

An Investigation on the Role of Education in the Governance of Schools in Some Selected Schools of Chibombo District

Owen Chisha Musonda*
**Dmi St. Eugene University.*

Abstract

This study investigated the role of civic education in promoting school governance in Keembe Constituency of Chibombo District. It examined how civic education contributes to addressing student unrest and stakeholder dissatisfaction in schools. A qualitative descriptive research design was used, guided by the Ladder of Participation model.

Three secondary schools were purposively selected, involving the District Education Board Secretary (DEBS), head teachers, teachers, pupils, and parents. Data was collected through interviews and focus group discussions.

The findings revealed that democratic practices exist in schools, with stakeholders participating in decision-making through structures such as Student Representative Councils, Parent-Teacher Committees, and School Management Boards. Civic education has contributed to improved governance; however, challenges such as low participation, limited accountability, lack of transparency, and inadequate experience and confidence among stakeholders persist.

The study concludes that while civic education has enhanced school governance, there is a need for stronger implementation of democratic practices. It recommends the development of clear policies to integrate civic education at all levels and promote active stakeholder participation in school governance.

Keywords: Civic Education, School Governance, Participation, Democracy, Stakeholders.

1. INTRODUCTION

This chapter provides background information, statement of the problem, purpose of study, objectives, study questions, significant of the study, delimitation, limitation to study and the definitions of terms used in the study.

Background to the Study

The re-introduction of multiparty politics in 1991 and introduction of civic education in 2004 in secondary schools in Zambia facilitated the establishment of support for effective citizen participation in governance. The concept of good governance is not a recent phenomenon in our schools and nation. It has been around for a long time, referring in a generic sense to the task of running a government or any other appropriate entity, for example a school. According to Bevir, (2013), the concept of governance is seen as a set of values, policies and institutions through which the society manages social processes at different levels, on the basis of interaction and is probably as old as human civilization. It broadly means the process of decision making and the process by which decisions are implemented or not implemented. The idea of connecting education to governance has been present from the time of colonialism in Zambia. Leadership of schools has now been transformed from the traditional style to one that involves other stakeholders. The traditional school leadership is one that adopted the top-down approach where head teachers were expected to be masters of

everything. This necessitated the concept of participation which has been endorsed by the Zambia Civic Education Association and Government in schools through numerous education reforms (M.o.E, 1996). Effective Civic Education in schools thrives on teaching methodologies which provides an avenue to learners to have knowledge, skills and other civic dispositions that enable them to serve in complex communities (Prentice and Robinson. 2007) linked between the school and its community represent an opportunity to motivating stakeholder participation in activities of the school to achieve the objectives and goals for the schools. According to Mukwena (2001), the educational decentralization reforms appear to have been driven by political expediency than by the need to improve the administrative performance of schools. Despite the efforts invested by Zambian government to decentralize education, stakeholders in school governance point to marginal progress in results achieved by the decentralization policy (Irish Aid, 2013). This is attributed to a number of factors mostly related to poor administrative challenges. The reasons for an increased emphasis on good governance in schools lie in a number of issues confronting the contemporary schools among them growing awareness of human rights. Compared with the situation in traditional schools, the contemporary school is becoming ever more complex.

Problem Statement

The aims and objectives of governance which are related to the processes of interaction and decision-making tend to be influenced by an understanding of civic engagement in the governance of schools. This calls for optimum management and planning in schools where new ideas and changes can be addressed very quickly and efficiently at School level (Mawele 1993 cited in Mphale, 2000). For this to happen, schools are encouraged to have effective forums where stakeholders engage each other on matters of concern. This is designed to have schools with reduced levels of unrest from learners and dissatisfaction from teachers and other stakeholders. Besides numerous efforts from the Ministry of Education to ensure good governance practices, there are still cases of unrest and discontent from stakeholders regarding their involvement in the decision-making processes in schools (Sikayile, 2011). If this situation is allowed to continue, schools will become ungovernable institutions where there be no rule of law. Therefore, incidences of student unrest, and low levels of moral among teachers and other stakeholders will be the order of the day in schools. The Ministry's desire to have democratic schools may not be attainable. It is against this background that this study was conducted to investigate the role of civic education in school governance in Zambia.

