

Social and Academic Challenges Faced by Pupils in Civic Education: A Case of Selected Secondary Schools in Mwinilunga District of North-Western Province, Zambia

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Abstract: Education is the key to the doors of success for most of people in Africa and the world at large. Without education people cannot productively, care for their Health, Sustainability and protect themselves. Therefore, the quality of civic education has been a concern of those interested in the health of our system of government and the well-being of the citizenry. For much of the nation's history, our leaders have viewed civics education as a means of realizing the country's democratic ideals. In most Zambian Schools, the academic performance of pupils is minimal as compared to the expected standards, especially at both primary and secondary school level. Among the subjects in which pupils perform poorly is civic education, and this has been noticed by many teachers and other stakeholders. Therefore, the researcher saw it essential to conduct a research which analyzes the social and academic challenges faced by the pupils in civic education at the selected secondary schools in Mwinilunga district, Zambia. The study employed both the qualitative and quantitative methods and a descriptive survey design that sampled head teachers, teachers and the pupils. Data was obtained from the respondents by means of interviews and questionnaires. Percentages, tables, graphs and pie-charts were used and data was then analyzed by the use of software MS access and MS Excel. The findings reviewed that the teaching and learning materials for civic education were not adequate in some cases which posed a challenge in the transmission of right knowledge, skill and values needed for democratic citizenship. The study also discovered that most residents in Mwinilunga district are from typical and rural areas (villages) that depend on farming for their basic needs making it difficult for pupils to be in school most of the time.

Keywords: Basic Needs, Challenges, Civic Education, Poverty, Development, Schooling.

1. INTRODUCTION

Social challenges are common problems in present-day society and one that many people strive to solve. Social challenges are those conditions or behaviors that have negative consequences at the personal and work level. On the other hand, academic challenges can relate to a student's performance in school or a student's behavior toward teachers and fellow students. Academic challenges can affect elementary school, middle school, high school, and college students. The introduction of multiparty system in 1991 in Zambia fostered the re-introduction of civic education in 2003 in learning institutions in Zambia facilitated the establishment of support for effective citizens social and academic participation in democratic issues that encourages good governance (Mainde and Katongo, 2020). Civic Education, also known as citizenship education, facilitates the development of the knowledge, understanding, social skills, disposition, virtues and values that personally fulfil individuals and render them socially constructive citizens. The concept of social and academic

participation 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 acquiring knowledge and running of a government or any other appropriate entity, for example a school. The idea of effective academic performance and social traits in civic education has been present from the time of colonialism in Zambia. This idea of effective academic performance and social traits in civic education has necessitated the endorsement participation concept by the Zambia Civic Education Association and government in schools through numerous education reforms. Effective Civic Education in schools thrives on teaching methodologies that provides an avenue to learners to have knowledge, skills, and other civic dispositions that enable them to serve in complex communities 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 (Muleya, 2019).

Access to education is one of the most important basic human rights in all societies. In Zambia, the provision of education has been one of the most critical issues of government social policy especially since after independence in 1964. Social and academic challenges in learning civic education has however remained an obstacle for most children to attain their basic right since colonialism. The above-mentioned challenges are a universal social problem that cuts across nations, race, religion, locations and culture. They have been in existence from the time of the establishment of the human race on planet earth. Learners facing social and academic challenges have always struggled in a number of ways to attain descent living standards, contribute to national development and patriotism. Social and academic challenges present a number of challenges to its victims such as access to proper education, employment after school and the realization of personal aspirations just to mention a few. Ideas of Civic Education also known as “Citizenship Education and democratic education” have gained prominence in recent times and discussed in line with some civic republican thoughts.

