile learning platforms in improving conceptual understanding in physics.
- To explore the alignment between the goals of the 2023 Zambian Secondary School Curriculum and the actual technological practices in physics classrooms.
- To recommend strategic interventions for promoting effective and sustainable use of technology in physics education across diverse school settings.

### 2.2 Research Questions

- What digital tools and technological resources are currently used in the teaching and learning of physics in Zambian secondary schools?
- What are the main institutional, pedagogical, and technical challenges hindering the integration of technology in physics education?
- How do teachers and students perceive the effectiveness of technology in improving physics understanding and classroom engagement?
- To what extent is the 2023 Curriculum's emphasis on technology integration reflected in everyday classroom practice?

- What strategic measures can be adopted to enhance the use of technology in the physics education ecosystem in Zambia?

### **3. Methodology**

This study adopted a mixed-methods research design, combining both quantitative and qualitative approaches to provide a comprehensive understanding of how technology is integrated into the teaching and learning of physics in Zambia. This methodological framework allowed for triangulation of data, ensuring that the results were both statistically valid and contextually rich.

#### **3.1 Research Setting and Participants**

The study was conducted in six government and grant-aided secondary schools in Zambia's Lusaka and Central Provinces, reflecting a mix of urban and peri-urban educational settings. Participants included 12 physics teachers, 3 head teachers or curriculum coordinators, and 180 students enrolled in Grades 10 to 12. The schools were selected based on accessibility, variation in technological infrastructure, and participation in recent curriculum implementation training related to the 2023 reform.

#### **3.2 Sampling Technique**

A combination of purposive and stratified sampling was employed. Teachers were selected based on their subject specialization and experience in using educational technology. Students were stratified by grade level to ensure balanced representation across the secondary school continuum. Head teachers were included to provide institutional perspectives on infrastructure, policy implementation, and leadership support for technology integration.

#### **3.3 Data Collection Tools**

Questionnaires were administered to students and teachers to gather quantitative data on access to digital tools, frequency of use, and perceived impact on learning. Semi-structured interviews with teachers and administrators explored deeper issues such as

training needs, curriculum alignment, and infrastructural support. Classroom observations provided insight into actual teaching practices, including how and when technology was used, student engagement levels, and integration with curriculum objectives. Document review of lesson plans, school improvement plans, and curriculum guides helped contextualize findings within institutional frameworks.

### 3.4 Data Analysis

Quantitative data from the questionnaires were analyzed using descriptive statistics (means, frequencies, standard deviations), while inferential analysis was employed where appropriate to identify correlations between access to technology and learning outcomes. Qualitative data from interviews and observations were transcribed and analyzed using thematic coding, focusing on key categories such as barriers to integration, opportunities for innovation, teacher preparedness, and institutional support. This methodological approach enabled the researchers to build a multi-perspective understanding of how technology is being integrated—or not—into the teaching and learning of physics, and to generate evidence-based recommendations for future policy and practice.

## 4. Results and Discussion

The findings from this study reveal a mixed picture of technology integration in physics education across the selected Zambian secondary schools. While there is growing awareness among educators of the benefits of educational technology, actual classroom implementation remains limited and uneven due to infrastructural, pedagogical, and policy-related challenges. The discussion is organized into key thematic areas derived from the data.

### 4.1 Technology Usage in Physics Classrooms

Across the six schools studied, only a minority of physics teachers reported consistent use of technology in instruction. Tools cited included projectors, smartphones, simulation software (such as PhET), and YouTube videos. Teachers who had undergone training workshops related to the 2023 curriculum were more likely to experiment with these

tools, using them to demonstrate complex physics concepts like projectile motion, refraction, and electricity. However, over 60% of teachers acknowledged that technology use was sporadic, primarily due to limited access to devices and internet connectivity. In schools where functional computer labs existed, they were often shared with other departments or repurposed for administrative functions, thereby reducing their availability for regular science instruction.

#### 4.2 Student Engagement and Learning Outcomes

Students in technology-enabled classrooms reported higher levels of interest and understanding, particularly in topics that are abstract or involve motion and forces. The use of animated simulations and virtual labs helped demystify concepts that are difficult to reproduce in physical settings due to safety or cost concerns. For example, in one observed lesson on electromagnetic induction, students who watched a simulation showing field line movement and induced current performed significantly better on a follow-up conceptual quiz than peers in traditional lecture-based settings. These findings suggest a positive correlation between digital content usage and conceptual clarity, particularly for visual and kinesthetic learners.