Research Objectives.

General objective: To investigate the role of Civic Education in the governance of Schools in selected secondary schools in Keembe constituency of Chibombo District.

Specific Objectives: The following were the objectives of the study.

- (i) To find out how democratic practices in schools in Zambia can promote stakeholder participation in the governance of schools in Lusaka Province.
- (ii) To determine how shared leadership in schools can enhance good governance and curb student unrest and teachers' discontent in schools.
- (iii) To identify challenges in schools and how they affect school governance and reduce unrest and discontent among pupils and teachers respectively.
- (iv) To identify ways of preventing unrest in schools.

Research Question.

The research aimed to answer the following research questions:

1. What are the practices of good governance in selected secondary schools in Keembe Constituency promote participation in school governance?
2. How does shared leadership in promote good school governance and curb unrest among learners and discontent among teachers in schools?
3. What challenges are faced from stakeholders in schools and how do they promote unrest and misconduct among learners and teachers in school governance?

Global Statistical scenario.

The success of every school depends on the way it is managed. The need for the effective management of schools has placed much more emphasis on the nature and quality of the work of the head teacher as the head of a team of professionals and non-professionals and as manager of the supply and effective use of resources (human, financial and material). McKenzie (2000) did a study on school Governance in Australia focusing on education and management. In the last 30 years, a number of countries have seen increased levels of decentralization of authority for a range of decisions to the education system. Generally, decentralization of authority in schools will enhance the quality, effectiveness and responsiveness of governance in schools. Decentralization is not unitary concept and such can be applied to different elements of school governance. Education decentralization of decision-making in schools can increase local authority and enhanced autonomy of schools. In Europe, there has been major changes in the legislative framework for the provision of public education in England (1988), France (1983 and 1989), Italy (1997), Spain (1990 and 1995) and Sweden (1985, 1988 and 1991) and developments towards site-based management in North America and elsewhere (Brown, 1990 and Herman, 1993).

Local Statistical Scenario.

The introduction of a new National Policy on Education in Zambia, Educating Our Future (1996), has brought about recognition and opportunity for children to take active part in decision-making and running schools. The policy says that Zambia's education is founded on the principles of liberation, democracy, equity, equality, partnerships and accountability. To that effect, the Ministry of Education has passed on power to districts and schools. Decentralization has made it more possible for children and necessary to respect the meet, join and or form groups and organizations. This necessitates the formation of child led organizations that brings about a genuine, complete partnership of teachers, community and pupils and ensures true accountability in our education systems.

In a study by Gudschinsky (1976), lack of knowledge and information limits individual's ability to engage in activities that require critical thinking. Such activities may include, understanding government policies, governance issues and training. This kind of situation affects stakeholders' effective participation in decision-making process in schools. Therefore, it can be observed that bad governance is a variable that affects participation. This study shows that changes in governance style and stakeholder engagement are key elements in school governance. Furthermore, it is hoped that stakeholder interaction with civic education can result in acquisition of knowledge, values, civic dispositions and skills relevant in the governance of schools.

Scope of the study.

The study covered the period from January 2025 to April 2025 and it covered the specific area which was Keembe Constituency of Chibombo District in Central Province of Zambia and the study was restricted to assessing only the role of Civic education in the governance of selected public schools.

Operational definitions.

The following operational terms have been explained as used in the study:

Education – It is the provision of information and learning experiences to empower and equip citizens to participate in democratic life. This can be formal or informal learning.

Civic Literacy – It is the practice to let your life speak by participating thoughtfully, responsibly and passionately in the life of the community concern for the common good.

Civic Engagement/Participation – This is the notion that embraces the concept of working together towards the common good.

Democracy - Engagement of stakeholders in school governance.

Governance – Refers to the process of decision making and the process by which decisions are implemented or not implemented.

Human Rights - Rights which belong to any individual as a consequence of being human being.

Management - Processes of decision-making in school governance to achieve goals.

