



Received: 14-01-2022

Accepted: 24-02-2022

International Journal of Advanced Multidisciplinary Research and Studies

ISSN: 2583-049X

A SWOT Analysis of the state of Civic Education in Secondary Schools in Zambia

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Abstract

The aim of this study was to identify the Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities and Threats of Civic Education in secondary schools in Zambia. A descriptive survey was conducted among Civic Education Examiners (Teachers) from across the country who gathered to mark Grade 12 examinations. The target population was all the teachers of Civic Education in secondary schools. The sample consisted of 208 teachers who were purposively selected. Interviews and Focus Group Discussions were used to gather data. A pilot study was conducted for the so purpose of validating the instruments. The key findings were: Strengths – Civic Education has brought awareness on many issues effecting

society, the subject is holistic in nature and it prepares learners to be enlightened, responsive, active and participative. Weaknesses – the subject is perceived as a mere passing subject and, it compromised discipline in schools. Opportunities – learners become critical thinkers, acquire relevant knowledge, skills and values. Threats – not compulsory in all secondary schools despite policy direction and the content was based on current social situation. Based on the findings, this study recommends among others to the Ministry of Education to make constant reviews of the curriculums to determine their effective implementation.

Keywords: Weakness, Strength, Opportunity, Threats, SWOT Analysis

Introduction

With the adoption of the revised curriculum of 2013, Civic education has become more pronounced in the Secondary School Curricular and has been placed in both the academic and career pathways. This is because like in other countries, it was in line with one of the aims of education which is to grow democracy. Ukegbu *et al.* (2009) ^[28] defines Civic Education as a systemized educative process through which a learner is oriented to governmental functions in a given democratic society as well as learner's rights and correlative responsibilities all geared at producing informed, participative and responsive citizens. This definition clearly indicates the importance of Civic Education in the secondary school curriculum. For this reason, we consider it necessary to do a SWOT analysis of the state of Civic Education in secondary schools in Zambia so as to capitalize on strengths and opportunities and, to minimize on weaknesses and threats.

According to Ch, Ahmad and Khalil (2016) ^[7], SWOT Analysis was first conducted in the 1960s. The analysis was first created for business and industry; however, it is now becoming increasingly popular and one can apply it in any process including the teaching of Civic Education in secondary schools. The acronym SWOT is composed of four words: Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities and Threats. Therefore, SWOT Analysis is a tool that is used to identify your strengths and weaknesses, and for examining the opportunities and threats you face. The tool can help determine if the information indicates something that will assist a programme in achieving its objectives (a strength or opportunity) or if it indicates an obstacle that must be overcome or minimized to achieve desired results (weakness or threat). Essentially, a SWOT Analysis allows you to immediately see where you can take action to improve your weak areas, capitalize on your strengths and opportunities and defend against threats.

According to Orr (2013) ^[24], a SWOT Analysis is a simple tool to assist faculty to initiate meaningful change in a programme and to use the data for programme improvement. However, according to Sladkayova (2021) ^[25], the aim of SWOT Analysis is to identify and evaluate individual factors (both subjective and objective) that act on quality, at the same time, we can divide these factors into internal (Strengths and Weaknesses) and external factors (Opportunities and Threats).

1. Strengths

According to Orr (2013) ^[24], strengths refer to things that a programme does well. These strengths may be in terms of curriculum or pedagogy. Questions to ask include 'What do you do better than anyone else? What does your stakeholders

see as your strengths? What are the indicators of success at your school?’ In short, strengths are factors that are likely to have a positive effect on achieving the educational objectives.

2. Weaknesses

Weaknesses refer to things a programme or an organization needs to improve. Weaknesses hinder a programme from achieving its desired goal. By understanding your weaknesses, there is a likelihood to focus on specific areas you may need to improve. Pertinent questions would be: What could you improve? What should you avoid?

3. Opportunities

Opportunities are trends that your institution could take advantage of. These are outside factors or situations that exist that may affect your institution in a positive way in achieving a desired goal. Examining the trends is helpful in identifying opportunities. In a nutshell, opportunities are external factors that are likely to have a positive effect on meeting the school’s goals not previously considered (Morrison, 2018; Sladkayova, 2021) ^[19, 25].

