

## Original Research Article

# **Social Justice and Diversity in Zambia: The Role of Civic Education and Teachers**

### **Abstract**

This article explores the role civic education plays in social justice and diversity in Zambia from the civic education teacher's perspective as well as establishes the extent to which teachers are actively engaged in social justice and diversity. Predicated on the fundamental role civic education plays in teaching and promoting diversity and social justice, it is highly expected that civic education teachers should be the lodestars in undertaking this activity. It is noted that teachers of civic education can bring about social justice in society; this can be achieved through active participation in local communities and consolidating the teaching of democracy, human rights and promotion of participation within people's local communities and global level for social justice. Therefore, teaching for diversification is of great significance in the delivery of Civic Education in Zambia both at teacher training and secondary school level. Anchored on the explanatory design as a methodological bedrock, this study found that teachers were not actively engaged with issues of diversity. The study concludes that there is little to no engagement among teachers in diversity and in bringing about social change, especially on matters that affect the wider community. This is partly attributed to the impractical nature in which Civic Education is delivered at the secondary school or tertiary level. The study recommends that different approaches to the teaching of civic education must be introduced in the civic education curriculum.

**Keywords:** *Diversity, Social Justice, Civic Education, citizens, society*

### **Introduction**

The role and nature of Civic Education across the globe are being critically considered from different standpoints. In Zambia, Muleya (2015) argues that civic education can be a vehicle of social change and transformation if underpinned by relevant methodological practices. Issues of social justice have become increasingly pronounced in school curricula as a way to address systemic oppression and inequalities in societies (Wade, n.d). Chola, (2016), Sakala, (2016), and Muleya (2015) have demonstrated the lack of pedagogical preparation for teachers that can lead towards desired social transformation.

So central to the issues of social justice is the concept of critical consciousness among citizens. This, in civic education, creates an environment in which learners and teachers become more aware of their role in Social Justice. Coninck, Culp & Tylor (2013) note the intended importance of incorporating social justice issues in the national curriculum as complementary measures to the efforts of the non-government organization and other stakeholders. Social Justice must start with the children's experience and then move towards fostering critical perspective and action directed towards social change (Wade n.d).

Zambia is greatly diversified; with above 72 ethnic groups and a mutilated political system, there is a need for an education system that holds the fabric of society from breakdown and political turmoil. To do this, there is a need to strengthen the provisions of civic education at all levels of society. The interpretation of civic education aims from a liberal perspective and emphasizes the teaching of tolerance and the maintaining of public order (Gutman 1995). Central to this conception is the understanding that mutual respect and a sense of fairness is the virtue of a democratic society. Rising from the deterioration of our moral framework and the emergence of many social barriers, most citizens are alienated and deprived of equal opportunity reinforcing injustices and division in society (William, 1997). Even though the development of an individual is an important step to effective citizenship, social justice must transcend individual development. It should encompass restructuring of social institutions as these institutions prevent individuals from taking control of their destinies and equally prevents them from taking responsibility for their moral behaviour. This is because the growth and success of society is dependent on the citizens' ability and willingness to examine current social problems.

Schools cannot teach mutual respect without exposing the teachers first and the children later to different ways of life. Kaumba, Kabombwe & Mwanza (2020) have argued that teacher preparedness is a great value that teachers should possess if Civic education is to be taught effectively. Kaumba & Mkumba (2020) acknowledge the need to critically deal with diversity in society starting with the classroom settings. Living in diversity is a fundamental aspect of modern society and is exclusively a vital element of human existence. The understanding necessitates the desire to explore the role civic education plays in social justice and diversity in Zambia from the civic education teacher's perspective as well as establish the extent to which teachers are actively engaged in social justice and diversity.

## **Methodology**

This study followed an explanatory design in which descriptive statistics were used in analyzing the responses of the study. The study focused on showing percentages of how teachers responded to each component on a Likert scale. The study included 55 civic education teachers that were purposively selected from four towns of the central and Copperbelt in Zambia. This includes Kabwe, Ndola, Luanshya & Masaiti districts. Questionnaires and document reviews were used to collect data.