Stakeholders - Controlling bodies in school governance.

Limitation of study

Limitations of the Study were financial and time limitations. The study was constrained by the following limitations. Reluctant of respondents to give information in some cases, absence of officials and some experts from office during data collection, Lack of organized secondary data due to the absence of documentation and organized database system in the district. Therefore, the study relied on a combination of different primary data collection mechanisms with special emphasis to in-depth interviews to manage all challenges faced by the researcher.

2. REVIEW LITERATURE

This chapter reviews literature on the historical background of governance and leadership in schools. It emphasizes that effective school governance requires active participation from all stakeholders, teamwork, and shared responsibility in achieving school goals.

Empirical Literature Review

Civic education, derived from the term *civicus*, refers to the study of citizens' rights and responsibilities (UNDP, 2012). It equips individuals with knowledge, skills, and values needed to participate in democratic processes. It promotes tolerance, social justice, human rights, and critical thinking, enabling learners to engage meaningfully in society.

In schools, civic education supports governance by encouraging participation, accountability, and transparency. In Zambia, civic education evolved from colonial systems that promoted loyalty to government, to post-independence reforms aimed at fostering democracy and citizen participation. Educational reforms also introduced stakeholder involvement in school decision-making.

Globally, studies show that democratic school governance improves effectiveness. Countries such as Australia, the USA, and European nations have adopted decentralization, giving schools more autonomy and encouraging stakeholder participation. Similarly, South Africa introduced democratic governance through school governing bodies after apartheid, allowing parents, teachers, and learners to participate.

However, challenges remain. In many contexts, participation is limited due to lack of skills, confidence, and resources among stakeholders. In some schools, leadership remains

authoritarian, reducing collaboration. In developing countries, poor governance practices, lack of training, and limited infrastructure hinder effective participation.

Civic education plays a key role in addressing these challenges by empowering stakeholders with knowledge and skills for participation. It promotes inclusiveness, teamwork, and shared decision-making, which are essential for good governance. Studies indicate that when stakeholders actively participate, schools experience improved management, accountability, and performance.

Despite these benefits, gaps still exist between theory and practice. Many schools lack effective implementation of democratic principles, and stakeholders are not fully engaged. This study therefore seeks to examine how civic education can strengthen school governance in Zambia.

Theoretical Review

This study is guided by Arnstein's (1969) Ladder of Participation model, which explains different levels of stakeholder involvement. The model ranges from non-participation to full citizen power.

Lower levels such as manipulation and tokenism do not represent true participation, while higher levels involve genuine engagement where stakeholders influence decisions. The theory suggests that effective participation occurs when stakeholders are empowered and actively involved in decision-making.

In the context of school governance, this model highlights the importance of meaningful participation by teachers, learners, parents, and administrators. It shows that true governance is achieved when stakeholders have equal opportunities to contribute to decisions.

The theory is relevant to this study as it explains how civic education can promote active participation and improve governance in schools. By equipping stakeholders with knowledge and skills, civic education helps move participation from symbolic to meaningful levels.

Conceptual Framework

The conceptual framework shows the relationship between civic education, school governance, and community involvement.

Civic education provides learners and stakeholders with knowledge, skills, and values needed for democratic participation. This leads to active involvement in school governance structures such as student councils and parent-teacher committees.

Effective governance practices, in turn, promote accountability, transparency, and teamwork, which improve school management and learner outcomes. Community involvement further strengthens governance by fostering collaboration and shared responsibility.

The framework emphasizes that when civic education is effectively implemented, it enhances stakeholder participation, leading to improved governance and better educational outcomes.