4. Threats

Threats are outside factors that currently exist that affect your institution in a negative way. What obstacles do you face in your school in the teaching of Civic Education? This is the time to look at what others are doing. Threats are external factors and conditions that are likely to harm achieving the school’s objectives or making the objective redundant or unachievable (Morrison, 2018; Ch, Ahmad and Khali, 2016) ^[19, 7].

Content of Civic Education in Secondary Schools in Zambia

Civic Education is taught as a standalone subject from Grade 10 to 12. Table 1 shows the topics covered per grade:

Table 1: Topics from Grade 10-12

Grade 10	Grade 11	Grade 12
Constitution	Zambian Bill of Rights	International Human Rights Instruments
Governance	Civil Society and Media in Governance	Rights of a Child
Citizenship	Economic and Social Development	Family Law
Introduction to Human Rights	Zambia’s Legal System	Development Planning
Corruption	Gender Equity and Equality	Poverty Eradication in Zambia
Cultural Studies	Culture of Peace	Environmental Education
Substance Abuse	Child Abuse	Global Issues

Source: Curriculum Development Centre (CDC), 2013 ^[6]

Methodology

This study employed a qualitative approach to generate data because it targeted for an in-depth indulgence in the issue under analysis. A descriptive survey was conducted among Civic Education Examiners (Teachers) from across the country who gathered to mark Grade 12 examinations. The target population was all the teachers of Civic Education in

secondary schools. The sample consisted of 208 teachers who were purposively selected. Interviews and Focus Group Discussions were used to gather data. An interview guide was administered to one (1) Chief Examiner, one (1) Deputy Chief Examiner and fifteen (15) Team Leaders. Twelve (12) Focus Group Discussions were held among the One Hundred and Ninety-One (191) examiners. A pilot study was conducted for the so purpose of validating the instruments. The researchers were guided by the principles guiding ethical research in social sciences. Thematic analysis was used to analyse data.

Presentation of the Findings

The aim of this study was to identify the Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities and Threats of Civic Education in secondary schools in Zambia. This SWOT Analysis was primarily based on two research methods – interviews and focus group discussions. The interviews were held with the Chief Examiner, Deputy Chief Examiner and Chief Markers. Focus group discussions were held with examiners from across the country because it was conducted at the time Civic Education examiners gathered to mark Grade 12 examinations.

Strengths

When a question was asked to determine the strengths of Civic Education in secondary schools, the following themes emerged: Addresses challenges faced by society, Awareness of Human Rights and Obligations and Effective participation in public affairs.

1. Addresses challenges faced by society

Most participants welcomed the introduction of Civic Education in secondary schools and argued that it helped address the challenges society was facing through the acquisition of relevant knowledge, skills and values. This is what one participant said:

Topics in Civic Education prepare learners for holistic integration into society

Similarly, another participant from the FGDs had this to say:

The topics covered from Grades 10-12 actually prepare learners to be well informed citizens as they join society after Grade 12. This is so because the topics have been designed in such a way that they cover all aspects of society such as social, economic and even the legal aspect that citizens find themselves engaged in

Another participant in the FGDs had this to say:

Civic Education has made learners to realize that social challenges and environmental issues need to be addressed. This is evident when the learners present their work in Civic Education during school fairs.

Another participant who was interviewed had this to say:

Learners have become more proactive and responsive to issues affecting society

2. Awareness of Human Rights

Participants agreed in the FGDs that Civic Education had made learners become aware of their human rights and responsibilities. This is what one participant had to say:

Pupils are now more aware of their rights, duties and responsibilities

Similarly, another participant who was interviewed echoed:

Civic Education brings awareness of human rights to the pupils and prepares them to be responsible citizens

3. Effective Participation in national affairs

All the participants indicated that Civic Education fostered effective participation in public affairs through the acquisition of knowledge, skills and values. Furthermore, learners were able to make informed decisions for their future. This is what one participant who was interviewed had to say:

Civic Education allows learners to gain the national values and the knowledge necessary for effective participation in national affairs

Another participant had this to say:

Learners have become more active in public affairs

Another participant had this to say:

Both teachers and learners have realized their potential in sensitizing communities on governance issues

Weaknesses

When a question was asked to determine the weaknesses of Civic Education in secondary schools, the following themes emerged: Compromised discipline in schools, no practical assessment, lack of trained staff and the subject was viewed as mere passing subject.