1.2. Statement of the Problem

The effects of social and academic challenges on learners are wide reaching and can lead to devastating struggles, especially when learners do not receive the appropriate education they deserve. Social and academic challenges are always in line with education in most nations to foster development and if not carefully tackled may lead to underdevelopment in that democracy won't be a key factor looked upon in curbing poverty, corruption, improving economic state and reducing high unemployment levels in the country. The national symposium on civic education spear headed by Professor Geoffrey Lungwangwa in 1995 recommended that civic education be part of the school curriculum and introduced in all high schools (CDC, 2012). It appears the introduction of civic education in schools have been received with renewed interest among pupils. This is evident from the large numbers of students studying civic education (Muleya, 2015). However, even though pupils have been provided with education, alternate factors throughout their lives can prevent them from participating and learning of civic education, among these factors are their own socioeconomic status and their own social and cultural capital, along with those of their peers, family relationships and perceptions on the subject from community. Another problem in the provision of civic education has been to reach deprived groups. In deprived areas (rural) where this kind of research may be conducted, creating schools does not guarantee that children will attend them because of long distance, incompetent teachers and shortage of teaching learning materials in schools hence making it difficulty in learning civic education.

1.3. The Purpose of the Study

The purpose of this study was to analyze the social and academic challenges faced by pupils in civic education at the selected secondary schools in Mwinilunga district of North-western province, Zambia.

1.4. Research Objectives

The objectives of the study were to:

- Identify the social and academic challenges pupils face in civic education at the selected secondary schools in Mwinilunga district.
- To assess how social and academic challenges affect pupils learning civic education at the selected secondary schools in Mwinilunga district.

1.5. Significance of the Study

This research showed the relevance of Civic Education in schools. “Civic Education is a subject that builds capacity in the learners to begin to evaluate a position or some decisions, taking positions and defending a position, distinguishing a statement of fact from an opinion; interpreting and critiquing media messages, including the interests and value systems that are involved; monitoring policies and decisions; synthesizing research data; understanding and coping with ambiguity”. As such, Civic Education will start displaying interest and skill in decision-making, solving problems and resolving conflict resolution through collaboration and demonstrating intercultural competence. This study would also help the ministry of general education, learners of civic education, the public, policy makers and curriculum developers to design effective curriculum for teacher’s professional development needed for Teacher Training Colleges (TTCs) to build and enhance the capacity of teachers in teaching civic education. It would also assist teachers come up with practical insights about the teaching and learning of Civic Education in enhancing democratic citizenship ideals because it will explore the real social and academic challenges of learning civic education. This study would also add value to the existing current body of literature in the field of education and be a reference to other researchers who would want to further their study.

2. LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1. Civic Education

Pupils face a number of academic challenges in schools, including finding time to study, understanding course content and maintaining a high degree of motivation. Along with meeting these challenges, pupils often struggle to balance academic demands with work, personal responsibilities and social experiences. Social challenges are problems that influences many citizens within a society. It is a common problem in present day society that mostly affect learners extending towards society. Many people strive to solve it but fail. It is often the consequence of factors extending beyond an individual’s control. Social issues are the source of a conflicting opinion on the grounds of what is morally correct or incorrect personal life or interpersonal social life decisions and teachings (Galtung, 2007). From the above mentioned statements, academic and social challenges is simply the deprivation of rights for the future generation in building a more stable democratic front of a country to foster development with responsible active citizens (Hess, 2009). The study of Civic Education which is also known as citizenship education in other areas of society has come with various explanations on what it is constituted of. Scholars from different parts of the global have different understanding on what Civic Education is. Civic Education can also be called, Citizenship Education and Ethics, Civic Culture, Civic, legal and social education (Vasiljevi, 2009). The differences in names does not however means the subject have unique content from one society to another, instead it is all based at producing a citizen who will understand the fabrics of his or her society. In this study, few samples among the existing definitions on what Civic Education are explored. This work however, is not set to dive into defining or why many explanations on what constitute this field of study exist, instead it is set to investigate the teaching of Civic Education in Zambian’s senior secondary schools and how it serves as a tool for conflict resolution in the society. Hence, other scholars will find it convenient to look into other areas as such in future.