Research gap

Civic education plays a crucial role in shaping the democratic values, citizenship, and active participation of students in the governance of their schools. However, there are several gaps in the current body of research that need to be addressed to gain a comprehensive understanding of this relationship, particularly within the context of Chibombo District, Zambia. While there is a wealth of research on civic education and school governance globally, there is a scarcity of studies that focus specifically on Chibombo District. This research gap underscores the need for localized studies that consider the unique socio-cultural, economic, and political contexts of Chibombo District. There is limited research exploring how civic education directly influences the governance structures within schools in

Chibombo District. This includes the roles and responsibilities of school boards, principals, teachers, and student representative councils (SRCs). Understanding these dynamics is crucial for assessing the effectiveness of civic education in promoting democratic practices. Existing literature often discusses the theoretical benefits of student participation in governance but lacks empirical evidence on how civic education empowers students to take active roles in decision-making processes within Chibombo District. Investigating the actual experiences and agency of students is essential for evaluating the impact of civic education on learner outcomes. There is a gap in understanding how civic education initiatives enhance community involvement in school governance. Research is needed to examine the interactions between schools and their surrounding communities in Chibombo District, and how civic education can foster stronger partnerships and collaboration. Limited research has been conducted on the challenges and barriers that schools in Chibombo District face in implementing civic education programs. Identifying these obstacles, such as resource constraints, teacher preparedness, and cultural resistance, is vital for developing effective strategies to enhance civic education and school governance. Few studies have conducted comparative analyses between different schools within Chibombo District or between Chibombo and other regions in Zambia. Comparative research can provide valuable insights into best practices, variations in implementation, and potential areas for improvement. There is a scarcity of longitudinal studies that track the long-term impact of civic education on students' participation in school governance and their development as active citizens.

Addressing these research gaps is important for gaining a comprehensive understanding of the role of civic education in school governance in Chibombo District. By conducting context-specific, empirical and longitudinal studies, researchers can provide valuable insights into the effectiveness of civic education initiatives and identify strategies to enhance democratic participation and governance in schools. This research will contribute to the broader goal of fostering active citizenship and promoting democratic values within the educational system.

Chapter Summary

The chapter has discussed literature review on how schools, institutions are turning to governance to stimulate stakeholder effective participation in the governance of schools. The interaction stakeholders get from civic education could create citizens who are Civic minded and are prepared to be engaged in school governance. As the desire for good governance extends across the globe, there is need to understand that partnerships in school governance leads to achievement of set objectives and set goals in schools.

3. METHODOLOGY

The chapter gives a description of the method that was applied in carrying out this research. It also gives the description of the research area in which the research was carried out and provides reasons why the chosen method was appropriate to gather the information required to answer the questions posed by the research problem. It presents the research design, target population, sample size, sampling procedure, research tools, data collection and analysis tools and the difficulties faced by the researcher.

Research Design

A research design is a plan of how to conduct a research. It explains what data is required, what methods are going to be used to collect and analyze data and how the research questions will be answered. The research used a qualitative method and employed a descriptive

research design. A descriptive research refers to research studies that have their main objective the accurate portrayal of the characteristics of persons, situations or groups (Hiatt, 1986). The descriptive approach in data collection gives the ability to collect accurate data on and provide a clear picture of the phenomenon under study (Hillman, 2005). A qualitative research depends on a research approach that is flexible and interactive (Kombo and Tromp, 2006). The design is also intended to control errors of procedures and interpretation, the structure of the design specifically delimits the kind of observations which can be made, the persons from which data can be collected and the kind of analysis possible to make with the framework and the form of the data.

A descriptive survey was used because the research was aiming at giving a detailed description of the extent to which Civic Education plays in the governance of schools in Zambia and because survey methods allowed the researcher to collect data on attitudes and opinions from large numbers of people (Laverne, 1995). The major purpose of descriptive research is the description of the state of affairs as it exists (Kombo and Kerlinger, (2006). Kerlinger (1996) in Kombo and Tromp (2006) points out that descriptive studies are not only restricted to fact findings but may also result in the formation of important principles of knowledge and solution to significant problems. The description also relates to the logical relationship among categories and processes in the discussion of different categories. Descriptive studies are aimed at making clear characteristics of phenomena (Polit and Hungler 1999). The descriptive survey is a method of collecting information by interviewing or administering a questionnaire to a sample of individuals (Orodho, 2003).

Universe

When conducting a research on the role of civic education in school governance in Chibombo District, it is important to define the scope and boundaries of the research. The universe of the study refers to the entire group of elements or entities from which the sample will be drawn.