1. Compromised discipline in schools

Participants indicated that the inception of Civic Education in secondary schools had compromised discipline in schools. This is what one participant from FGDs had to say:

There is conflict of interest between discipline and indiscipline resulting from misunderstandings between human rights and being responsible. Learners seem not realize that as they enjoy their freedoms, they also need to respect the freedoms of others as well

Similarly, another participant who was interviewed had this to say:

*Some learners have misunderstood the existence of human rights; hence, they have become undisciplined by violating other peoples' rights
If it is not well handled, the subject may bring confusion among learners and teachers in the quest for learners to enjoy their rights. Learners may disrespect their teachers and elders in the name of enjoying their rights*

2. Few Qualified Staff

It was established in the FGDs that there was secondary

schools with few qualified staff to teach the subject. This is what one participant had to say:

There are still few members of staff who are qualified to teach Civic Education in secondary schools. There is need to employ more teachers to teach Civic Education

1. Perceived Passing Subject

It was further established from the discussions that the subject was merely taken as a passing subject and not an emancipating one. One member of the FGDs had this to say:

Civic Education has been taken like any other subject in the secondary school curriculum which is examinable. The learners study the subject for the to just pass and not to equip them with values, skills and knowledge

2. Lack of Practical

Participants indicated the importance of the subject in the secondary school curricular but bemoaned lack of practical situations in most cases. This is what one participant said:

There was lack of exposure to the real-life situations, almost every topic is taught as a theory

Similarly, another participant in the FGDs had this to say:

The subject was not practically practiced by learners and its content is not detailed as expected

3. Perceived as a Political Subject

Some participants explained that Civic Education was taken as a subject to do with politics. This is what one participant who was interviewed said:

The subject is perceived as a subject to do with politics, therefore, this makes teachers not to teach the subject the way it is supposed to be taught. Classrooms are sometimes turned into political rallies

Opportunities

Participants indicated that there were many opportunities that came along when learners take Civic Education as a subject in secondary schools. This is what one participant who was interviewed said:

It increases their knowledge of governance issues

Furthermore, another participant in the FGDs stated:

Learners become critical thinkers. Learners are motivated to become politically active as they are able question certain decisions that violated their rights in society

Another participant who was interviewed had this to say:

The subject takes on board a wide range of formal and informal opportunities which include voting, volunteering and participation in public affairs which are critical for a fully-fledged democracy

Threats

When a question was asked to state the threats of Civic Education in secondary schools in Zambia, one participant who was interviewed had this to say:

We still have schools that have not taken Civic Education as a compulsory subject because of various reasons. This is despite policy direction that the subject should be compulsory

Similarly, another participant who was interviewed had this to say:

Some school especially the grant-aided schools have not embraced the subject as it is perceived as a source of indiscipline in schools

It was also clear that Civic Education content was based on current-social situation and so the curricular content keeps on changing as things evolve. This is what one participant said:

The fast-changing modern society puts Civic Education at a threat as information changes every time. Most of the information in the text book has been taken over by events.

Discussion of the Findings

Strengths

This study has established that Civic Education in secondary schools has been recognized as very important in the secondary school curricular. For instance, like already stated, Civic Education is found in both the academic and career pathways at secondary school level. This recognition was in line with UNESCO (2011) ^[29] which recommends providing access to good quality formal and informal education that recognizes Civic Education as an integral part of education. This recognition is also supported by UNESCO (2017) ^[30] which recommends that educational programmes should be designed to promote the full development of character and profound respect for human rights and fundamental freedoms. This entails that the subject exposes learners to their rights, duties and obligation as can be seen from the topics that are covered from grade 10 - 12.