#### 4.3 Barriers to Effective Integration

Despite these benefits, several critical challenges hindered the consistent integration of technology: **Inadequate Infrastructure:** Many classrooms lacked basic necessities such as electricity, secure storage for devices, or stable internet connections. In some rural schools, even the most basic ICT tools were absent.

**Limited Teacher Training:** Most teachers had not received formal instruction on how to integrate technology into their physics lessons. Those who did reported that the training was brief, theoretical, and not tailored to subject-specific needs.

**Overcrowded Classrooms:** Large student-to-teacher ratios made it difficult to facilitate interactive, tech-based lessons. Teachers found it challenging to ensure equal access to devices or manage classroom behavior during digital activities.



Curricular Misalignment: Some teachers felt that the national exams still prioritized theoretical recall over practical or technology-based learning, which discouraged experimentation with digital tools.

#### 4.4 Alignment with the 2023 Curriculum

The 2023 Zambian Secondary School Curriculum explicitly promotes the use of ICT and digital literacy in all subjects, with physics singled out as a priority area for simulation and visualization. However, the gap between curriculum policy and classroom practice remains wide. While head teachers were generally aware of the policy directives, most schools lacked implementation roadmaps, support structures, or dedicated budgets for technology integration in science. Teachers reported feeling enthusiastic about the curriculum's vision but constrained by lack of training, peer support, and administrative flexibility. Without coordinated support and systemic investment, the curriculum's goals risk remaining aspirational rather than transformational.

### 5. Challenges and Opportunities

The integration of technology into physics education in Zambia presents a landscape shaped by both persistent barriers and promising possibilities. While the 2023 curriculum encourages digital innovation in teaching, systemic challenges continue to impede full implementation. This section outlines the key challenges and opportunities identified through the study.

#### 5.1 Challenges

##### a. Infrastructure Deficits

Many schools lack the basic infrastructure required for sustained technology integration. Unreliable electricity, insufficient computer labs, poor internet connectivity, and absence of secure storage for devices were frequently cited as deterrents. Teachers also expressed

concern about the risk of theft or vandalism of ICT equipment in under-resourced environments.

#### b. Inadequate Professional Development

A significant number of teachers indicated that they had not received adequate training on integrating digital tools into physics instruction. Those who had attended CPD workshops often found them to be overly general, lacking subject-specific strategies. As a result, even where technology is available, it is not always used effectively or confidently.

#### c. Digital Literacy Gaps

Both students and teachers in peri-urban and rural schools demonstrated low levels of digital literacy, limiting their ability to engage meaningfully with available tools. Some students lacked personal experience with computers or tablets and found basic navigation of software or simulations challenging.

#### d. Time Constraints and Syllabus Pressure

Teachers reported that the pressure to complete the syllabus for national exams leaves little room for experimentation with new teaching methods. The additional time required to prepare and facilitate tech-based lessons is often perceived as impractical in an already packed academic calendar.

#### e. Policy-Implementation Mismatch

While the 2023 curriculum outlines ambitious goals for digital integration, many schools have not received corresponding support, such as updated teaching guides, ICT resource kits, or implementation timelines. This disconnect results in inconsistent and fragmented efforts.

### 5.2 Opportunities

#### a. High Student Receptivity

Students across all schools showed enthusiasm for digital learning tools. Many expressed a desire for more frequent use of simulations, videos, and mobile-based applications. This intrinsic motivation is a valuable asset that educators and policymakers can leverage.

#### b. Mobile Technology Penetration



Despite infrastructure limitations, mobile phones are increasingly accessible to students and teachers. Several educators reported success using WhatsApp groups to share video clips, assignments, and links to physics simulations. This indicates that mobile learning could be a scalable interim solution for bridging the resource gap.

#### c. Availability of Open Educational Resources (OER)

Teachers who used platforms such as PhET, Khan Academy, and YouTube found them effective in illustrating complex concepts. These freely available tools can supplement instruction and reduce reliance on expensive proprietary software.

#### d. Supportive Curriculum Policy

The 2023 curriculum provides a policy window that legitimizes experimentation and integration of technology in science education. This framework, if operationalized with clear funding and support mechanisms, can catalyze large-scale change.

