

PERCEPTIONS OF TEACHERS AND LEARNERS ON THE EFFECTIVENESS OF CIVIC EDUCATION IN THE DEVELOPMENT OF CIVIC COMPETENCY AMONG LEARNERS IN CHIPATA DISTRICT, ZAMBIA

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Abstract

The study examined the Perceptions of Teachers and Learners on the Effectiveness of Civic Education in the Development of Civic Competency among Learners in Chipata District, Eastern Province of Zambia. The study employed the descriptive quantitative method. The variables associated with the study were civic knowledge, civic skills and civic disposition. The total number of secondary schools in Chipata is seven (7) with 228 teachers and 7550 pupils. The sample comprised of three secondary schools (one single sex male, one single sex female and one co-educational). Thirty teachers (10 from each school) were selected randomly. One hundred and eighty (180) pupils (60 from each school and 20 from each of grade levels 10-12) were also selected using the simple random sampling technique. A self-constructed structured questionnaire was used for data collection. The questionnaire was face and content validated. A pilot study was carried out in one co-education school in Chipata District using thirty five respondents (5 teachers and 30 pupils). The reliability of the instrument was determined using the Cronbach's Alpha reliability method. An Alpha reliability coefficient of 0.829 was obtained. Data collected was analysed using the statistical package for Social Science (SPSS). Descriptive statistics was employed. The outcome of the analysis revealed that both teachers and pupils regard civic education as highly effective in the development of learner's civic competency in terms of civic knowledge, civic skills and civic disposition. The findings of the study therefore revealed that civic education plays a significant role in the political development of the learner. Civic education is an important component of education that cultivates in learners

to participate in public life of democracy, to use their rights and to discharge their responsibilities with the necessary knowledge and skills.

Keywords: Perceptions, Effectiveness, Civic Education, Development, Civic competency, Civic knowledge, Civic skills, Civic disposition

Introduction

Civic education (also known as citizen education or democracy education) in democracy is education in self-government. Democratic self-government means that citizens are actively involved in their governance. The ideals of democracy are most realised when every member of the political community shares in its citizen. Members of the political community are its governance. Membership implies participation but not participation for participation sake. Citizen's participation in a democratic society must be based on informed, critical reflection, and on the understanding and acceptance of the rights and responsibilities that go with that membership.

According to Carpini and Keeter (2008), civic Education is concerned with three (3) different elements:

1. civic knowledge,
2. civic skills and
3. civic disposition.

Civic knowledge refers to citizens understanding of the working of the political systems and of their own political civic rights and responsibilities (e.g. the right to freedom of expression and to vote and run for public office, and the responsibilities to respect the rule of law and the rights and interests of others). Civic skills refer to citizens' ability to analysis, evaluate, take and defend positions on public issues, and to use their knowledge to participate in civic and political processes (e.g. to monitor government performance, or mobilise other citizens around particular issues). Civic dispositions are defined as the citizen traits necessary for a democracy (e.g. tolerance, public spiritedness, civility, critical mindedness and willingness to listen, negotiate and compromise).

Branson & Quigley (2006) stated that by far the most wide spread application of civic education is in formal school education. It is being as part of the regular curriculum in primary schools and secondary schools around the world, and there are extensive pedagogical resources available from the many civil society organisations involved in promoting this aspect of the approach. They further argued that civic education was an important component of education that cultivates citizens to participate in public life of a democracy, to use their rights and to discharge their responsibilities with the necessary knowledge and skills. Societies have long had an interest in the

ways in which their young are prepared for citizenship and in how they learn to take part in civic life. Today that interest might better be described as a growing concern, particularly in democratic societies.

According to Branson (2004), civic education is essential to sustain constitutional democracy. The habits of the mind, as well as "habits of the heart," the dispositions that inform the democratic ethos, are not inherited. As Alexis de Toqueville (2010) pointed out, each new generation was a new people that must acquire the knowledge, learn the skills, and develop the dispositions or traits of private and public character that undergird a constitutional democracy. Those dispositions must be fostered and nurtured by word and study and by the power of example. He further mentioned that Democracy was not a "machine that would have go itself," but must be consciously reproduced, one generation after another.