According to Dawishi, Jafari and Soleimani (2021) ^[10], such understanding of the subject turns schools to a place to practice life and experience in different fields. This is because Civic Education prepares learners with relevant knowledge, skills and values which may enable them to contribute meaningfully to society. This was in line with the findings of this study that Civic Education was holistic in nature as it is aimed at addressing the problems that society was facing. For instance, a topic in grade 12, Poverty eradication in Zambia, aims at addressing the problem of poverty. This finding was also in line with Ogunkeye (2012) ^[23] who defined Civic Education as education given to the young people with the aim to make them grow and develop into responsible citizens who know and understand their rights, duties and obligations which will make them participate actively in the growth and development of society. By implication, the central idea on which Civic Education was anchored is that nowadays society is more often than not faced with unprecedented problems; and these

problems need to be solved. Therefore, Civic Education is key if society is to be changed to the ideal type which upholds social values such as tolerance, civility and decency. Culture of peace, a topic in grade 11 is seen to transmit such values.

Civic Education places great emphasis on an individual and society's development. For instance, a topic on Constitution in Grade 10 teaches about human rights as enshrined in the constitution. Learners are taught that human rights are privileges, opportunities, entitlements and benefits that every citizen of a country must enjoy. This awareness is critical for personal and public life. Similarly, Mainde (2018) ^[17] contends that with Civic Education, learners are given knowledge on characteristics of human rights as well as ways of enforcing them.

Furthermore, this study established that one of the strengths of Civic Education was to sustain democracy in Zambia. By implication, this is true following the enactment of the Mvunga Constitution Review Commission which outlawed the undemocratic One-Party State and ushered in a Multi-Party Democracy in 1991. Civic Education was reintroduced in secondary schools in Zambia in 2004 after it was banned in 1978 where it was taught as Political Education because it was perceived a threat to the undemocratic traits of the One-Party System. This finding was in line with Ajibade (2011) ^[2] who revealed that Civic Education was concerned with democratic skills and values that citizens need to function effectively in participatory democracy. This means that Civic Education is capable of inducing values, attitudes and skills that enable the learners to live a patriotic and democratic life. According to Adeyemi (2018) ^[11]; Magasu, Muleya and Mweemba (2020a) ^[14]; Magasu (2021) ^[13], Civic Education is an important component of education that motivates citizens to participate in the public life of a democracy. This entails that the ultimate goal of Civic Education was to empower learners with knowledge, values and skills. Citizens need this education because without it, they can hardly effectively participate in decision making and directing their development agenda in the right direction. In a democratic society, people in the local community are supposed to be actors in governance and therefore, they must be empowered so that they can ably take part in the public policy formulation and implementation (Magasu, Muleya and Mweemba, 2020b) ^[16]. For instance, a topic in grade 10 on governance will foster such values.

Weaknesses

On the weaknesses, participants explained that learners perceived the subject as a mere passing subject just like other subjects in the secondary school curriculum. From this view, one would argue that Civic Education in secondary schools was not taught to promote civic engagement and support democratic and participatory democracy but rather taught so that learners can pass examinations. At this point, one would agree with Chola's (2016) ^[8] study which revealed that some teachers did not have sound understanding of the subject matter but taught it to make learners pass examinations only. While one would appreciate that learners ought to pass examinations, it is also important that their passing of examinations was commensurate with the expectations of society of good and responsible citizens. This was important as Muleya (2018)

[21] aptly puts it that Civic Education attaches meaning to people so that citizenship is lived and experienced.

Furthermore, this study established that the subject lacked a practical assessment. At this point, one would argue that since Civic Education was practical in nature, learners needed to be assessed that way (Magasu *et al.*, 2020a) [14]. This is because citizens in a functioning democracy needed to be active, responsive and informed. Therefore, engagement in public life is considered cardinal in effective transmission of democratic ideals. Sim and Chow (2018) [26] observed that active participation of citizens on public matters was crucial to the sustenance of a healthy democratic society. This means that tangible experience to public matters facilitated the development of active, committed and responsive individuals.