## **Conceptual Framework**

Diversity and social justice are inseparable from man's everyday life, it is regarded as the anchor and mirror of progress. To achieve meaningful democratic tendencies, there is the need that appreciation and understanding of diversity to be made central as a tool for integration. This offers an opportunity to expose learners to diverse backgrounds and experiences. Appreciation of cultural differences in a given society can well be possible if the learners are continuously exposed to diversity and interact with diversity. Social justice can be conceptually viewed as finding the optimum balance between society and individual responsibilities. As defined by Warren (1998), Social justice is a movement of society toward more equality, support for diversity, economic fairness, nonviolent conflict resolution, and participatory democracy. In the classroom, it looks like explicit recognition of oppression in its multiple forms.

## **Diversity and Social Justice**

Social justice is seen both as a process and as a goal (Adams, Bell & Griffin, 2007), and encompasses all forms of mutual relationships in society in meeting the needs of members physically and psychologically to feel safe and secure. In search of equality upon which social justice lies, the need for political diversity and social diversity rests on the development of good citizenship (Gutman, 1995).

The connection between Civic Education (Citizenship education), social justice and diversity is an important element to critically examine. While social justice is the responsibility of everyone in society, civic education teachers can play a leading role to develop among learners a culture of justice and acceptance of diversity. Erlich & Gindi (2018) note that teachers are in the direct line

of learning for the learners in the formal education system from which they learn different government legal issues and organizations. Teachers then stand to have a central role in influencing the outcomes of learning (Center for Information and Research on Civic Learning and Engagement (CIRCLE), 2015).

Preparing students for responsible citizenship in a diverse democracy is a huge task which calls for a commitment among college, university professors and administrators to massively take into consideration the cultural and social changes we are experiencing (DeJaeghere, 2009). In Zambia, there has been a widespread cancerous tendency in which teachers that have in one way or another other participated in political, social or economic engagement are transferred and labelled as opposition by school administrators. Speaking out or exercising one's displeasure has now been politically connoted to be anti-government but yet some scholars regard teaching as a political endeavour (Eleni, Bree & David 2010). A good citizen must actively organize to address causes of injustice and suffering (Westheimer & Kahne, 2004), A good citizen understands the complexities of social issues, political issues, and economic issues, and how they are tied together and is not always willing to accept the definition of a problem as presented to them by politicians.

Levine & Soltan (2014) argue that Colleges and universities are anchor institutions that often express a civic purpose and are, at a time when society is changing in its social characteristics, ideally situated for addressing questions of justice and diversity. These institutions play a leading role in the preparation of teacher educators who are expected to influence and act in different capacities to cause change in society. Tonya & Warring (2006) see the responsibility of a college of education as one that is committed to democratic practices and social justice, to prepare teachers who are critically reflective and conscious of social interactions and their contribution to the liberation or oppression of others. There is a need to reshape pedagogical practices at teacher training institutions to allow for transformative learning. Sakala (2016) argues that teacher trainers' institutions have not given the candidates opportunities to actively engage with communities. This form of training has left a gap in the responsiveness of teachers towards the achievement of civic education goals.

Teachers' experience is a valuable component to the attainment of goals of education and in the tendencies to influence the acquisition of values and dispositions. Teachers, regarded as role models should be exposed to service learning to yield social change (Kaumba, 2023). CIRCLES

(2015) argue that longer service learning experiences are associated with higher civic knowledge, civic dispositions and efficacy. This simply means that the more teachers participate and actively engage in issues of justice and diversity, the more they are likely to cause social change in their school and classroom settings. If teachers are not aware of the communities they live in and of theirs, they may not be able to connect with their learners and this can affect their classroom management and instruction (Eleni, Bree & David, 2010).