According to Galston (2006), civic education in a democratic society most assuredly needed to be concerned with promoting understanding of the ideals of democracy and a reasoned commitment to the values and principles of democracy. That does not mean, however, that democracy should be presented as utopia. Democracy is not utopian, and citizens need to understand that lest they become cynical, apathetic, or simply withdraw from political life when their unrealistic expectations are not met. To be effective civic education must be realistic; it must address the central truths about political life. It is reasonably clear that good citizens are made, not born. The question is how, by whom, to what end? Galston (2006) stated that, civic education programs have the potential to convey political knowledge to students. However, the extent to which knowledge is gained through these programs depends upon students' civic learning experience. Civics instruction across the nation varies widely in its structure, content, and quality.

According to Komalasari (2009) civic competence referred to someone's wish to become an active member of a democracy and it was also known as social conscience. A person who possesses civic competence is involved in the community and has patriotic feelings about his country. It helps to become a better citizen and competent people are more likely responsible for their actions because they are aware of their rights and obligations. Civic competence could be described as a person's understanding and desire to be an active member of a democracy. Developing civic competence is developing a social conscience. This included becoming involved in the community, appreciating diversity and patriotism, ability to make informed decisions and an understanding of the rights and responsibilities of citizenship.

According to Simfukwe (2010), the historical background of the Zambia high school Civic Education Curriculum could be traced to the

period after 1991 when the democratic system of governance was re-introduced in Zambia. In 1995, the Ministry of Education (MOE) in conjunction with the Southern University Democratic Governance Project (USAID/ Zambia), commissioned a needs assessment on the introduction of Civic Education in Zambia high schools. One key recommendation from the study was that Civic Education needed to be introduced in all high schools in Zambia. The teaching and learning of Civic Education will help pupils recognise the profound role that this subject plays in our constantly changing world. The Ministry of Education hope that through Civic Education learners will be equipped with knowledge, skills and values which will enable them to practice their civic rights and perform duties as responsible Zambian citizens (Simfukwe, 2010).

Civic Education syllabus cover a cross section of political, economic, social and cultural issues that are key to Zambia's democratic system of governance. Some of the themes and topics covered in the civic education syllabus include: Governance, Human Rights, Rights of the Child, family law, Developmental Planning, Poverty in Zambia, Environmental Education and global issues. It is taught in schools as an optional subject. The themes and topics covered in civic education curriculum are based on the set goals of the National Policy on education (Educating our Future, 1996).Civic education will enable school leavers to gain the civic knowledge and acquire skills that will enable them understand and practice their civic values, rights and obligations as responsible Zambian citizens (Curriculum Development Centre 2010).

Statement of the Problem

In 1995, an assessment carried out by the ministry of education, Zambia in conjunction with the Southern University democratic governance project on the rights of the pupils and how best they could contribute to governance of the country. The assessment revealed that most pupils were not acquainted with their rights. One key recommendation from the study was that civic education needed to be introduced in all high schools in Zambia but currently it is taught as an optional subject. This study therefore intends to determine the effectiveness of civic education on the development of civic competency of the learners in Chipata district, Zambia. Effectiveness in this study is a measure of the extent to which civic education helps or assists learners in developing civic competency in terms of Civic knowledge, Civic skills and Civic disposition

Research Questions

The researches sought answers to the following research questions:

1. To what extent is civic education effective in the development of civic competency of learners in terms of:

- a. Civic knowledge
- b. Civic skills
- c. Civic disposition

Research Methodology

The study employed the descriptive quantitative method. The total number of secondary schools in Chipata is seven (7) with 228 teachers and 7550 pupils. The sample comprised of three secondary schools (one single sex male, one single sex female and one co-educational). Thirty teachers (10 from each school) were selected randomly. One hundred and eighty(180) pupils (60 from each school and 20 from each of grade levels 10-12) were also selected using the simple random sampling technique. A self-constructed structured questionnaire was used for data collection. The questionnaire was face and content validated. A pilot study was carried out in one co-education school in Chipata District using thirty five respondents (5 teachers and 30 pupils). The reliability of the instrument was determined using the Cronbach's Alpha reliability method. An Alpha reliability coefficient of 0.829 was obtained. Data collected was analysed using the statistical package for Social Science (SPSS). The descriptive statistics was employed.