On the issue of few qualified staff in some secondary schools, one would argue that someone cannot effectively teach concepts not grounded in. Ali (2009) [4] and Akinsolu (2010) [3] contend that the availability of qualified teachers determines the performance and attitudes of learners in both school and society. However, it must be noted that there were very few cases if any where such a situation exists.

Many participants in this study indicated that Civic Education in secondary schools compromised discipline. This view emanated as a result of the ban of corporal punishment in schools in Zambia because of among other reasons, it violated human rights and international law. This was in 2003. Essentially, the Education Act of 2011 bans corporal punishment in both public and private schools in Zambia. The argument that the awareness of human rights in schools had made the learners to challenge teachers and those learners were uncontrollable could suggest that teachers were not stressing that the enjoyments of human rights go with responsibilities and obligations. One would argue that insulting someone in the name of expression of freedom of speech would be unacceptable because Civic Education is aimed at producing citizens who were participative, responsive and morally good.

In Civic Education, character formation is key for the development of a learner's academic potential and civic dispositions which include civility, respect, individual responsibility, self-discipline, civic-mindedness, open mindedness, compromise, toleration of diversity, patient, persistence, compassion, generosity, and loyalty to the nation and its principles (Centre for Civic Education, 1991). In a broader sense, the goal of schooling, therefore, should be to equip a citizenry with knowledge, skills and dispositions needed for active and engaged civic life. Furthermore, Mainde and Chola (2020) [18] contend that through Civic Education citizens ought to know when and how to exercise their liberties, to put into appropriate practice knowledge and to have self-conviction to actively take part in public decision-making process. Therefore, 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 achievement to personal character.

The fact that Civic Education was viewed as a political subject means that teachers taught the subject in a more biased manner when it came to political issues which did not encourage diversity of ideas. It is expected that learners became critical of their government and made it accountable, and not to become political cadres. However, according to Mainde and Chola (2020) [18], political

knowledge is directly related to participation because those who have acquired it tend to be more politically efficacious in public matters. They use this knowledge to adopt policies and enact them for the common good. It should also be noted that political knowledge is just one of the dispositions learners must acquire for them to participate in public affairs.

The above finding could also suggest that teachers have problems in the way they teach controversial topics especially those that boarder on governance. According to the Council of Europe (2016) [9], when teaching controversial topics, teachers were required not to express any personal view or allegiance whatsoever, but to act as a facilitator of discussions, and not to turn a classroom into a political arena. Where strong emotions are evoked, classes can be polarized causing hostility between learners which may threaten discipline in schools.

Opportunities

The introduction of Civic Education in secondary schools in Zambia was in line with the national education policy 'Educating Our Future' of 1996 which retaliates its commitment to education for all and that education should be relevant to help learners develop logical thinking skills. It should further be noted that before 2004, there was never Civic Education in secondary schools in Zambia. Civic Education was taught as Civics at junior secondary school level (Grade 8 – 9). According to the Irish Aid Report (2002); Muleya (2015); Magasu, Muleya and Mweemba (2020a) [14]; Kaumba, Kabombwe and Mwanza (2020) [12], confinement of Civic Education as Civics had a lot of shortcomings. For instance, Civics had created a gap between the upper and tertiary levels, the content at junior level was too loaded and detailed to be grasped by grade eights and nines, and the skills and values in the content were also limited to enable the learners understand and practice their civic rights and obligations.

Now that Civic Education has been made compulsory at secondary school level and is being taught at tertiary level in colleges and universities, there are a number of opportunities to the learners that were previously missed. Learners will be equipped with tools to engage in political, legal, social, economic, and cultural dimensions of society. Through the development of critical thinking skills, learners will have a deeper understanding of issues affecting society. This view was also held by Bergen and Muleya (2019) [5] who argued that Civic Education creates as a matter-of-fact opportunities and possibilities among the general citizenry to learn how they ought to relate with one another as well as respecting divergent views and supporting each other whenever need arose in the community. Furthermore, Kasenge and Muleya (2020) [11] contend that there is also an opportunity of fostering deep democracy which allows for free and open inquiry and critiques, recognition of interdependency in working for the common good.