Due to the deepening of racial, ethnic, cultural, language and religious diversity, in many states (Banks 2004), Civic education must be transformed to respond to the core issues required to sustain a diversified society. Even though the Zambia curriculum emphasizes certain values as the backbone of Zambia's democracy, the school system has not changed what to teach and how to teach. Adams, Bell, & Griffins (2007) have argued that 'to change what to teach is to change the strategy to teach it'. Tonya & Warring (2006) makes a valid comment that teaching with a commitment is a difficult journey that begins with engaging the learners in a deliberate self-awareness which requires one's ability to examine one's own culture.

To teach social justice and diversity, there is a need to include active learning and interactive pedagogy in achieving social justice education (Adam, Bell & Griffin, 2007). Pedagogies of such nature teach learners values of democracy which Tonya and Douglass (2006) have argued are the ingredient to social justice and diversity education. Teachers need to actively engage in critical topics and discussions which necessitate the appreciation of divergent views for democracy to thrive. According to Coninck, Culp & Tylor (2013), Africa's bounded democracy gives a point of discussion for social justice; the authors note that even though citizens may participate in an electoral process, they are further restricted to engage by ignorance, fear or other forms of exclusion. These elements account for oppression which can be addressed through service learning which is inherently connected to social justice (Mitchell, 2008). Susan (2010) has made the connection between service learning and social change. The author argues that when people become consciously aware to participate in social, economic and political life, they develop self-awareness about their moral and civic obligation which clarifies their values and become committed to working for the common good.

Four important components that matter to social justice have been identified by Susan (2010). These components form what Susan has referred to as critical consciousness. The author proposes that learners become aware of themselves as they clarify their values through

reflections, discussions and actions. The components of critical consciousness have been summarized in Figure 1.



Figure 1 (adopted from Susan, 2010).

To create the elements of self-awareness, there is a need that teachers to become skillful in designing assignments or work that can allow learners to think more about themselves. But also important is the ability to make the learners able to work with others, this implies having the opportunity to interact with people of different backgrounds, cultures or races to give meaning to living with others (Susan, 2010). In multicultural societies, teachers may find it difficult to teach diversity and social justice if the democratic values of equality and justice are not prevalent in government institutions or schools (DeJaeghere, 2009). In addition, the caution is that if teachers do not understand the philosophical and epistemological principles of critical multiculturalism or participate in the process of justice and diversity, they may not be able to practice and teach to influence others to act so.

## Results

### Teachers' Perceptions about the role of Civic Education in social justice and diversity

On a Likert scale of 1 to 5, in which 1 strongly agreed and 5 strongly disagree, teachers were asked to rate a series of statements about their perceived view about the role of civic education in social justice and diversity. Ten (10) statements were randomly phrased to check the level of teacher understanding of the issues of diversity. Some statements were negatively framed and while others carried a positive connotation. Table 1 shows the results of the study.

**Table 1:** Teachers' perception of the Role of civic education in Social justice and Diversity

S/ N	Item	Responses N-55 Percentage				
		SA	A	N	D	SD
1	My role as an educator involves teaching about social justice and diversity and not trying to change the injustice in society	14.5	30.9	7.3	36.4	10.9
2	Teaching and learning about diversity has little to do with Civic Education	1.8	7.3	5.5	63.6	21.8
3	The current Civic Education curriculum offers sufficient opportunity to include diversity and social justice in my teaching	9.1	49.1	25.5	16.4	-
4	Active and participatory teaching and learning are not practical in the Civic Education classroom context	3.6	25.5	9.1	40.0	21.8
5	Civic Education should be concerned with inequality in society and other issues in society	38.2	45.2	3.6	9.1	3.6
6	Education equity is a moral imperative	16.4	60.0	14.5	7.3	1.8
7	I feel helpless in bringing about positive social change	1.8	34.5	14.5	38.2	10.9
8	As a teacher, I should engage in social activism	32.7	41.8	10.9	9.1	5.5
9	Making societies better is the responsibility of the government and NGOs and not mine as a Civic education teacher	7.3	10.9	3.6	23.6	54.5
10	I am confident in my ability to influence decisions affecting my society	30.9	56.4	9.1	1.8	1.8

Table 1: demonstrates the strong attachment teachers give to the importance of civic education in social justice and diversity. Teachers show a positive agreement with the role they can play in

engaging in social activism. The results show that teachers perceive making society better as the sole responsibility endowed on them.