The universe of the research encompasses all the aforementioned components within Chibombo District. The research will focus on the interactions and relationships between these stakeholders and institutions, examining how civic education influences school governance and the overall educational experience. The research will also consider the unique socio-economic, cultural, and political context of Chibombo District to ensure that the findings are relevant and applicable to the local setting. Defining the universe of the research is a critical step in ensuring that the research is comprehensive and representative. By including all relevant stakeholders and institutions involved in civic education and school governance in Chibombo District, the research aims to provide a holistic understanding of the role of civic education in promoting democratic values and effective governance within the educational system. This comprehensive approach will enable the identification of best practices, challenges and areas for improvement, contributing to the overall enhancement of civic education and school governance in the district.

Sampling Procedure

This research was conducted in Keembe constituency of Chibombo district. The schools in Keembe constituency were selected as the area of sampling because it is the residential area of the researcher and it was also purposely selected for easy movement for data collection. The schools involved are, Shimukuni day, Kafululu Day and Chibombo Day Secondary. The population for this research includes selected secondary schools in Chibombo District, along with their pupils, teachers, school administrators, parents and community members. The researcher visited the three (3) selected public Secondary schools and the head teachers of the sampled schools to introduce himself and seek for their consent to carry out the research in

their schools with a letter of introduction. Then, the researcher formally introduced himself to the schools in order to being allowed to collect the required data. Therefore, data was collected at different times and stages.

Sample Size

The research targeted District Education Board Secretary, Head teachers, Parents, teachers and Pupils in Keembe constituency of Chibombo District. Best and Khan (2006) have defined population in research as “a group of individuals, objects or items from which samples are taken for measurement”. It refers to an entire group of persons or elements that have at least one thing in common. Population also refers to the larger group from which the sample is taken (Kombo and Tromp, 2006). Bless and Achola (1998), also agree that a population is the entire set of objects and events or group of people the researcher wants to determine some characteristics. With the definitions given, my research population were parents, teachers of civic education and those who teach other subjects, Head teachers and District education Officer for Chibombo District as key informants in the research while the rest the elements were respondents.

Sampling Area

Sampling is the procedure a researcher uses to gather people or things to study. It is a process of selecting a number of individuals or objects from a population such that the selected group contains elements representative of the characteristics found in the entire group (Orodho and Kombo, 2002) in Kombo and Tromp, 2006). Webster, (1985) in Kombo and Tromp (2006) defines a sample as a finite part of a statistical population whose properties are studied to gain information about the whole. When dealing with people, a sample is defined as a set of respondents selected from larger population for the purpose of a survey. Bless and Achola (1988) define a sample as the subset of the whole population which actually investigated by a researcher and whose characteristics will be generalized to the entire population. As ably put by Borg and Gall (1979) sampling is the selection of some units to represent the whole set from which the units were drawn. The sampling area was Keembe Constituency of Chibombo District.

Sources of Data

The researcher used interviews on the District Education Board Secretary, Head teachers and teachers and focus group discussion with parents and pupils as data collection strategies. Interviews were used to give more detailed insights into interpreting the situation so that the researcher sees things as they really are and provide the most needed information about the topic under investigation.

Methods of Data Collection

The research applied both individual interviews with the District Education Board Secretary, Head teachers and teachers. Focus group discussions used with parents and pupils. Coolcan (2009) has stated that individual interviews involve asking respondents direct questions. Interviews were used as they aimed at obtaining vital information to what extent civic education can play in school governance. Focus group discussion is a research strategy for understanding audience attitude and behavior where the moderator interviews the informants in a relatively free atmosphere (Wimmer and Dominic (1987). A qualitative design with a phenomenological strategy was used to uncover perceptions of school governance, and as advanced by various authors on qualitative research (Biklen, 2003: Gay and Airasian, 2003) this enables one to understand human behaviour and experience better, to focus on