This chapter explained the methodology used in the study. The chapter included Research Design, Population of the Study, Sample and Sampling Techniques, Research Instruments, Validation and Reliability of the Instrument, Data Collection Procedures and Data Analysis Procedure.

Results

The results of the analysis are discussed as follows

Research Question

To what extent is civic education effective in the development of civic competency of learners in terms of:

- a. Civic knowledge
- b. Civic skills
- c. Civic disposition

Civic knowledge

Table 1 below shows the perceptions of teachers and pupils on the effectiveness of Civic Education on learners' civic knowledge. The table revealed that teachers perceived civic knowledge as very highly effective in learners understanding of how government is run on the political system, understanding and knowing their rights, to be responsible citizens as well as

help them understand the functions associated with governing the country with means of 4.8333, 4.8667, 4.6333 and 4.5667 respectively.\

Table 1: Civic Knowledge

Item	Teachers		Pupils	
	Mean	STD	Mean	STD
Learning Civic education helps the learner/me to understand how the government is run or the political system.	4.8333	.37905	4.6944	.59886
Civic education helps the learner/me to understand and know their rights (freedom of expression and right to vote).	4.8667	.34575	4.8056	.47387
Learning Civic education helps the learner/me to be a responsible citizen (respecting the law, the rights and interests of others).	4.6333	.49013	4.5944	.66599
Civic education Principles (rights, freedom of expression,) is practiced by the learner/me in school.	3.3333	1.12444	4.1722	.95619
Learning Civic education helps the learner/me to understand the structure of governing the country.	4.4333	.81720	4.3278	.85763
Learning Civic education helps the learner/me to understand the functions associated with governing the country.	4.5667	.56832	4.2722	.88331
Learning Civic education helps the learner/me to understand the processes of governing the country.	4.5000	.73108	4.2389	.94759
Average	4.4524	.41282	4.4437	.451120

Interpretation of Mean Scores: 4.51-5.00 = Very Highly Effective, 3.51-4.50 = Highly Effective, 2.51-3.50 = Effective, 1.51-2.50 = Fairly Effective, 1.00-1.50 = Not Effective

The low standard deviation for all the four items showed that the teachers were homogeneous in their responses. The teachers also perceived civic knowledge as highly effective in helping learners understand the structure of governing the country with a mean of 4.4333 and the processes of governing the country with a mean of 4.5000. The standard deviations of 0.81720 and 0.73108 respectively showed homogeneity of responses. The overall mean of 4.4524 indicated that teachers perceived civic knowledge as highly effective in the development of civic knowledge by learners.

In the perception of the pupils, civic knowledge is very highly effective in their understanding of how government is run on the political system, in understanding and knowing their rights, as well as help them become responsible citizens with means of 4.6944, 4.8056, and 4.5944 respectively. The low standard deviations for the three items showed that the pupils were homogeneous in their responses. The overall mean of 4.4437 showed that civic knowledge is highly effective in their development of civic

knowledge and they were homogeneous in their responses with a standard deviation of 0.45112.

The finding of this study is in agreement with the assertion of Branson & Quigley (2006) who argued that civic education was an important component of education that cultivates citizens to participate in the public life of a democracy, to use their rights and to discharge their responsibilities with the necessary knowledge and skills.

Civic skills

Table 2 below shows the perceptions of teachers and pupils on the effectiveness of Civic Education on learners' civic skills. The table revealed that teachers perceived civic education as very highly effective in learners knowing how to participate in an election with the mean of 4.5333. The standard deviation of .57135 showed that the teachers were homogeneous in their responses. The teachers also perceived civic education as highly effective in helping learners develop the skill of respecting one's rights, expressing their freedom of speech, exchanging opinion and the skill to dialogue matters in a meaningful way with means of 4.4333, 4.2333, 4.2000 and 4.0000 respectively. The standard deviations for the items showed homogeneity of responses.