2.2. Academic Challenges in Civic Education

The teaching and learning materials are not usually adequate in some cases which poses a challenge in the transmission of right knowledge, skill and values needed for democratic citizenship. Furthermore, pupils argue that the school libraries lack Civic Education materials and this frustrates the learning of good and democratic citizenship in Civic Education. The findings of the study are in agreement with the findings of Oats (2009) who reiterated that “schools have an acute shortage of instructional material suitable for citizenship education and that this condition worked against the curriculum goal of effective citizenship education transmission.” Finkel (2003) noted that this condition needed to be addressed if Civic Education was to achieve its intended goal of preparing responsible citizens. For this reason, the government needed to equip secondary schools with adequate teaching and learning materials to support all various content areas in Civic Education. Underdevelopment will be the most suffered impact because it is the major result of none participation in national affairs by citizens for the fact that they are not satisfied with the government. This is due to corruption, lack of transparency, respect

and promotion of human rights and illiteracy on the principles and values of how citizens should live in society by virtue of adhering to democratic ways of running government.

The study conducted by Mufalo, Mulubale, Muleya and Simui (2021) in Masaiti district, Zambia revealed that teachers faced a number of challenges not limited to the following: inadequate teaching and learning materials, limited school infrastructure, poor reading culture among learners and lack of qualified teachers. The study established that teachers faced challenges in terms of preparations and conducting class activities because some schools had inadequate teaching and learning materials. This revelation agrees with the findings of Magasu, Muleya and Mweemba (2020) who established that teaching and learning materials were not adequate and posed a challenge in the transmission of right knowledge, skill and values which were vital and required for democratic citizenship. Further, it was discovered that teachers faced challenges with regard to conducting lessons owing to poor reading and communication skills among some pupils who could hardly read possibly due to their primary education background. This revelation corresponds with the findings of (Musonda, 2019) who established that the challenge which teachers faced during teaching was the language barrier emanating from failure by learners to use the official language (English) to participate in the lesson activities as well as inadequate teaching and learning (Mainde & Katongo, 2020).

Additionally, unfinished buildings rather classes psychologically and physically are a challenges for learners to acquire appropriate learning as compared to those in proper finished classes. This generally and mostly refers to rainy season where learners are disrupted from learning and in summer where there is too much dust as well as winter when it is cold. This way, it is difficult for learners to always continue where they left off from and catch up with other colleagues from different schools and hence missing out on acquiring civic skills that they need in society to foster development. Hence, there is much need to work on the unfished buildings in order to equal learner's acquisition of knowledge. In addition to that, Bermudez (2007) noted that all schools sampled had limited school infrastructure such as staff offices, classroom blocks and desks among others. The status quo resulted into pupil congestion in classes hence, putting pressure on the existing school infrastructure. In the same vein, Akinyemi Olufunminiyi and Abiodun Adekunle (2019) citing Tobin (1990) contend that, too much pressure on the use of tools, equipment, infrastructure and materials may result to over utilization, which may lead to breakdown of such. On the aspect of inadequate qualified teachers, it was found that some teachers who were teaching Civic Education or Social Studies were seconded due to shortage of qualified teachers and the few qualified teachers were found teaching subjects, where they had no requisite specialization. Therefore, it is very important to state that effective teaching and learning of any school subject depends on the availability and utilization of human and material resources (Nwaubani, Otoh-Offong, Usulor and Okeke, 2016).

2.3. Social Challenges in Civic Education

Some teachers fail to deliver lessons or rather make learners understand and by the end of the day, learners go back the same way they came and this gradually affects learners in that learning has failed to take place. Comparisons are made between a private and government school where government schools under perform and private schools on the other hand does better because management takes keen interest in the selection of more qualified personnel's. The reason is very simple, some higher learning institutions does not provide strict measures for acquiring certificates in order to qualify to become a teacher with relevance and value as to provide good educational standards. Also, for the fact that some teachers fail to deliver lessons properly, they tend to focus on discrimination where they only focus and concentrate on the favorite few that do better in class and manage to provide for themselves in almost all necessities.

Galtung (2007), explains that schools do not give learners enough space to allow them to express themselves on public matters that affect them. It is on this premise that Civic Education should build a positive school climate, which in turn has a positive impact on a wide array of outcomes for learners, ranging from academic and social achievement to personal character. Both academic content and process; civic knowledge, virtues and skills must be taught and learned together to fulfil the mission of civic education, which is the development of individuals with the capacity to establish, maintain and improve democratic governance and citizenship in their country and throughout the world. This can be accomplished by using participatory methods and active learning so that learners experience participation in a real democracy (Muleya, 2019).

3. RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

3.1. Study Design

The study adopted a mixed methods approach which is a combination of quantitative and qualitative data. Exploratory and descriptive designs were as well considered appropriate as they also allowed for more flexible strategies of data collection in order to answer the research questions. The study incorporated both qualitative and quantitative aspects of research. It was aimed at collecting information from respondents on the social and academic challenges pupils face in civic education at the selected secondary schools in Mwinilunga district of North-western Province, Zambia.

3.2. Research Site

The research was conducted in Mwinilunga district in Zambia at some selected secondary schools from which respondents were also sampled.

3.3. Population, Sample and Sampling Procedure

The population for the study comprised of Head teachers, teachers and pupils at the selected secondary schools. The target population was 1000. The sample size involved a total of 100 respondents which included four (4) head teachers, one from each selected school. Sixteen (16) teachers, four from each selected school. Eighty (80) pupils, Twenty (20) from each selected school. The study employed both purposive and simple random sampling on different participants from the selected secondary schools. Simple random sampling was used on the pupils and teachers whereas purposive sampling was used on the head teachers.

3.4. Data Analysis

In this research, data was analyzed qualitatively as the semi structured interview schedules were used as data collection instruments. Thematic approach was used, where data analysis started with the categorization of themes from the semi structured interviews and observation schedules. The data gathered was analyzed according to the themes of the study, the order of the research objectives. Data generated from the questionnaires was analyzed manually and also, a combination of software MS Access, SPSS and MS Excel was used to analyze data.

3.5. Ethical Issues

The researcher avoided pressuring respondents to take part in the research. Alternatively, permission consents, assents were obtained from respondents involved in the research and the research topic was strategically selected to ensure that there was no harm whatsoever to the research respondents. In this research, the researcher was fully conscious of the need to abide by the ethical rule of respecting the privacy of individuals taking part in the research. In the same way, all the respondents of the research were to remain unidentified to the public as all their valuable views, opinions and perceptions were only known by the researcher for use only in the research and participant's identities will forever remain hidden. Additionally, the researcher got permission from Mwinilunga DEBS office as well as the head teachers on behalf of the independent schools.

4. FINDINGS AND DISCUSSIONS

The following findings and discussions were presented according to set research objectives:

4.1. Social and Academic Challenges Pupils face in Civic Education

The study's research findings indicated that social and academic challenges have affected most of learner's academic achievement negatively as some learners and teachers proposed. Only 35% of pupils maintained a pass rate of distinction without proper requisites for learner's enhancement coming from rural areas and on government schools and 65% maintain their pass rate coming from well to do families on private schools. These findings were consistent with observation that 70% of student teachers and graduate teachers did not have sound understanding of the subject matter, they were just teaching to make the learners pass the examinations and beyond that while 30% understood and knew exactly what they were teaching.