According to Muleya (2019) [22], in Mainde and Chola (2020) [18], Civic Education sharpens critical thinking skills of the learners which is important in the analysis of political, social, and other issues, as well as preparing them for their roles and responsibilities and for the challenges and uncertainties of life through provision of relevant education. Furthermore, we can deduce that learners are empowered with knowledge, skills, and values to analyse policies and actions of those in government as well as those seeking

public office. In this regard, citizens are automatically given the mandate to participate in decision making process.

Torney-Purta and Wilkenfield (2009) ^[27] observe that learners who leave high school with civic competences achieved through high quality civic learning practices are to address complex challenges, work and study with diverse colleagues, and creatively solve problems that do not have easy solutions. This view was in line with the current study which established that learners through Civic Education acquired skills of analysis to solve problems that society faces. Furthermore, through respecting the rights of others, they will learn to accommodate each other and live for the common good.

Furthermore, the introduction of Civic Education has challenged teachers to change their pedagogical strategies from the old traditional lecture method to learner centered approach which allows learners to think, reflect and do, rather than reproduce from rote learning as a way of developing critical thinking skills. This is a call that has been made very clear in the 2013 Revised Curriculum. Similarly, Adeyemi (2018) ^[1] argues that Civic Education teachers were expected to have good knowledge of civic and political concepts to help strengthen their teaching strategies. This implies the use of innovative forms and methods of education. The inspiration according to Birzea (2000) in Sladkayova (2021) ^[25] should be the models of teaching Civic Education which are experiential learning, collaborative learning, intercultural learning, action learning and contextual learning.

Threats

The fact that we still have schools where we have few teachers to teach Civic Education poses a threat to achieving the goal of the subject in the school curriculum. This is an external factor in the sense that schools have no powers to recruit teachers. It is hoped that the government can recruit enough teachers to teach Civic Education.

Another threat was that curriculum content keeps changing with time and as a result, Civic education textbooks often become outdated even before they reach the bookshops or the classroom. The teacher of Civic Education should be up-to-date with the information such as constitutional amendments and political changes to avoid teaching pupils outdated information to the learners in a classroom. This clearly reflects a huge challenge in the delivery of the subject in schools and this call for constant production and revision of teaching and learning materials consistently with the ever-changing demands of society. Despite this finding being a threat, it poses an opportunity to curriculum developers to tailor the topics in line with global trends.

Conclusion

The present study attempted to do a SWOT analysis of the state of Civic Education in secondary schools in Zambia. The analysis revealed that the internal school conditions had both strengths and weaknesses. For instance, on the strengths, Civic Education has the mantle to empower learners with relevant knowledge, skills and values which can be attested from the topics that are covered by learners from grade 10 - 12. On the weakness side, participants indicated that the subject somehow compromised discipline in schools and that, it was perceived by learners and some teachers that it was a mere passing subject. Its emancipating power was overlooked. Furthermore, the study established

that external factors had both opportunities and threats. On opportunities, participant indicated that learners would engage with public affairs, embrace a culture of diversity and that Civic Education would sharpen critical thinking skills of the learners. Some threats were that some schools had not made the subject compulsory for perceived factors. The content of the subject kept changing with changing situations. The strengths and opportunities should help improve the teaching of Civic Education. Weaknesses and threats should be minimized if the educational goals and in particular the goals of Civic Education were to be realized.

Recommendations

Based on the findings, the following are the recommendations:

- Schools should provide learners with relevant and motivational opportunities to connect formal classroom instructions to community problem solving
- Schools should encourage students to participate in simulations of democratic processes and procedures
- Schools should encourage learners to participate in school governance
- Teachers should deliver Civic Education in ways that provoke analysis and critical thinking skills
- The Ministry of Education to make constant reviews of the curriculums to determine their effective implementation.

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