Table 2: Civic Skills

Ítem	Teachers		Pupils	
	Mean	STD	Mean	STD
Civic education helps the learner/me to know how to communicate with councilors and members of parliament.	3.5000	1.04221	3.0611	1.41880
Civic education helps the learner/me to know how to participate in an election.	4.5333	.57135	4.3944	.87483
Civic education helps the learner/me to dialogue matters in a meaningful way.	4.0000	.91972	3.8667	1.04854
Civic education enables the learner/me to participate effectively and actively				
a. In a class	3.8667	1.07425	4.2333	1.03622
b. In the school	3.8667	1.00801	4.2611	.93572
c. In the community	3.9667	1.03335	4.1722	1.00741
Civic education helps the learner/me to develop the skill of exchanging opinion.	4.2000	.80516	4.2333	1.08880
Civic education helps the learner/me to develop the skill of respecting one's rights.	4.4333	.89763	4.5833	.77586
Civic education helps the learner/me to develop the skill of expressing their freedom of speech.	4.2333	.97143	4.4778	.88725
Average	4.0667	.63635	4.1426	.55924

The overall mean of 4.0667 indicated that teachers perceived civic education as highly effective in the development of civic skills by learners

In the perception of the pupils, civic education is very highly effective in their developing of skills to respect one's rights with a mean of 4.5833. The standard deviation of 0.77586 showed that the pupils were homogeneous in their responses. The pupils perceived other items as highly effective in helping them develop civic skills. The overall mean of 4.1426 showed that civic education is very effective in their development of civic skills and they were homogeneous in their responses.

The finding of this study is in agreement with the affirmation of Galston (2004) who stated that, if citizens are to influence the course of political life and the public policies adopted, they needed to expand their repertoire of participatory skills; voting certainly is an important means of exerting influence.

Civic disposition

Table 3 below shows the perceptions of teachers and pupils on the effectiveness of Civic Education on learners' civic disposition. The table revealed that teachers perceived civic education as very highly effective in learners understanding if the country is run in a democratic or dictatorial way with a mean of 4.7333. The standard deviation of 0.44978 showed that the teachers were homogeneous in their responses.

Table 3: Civic Disposition

Ítem	Teachers		Pupils	
	Mean	STD	Mean	STD
Civic education helps the learner/me to become independent member of the society who will take responsibility to every action.	4.0000	1.17444	4.1444	1.08891
Civic education helps the learner/me to be responsible politically.	3.8667	1.04166	4.0111	1.10352
Civic education helps the learner/me to respect others feelings and human dignity (respecting others and being a good listener).	4.2667	.82768	4.3111	1.00440
Civic education helps the learner/me to understand if the country is run in a democratic or dictatorial way.	4.7333	.44978	4.5556	.853660
Civic education helps the learner/me to develop the ability to participate thoughtfully in civic affairs	4.3000	.87691	4.2278	.99063
Civic education helps the learner/me to develop the ability to participate meaningfully in civic affairs	4.3667	.96431	4.1222	1.00087
Average	4.2556	.66915	4.2287	.59117

The teachers also perceived civic education as highly effective in the development of learners' civic disposition. The overall mean of 4.2556 showed that teachers perceived civic education as highly effective in the

learners' development of civic disposition and they were homogeneous in their responses.

In the perception of the pupils, civic education is very highly effective in their understanding of whether the country is run in a democratic or dictatorial way with a mean of 4.5556. The standard deviation of 0.85366 showed that the pupils were homogeneous in their responses. Other items were found to be highly effective in helping them develop civic disposition. The overall mean of 4.2287 showed that civic education is very effective in their development of civic disposition by learners. The finding of this study is in agreement with the assertion of Butts (2007) who argued that the overall goal of civic education is to promote civic engagement and support democratic and participatory governance.

Conclusion

From the above it is evident that civic education plays a significant role in the political development of the learners. Civic education is an important component of education that cultivates in citizens to participate in public life of a democracy, to use their rights and to discharge their responsibilities with the necessary knowledge and skills. The study revealed that civic education is indeed essential in the development of the three key civic elements in the learner (civic knowledge, civic skills and civic disposition). Based on this, it was recommended that the policy makers, the Government and other stakeholders should emphasize the learning of civic education in schools, make civic education a general subject and not an optional subject as well as establish school councils in schools which would enhance academic freedom in learners and participation in school governance.

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