Table 1: Learners pass rate in civic education subject

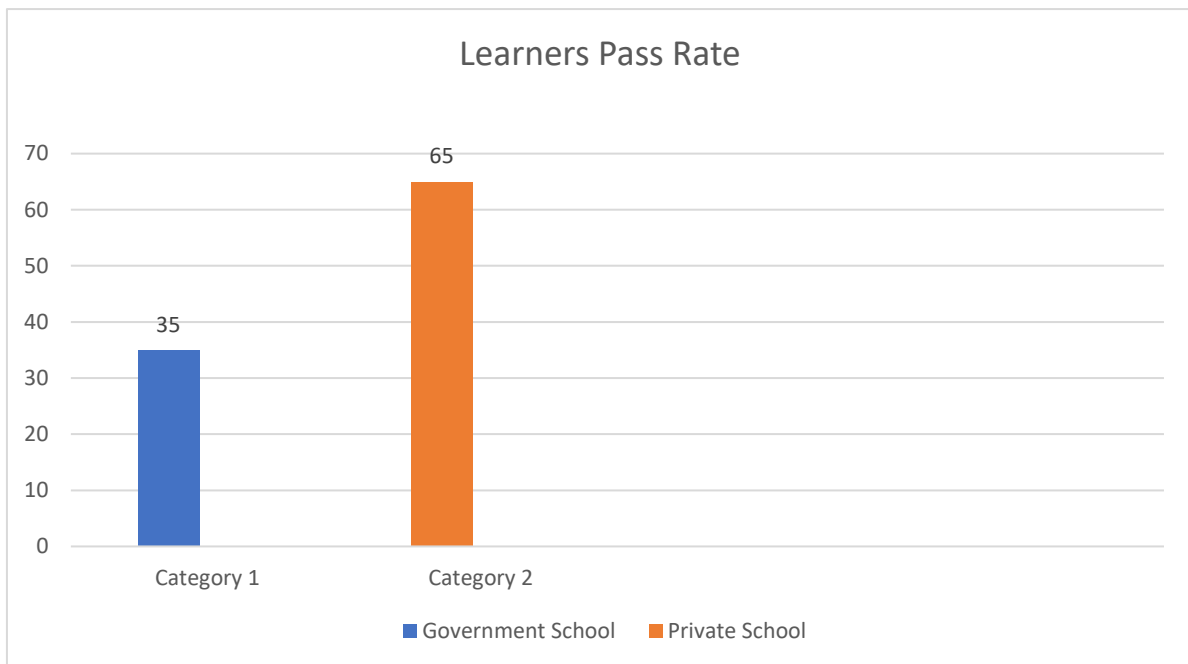
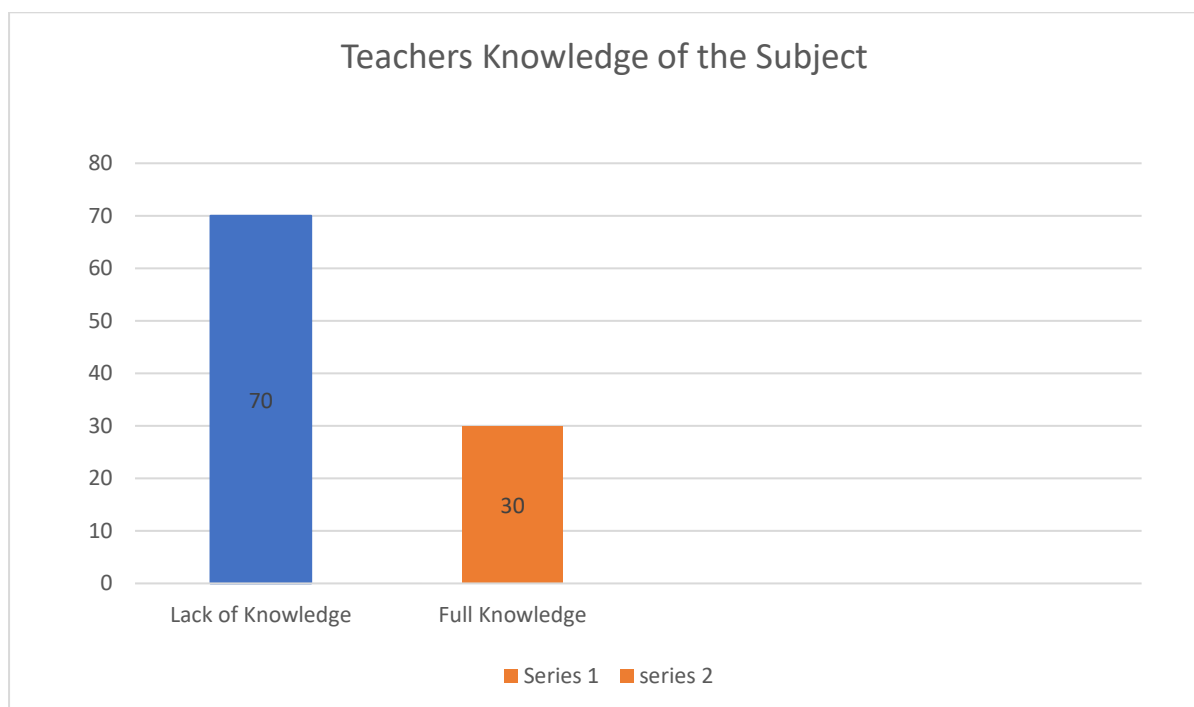