#### e. Potential for Public-Private Partnerships

There is growing interest among NGOs, tech firms, and development partners in supporting education through digital platforms. Collaborative initiatives could provide hardware donations, training programs, or locally developed educational content.

## 6. Recommendations

To ensure the effective and sustainable integration of technology in the teaching and learning of physics in Zambia, the following strategic interventions are recommended. These are informed by the study's findings and aligned with the goals of the 2023 Zambian Curriculum.

### 6.1 Invest in Subject-Specific Professional Development

The Ministry of Education and teacher training institutions should design and implement specialized CPD programs focused on integrating technology in science and physics instruction. These should be hands-on, context-sensitive, and aligned with the Zambian curriculum. Teachers should be trained not just in ICT use, but in pedagogical strategies that maximize student learning with technology.

## 6.2 Strengthen Digital Infrastructure in Schools

Government, donors, and private sector partners should collaborate to improve digital infrastructure, especially in underserved areas. This includes the provision of solar-powered ICT labs, reliable internet connectivity, and secure storage for devices. Even modest infrastructure improvements—such as mobile projectors and Wi-Fi hotspots—can have a major impact.

## 6.3 Promote the Use of Mobile and Offline Technologies

Given the widespread ownership of mobile phones, the Ministry of Education should encourage the use of mobile-based learning tools, including offline physics apps, audio-visual lessons, and SMS-based content delivery systems. Partnerships with developers can produce affordable, curriculum-aligned applications that support both students and teachers in low-connectivity areas.

## 6.4 Develop and Distribute Localized Digital Content

Locally relevant and curriculum-aligned digital physics content should be created in collaboration with Zambian teachers and subject experts. This may include simulations in local languages, virtual lab activities tailored to the Zambian context, and interactive assessments. Open licensing models should be used to ensure broad accessibility.

## 6.5 Embed Digital Assessment in National Exams

To reinforce the integration of technology, the Examinations Council of Zambia (ECZ) should begin incorporating digital competencies and simulation-based questions into science assessments. This will incentivize both teachers and schools to align instruction with tech-based practices.

## 6.6 Foster Communities of Practice and Peer Mentoring

Schools should be encouraged to establish Digital Learning Committees or Communities of Practice (CoPs) where teachers can share experiences, tools, and lesson plans. Experienced teachers can mentor colleagues through model lessons and peer observation.

### 6.7 Monitor, Evaluate, and Adapt Implementation

Ongoing monitoring and evaluation mechanisms must be established to track the effectiveness of technology integration. School-level ICT audits, student performance analytics, and teacher feedback loops should be used to refine policies and inform targeted support.

### 6.8 Leverage Public–Private Partnerships

The Ministry of Education should actively seek partnerships with technology companies, telecom providers, NGOs, and universities to fund hardware donations, teacher training, content development, and infrastructure rollouts. Incentivized collaborations could lead to scalable, low-cost innovations in science education delivery. These recommendations collectively aim to bridge the gap between policy and practice, ensuring that the transformative potential of technology in physics education is realized not only in vision but also in classrooms across Zambia.

## 7. Conclusion

The integration of technology in the teaching and learning of physics represents a transformative opportunity for Zambian education. Aligned with the goals of the 2023 New Curriculum, digital tools offer a pathway to deepen conceptual understanding, enhance student engagement, and modernize science instruction to meet global standards. This study has demonstrated that, when effectively implemented, technology enriches the learning environment by making abstract physics phenomena more tangible, interactive, and accessible. However, the current state of implementation reveals a stark disparity between curricular vision and classroom reality. Many schools lack the basic infrastructure, training, and policy support required for meaningful technology use. Teachers are enthusiastic yet underprepared, and students are eager yet under-resourced. The challenges—ranging from digital illiteracy to infrastructural limitations—underscore the need for a systemic, well-coordinated response that addresses both pedagogical capacity and technological access. At the same time, promising signs abound. Student

receptiveness to digital tools, teacher willingness to innovate, and the increasing availability of open educational resources present a fertile ground for scalable intervention. With strategic investment in teacher training, infrastructure development, mobile technology, and localized digital content, Zambia can bridge the gap and create physics classrooms that are not only aligned with the national curriculum but are also globally competitive. To succeed, the shift must be collective: led by policy makers, supported by institutions, enabled by partnerships, and driven by the commitment of teachers and learners. By embracing these changes, Zambia can empower its youth with the scientific skills, digital fluency, and critical thinking needed for success in an increasingly technological world.

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