phenomena that occur in natural settings and in their complexity, and obtain a deep understanding of how participants perceive things. It also allows researchers to maintain a physical presence in the research settings. Data collection is the precise, systematic gathering of information relevant to the research, using methods such as interviews, focus group discussions (Hiatt, 1986). Interviews and facilitated discussions were used to gather data from the respondents. According to Kombo and Tromp (2006), data collection refers to the gathering of information to serve or prove some facts. In research, the term 'data collection' refers to gathering specific information aimed at proving or refuting some facts. Semi-structured one on one type interviews with open-ended questions were used to gather descriptive data in participants' own words so that insight could be developed on how they interpret school governance (Bogdan and Biklen, 2003). A focus group discussion is a qualitative research method in the social sciences. Focus Group Discussion is a predetermined semi-structured interview led by a moderator. The moderator asks broad questions to elicit responses and generate discussion among the participants. According to Lindlof and Taylor (2002), Focus group discussion is also known as the group effect where group members engage in "a kind of chaining" or 'cascading' effect, talk links to or tumbles out of the topics and expressions preceding it" During this process, the researcher either takes notes or records the vital points from the group.

Tools for Data Collection

Data was collected through observational methods using checklist, open and closed ended questionnaires, test and document review checklist. As stated by Orodho and Kombo (2002) that research instruments include questionnaires, interview schedules and observation. Furthermore, it is argued that questionnaires are used to gather data over a large sample and should have both open-ended as well as closed questions.

Tools for Data Analysis

The researcher started the process of data analysis as soon as the research had been accomplished. Qualitative data was analyzed by descriptive style while quantitative data was analyzed numerically using tables of frequencies bar charts and number were used to indicate the respondents.

Qualitative Data Analysis

As regards qualitative data analysis Kombo and Tromp (2006:118-119) argue that, 'The responses can be categorized into various classes which are called categorical variables,' and adds that, 'in qualitative research, data can also be analyzed thematically. Themes refer to topics or major subjects that come up in discussions. This form of analysis categorizes related topics.' The qualitative data was analyzed through the identification of common themes from the respondents' description and presentation of their experiences. Later, conclusions were reached and analyzed with reference to research questions on which the research was based on.

Quantitative Data Analysis

In this research, quantitative data was analyzed using the statistical package for natural sciences to generate descriptive statistical information in form of frequencies as well as percentages. 'Statistics are a set of mathematical methods used to extract and clarify information from observable data. Statistics generate simple numbers to describe distributions' (Kombo and Tromp (2006:125). Additionally, Gall et al (1996) states that

mathematical technique is appropriate for organizing, summarizing as well as displaying a set of numerical data.

Difficulties faced by the Researcher

The difficulties that the researcher faced were many especially that the research period was during the rainy season. The rain season made it difficult to move smoothly as many roads in the rural parts of Chibombo are a challenge to use during this period. Some schools only gave the researcher limited time, due to the fact that some visitations were made during learning time. This was so because buses could reach after lessons had started. The other difficult part was the use of electronic gadgets, power to charge the gadgets was not available during the daytime. This made the researcher to have big issues with compiling and typing the collected data, for it was only done during night time when the body was tired with work. Finances were also a challenge for they were needed for logistical purposes.

Chapter Summary

This chapter focused on the methodology that was used to generate data from respondents. It discussed methodological elements that were important to the collection and processing of data in this research.

4. CONCLUSION

The study concludes that civic education plays a significant role in promoting democratic practices in school governance. It enhances stakeholder participation, encourages shared leadership, and supports teamwork, accountability, and transparency. Structures such as Parents Teachers Associations, School Boards, and Student Representative Councils provide platforms for inclusive decision-making.

Despite these efforts, challenges such as top-down leadership and limited involvement of parents and pupils still exist. However, schools are making progress toward more democratic systems through active stakeholder engagement. Civic education equips stakeholders with the knowledge, skills, and values needed for effective participation and critical decision-making. Overall, the findings show that democratic governance in schools improves when all stakeholders—teachers, parents, pupils, and the community—work collaboratively. Therefore, schools should strengthen partnerships and encourage participatory leadership to create more inclusive, effective, and democratic learning environments.

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