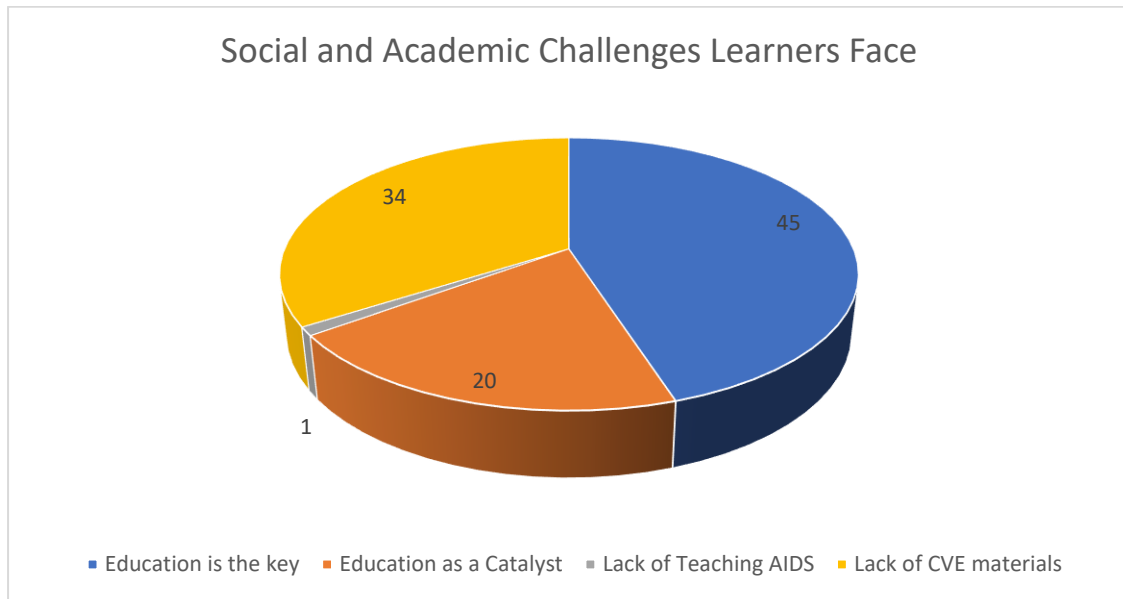
Table 2: Teachers knowledge of civic education subject



4.2. How Social and Academic Challenges Affect Pupils’ learning in Civic Education

The research findings indicated 45% of the respondents stated that education is the key for future leaders that will help them sustain a well-developed and stable economy of which the country acknowledges at large while 20% stated that education is only a catalyst. Unfortunately, 1% of the respondents said that teaching materials are not provided by government which makes it difficult to deliver most lessons appropriately for learners to understand. Furthermore, 34% of the respondents argued that the school libraries lacked civic education materials and this frustrated the learning process.

Figure 1: Effect of Social and Academic Challenges on Civic Education



5. CONCLUSION

This study was set to analyze the social and academic challenges pupils face in civic education. The study employed a descriptive research design to collect data from the head teachers, teachers and pupils of Civic Education according to the above study focus. It was established that the teaching of Civic Education in secondary schools has a lot of challenges which makes it difficult to be understood fully by the pupils concerned. Based on the results of this study, it can be concluded that, social and academic challenges pupils face in learning civic education are many and must be attended to as an urgent matter to help civic education fulfil its intended purpose in transforming the minds of the young ones as well as society at large. This study brings to light the effects brought about in Mwinilunga district due to social and academic challenges faced by pupils in the teaching/learning of civic education. The major draw-back is under-development since pupils have no morals and virtues about our civic culture which in turn makes them think it’s a difficult subject by nature and being uninterested in national responsibilities.

6. RECOMMENDATIONS

The following are actions that should be taken on the basis of the findings of this study:

- The Ministry of Education should ensure that there is constant revision of civic education syllabus and textbooks to meet the new changes in the community.
- School administrators must ensure that there is academic freedom to allow teachers of civic education cover subject content without fear of victimization.
- The Government through the Ministry of Education must ensure schools have adequate teaching/learning materials for civic education.
- Since civic education is practical in nature, there is need for the training institutions to make this aspect a real realization.

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