### Teacher's participation in activities addressing social justice and diversity concerns

Several activities were explored to check how actively engaged teachers are in matters of social justice and diversity. If the percentages are high more than Five (5) times dropping towards Never, it means that the teachers are actively engaged in social justice. If the percentage score is high on Never and dropping towards more than Five (5) then the teachers are not actively involved/engaged in diversity and social justice.

**Table 2:** shows the activities teachers participate in for social justice and diversity.

S/N	Item	Responses					Missing
		Never	Once	Twice	Three to Five	More than Five	
1	Contacted a politician or your local councillor	69.1	14.5	9.1	3.6	3.6	
2	Worked (for pay or no pay) for another organization or association	58.2	23.6	1.8	5.5	10.9	
3	Signed a petition	85.5	10.9	-	1.8	1.8	
4	Took part in a public demonstration/protest/rally	74.5	16.4	7.3	1.8	-	
5	Actively campaigned about social, economic, political or environmental issues (Besides protests/rallies)	69.1	16.4	5.5	-	9.1	
6	Attended a public meeting about a local and global problem	47.3	25.5	3.6	9.1	14.5	
7	Boycotted or avoided certain products because of the company's behaviour	45.5	27.3	9.1	7.3	10.9	
8	Activity sought information on the company's behaviour/policies	63.6	14.5	9.1	5.5	1.5	1.8
9	Done any voluntary work	36.4	21.8	14.5	10.9	16.4	
10	Donate money to a non-governmental organization or group	61.8	21.8	9.1	1.8	5.5	
11	Participate in human Rights campaigns	29.1	34.5	5.5	4.6	27.3	
12	Undertaken/participated in peace	60	14.5	12.7	3.6	9.1	

	initiatives						
13	Engaged in environmental issues	34.5	30.9	9.1	9.1	16.6	
14	Participate in children's rights campaign	29.1	25.5	14.5	7.3	21.8	1.8
15	Participated in an anti-tribalism campaign	41.8	25.5	12.7	1.8	18.2	
16	Participate in gender-based violence issues	32.7	16.4	14.5	7.3	29.1	
17	Conducted any good citizenship initiatives	43.6	14.5	16.4	7.3	18.2	
18	Non-discrimination campaigns on account of tribe, creed, religion or race	49.1	10.9	5.5	9.1	25.5	
19	Engaged in workers' rights campaigns	60	9.1	9.1	14.5	7.3	

Table 2 shows the results of teachers' participation in social justice and diversity in Zambia in the selected four districts. The results show that the majority of teachers are not actively engaged in social justice and diversity. Only three elements out of the 19 tested items tend to have an active score even though showing weaker tendencies since most teachers participated only once or never. Campaigns on children's rights, human rights issues and gender-based violence show positive participation with cumulative percentages of 69.1%, 71.9% 67.3% respectively, and elements of voluntariness (voluntary work) more than once with a cumulative percentage of 63.6%.

## Discussion

The lack of active engagement among teachers depicts the nature of passiveness that civic education has taken in schools in an attempt to cause social change and transformation. Teachers are themselves not trained to engage and thus cannot influence engagement among the learners in the classroom. Eleni, Bree and David (2014) argue for teachers to be able to speak or engage without fear of persecution. This calls for social justice in education that people should actively engage in sound debate, dialogue or discussions without fear to be branded political. The results in Table 2 show that teachers cannot even actively engage in workers' rights campaigns and sign petitions. Erlich & Gindi (2018) noted that Civic Teachers and Social Studies teachers found themselves being criticized on social media for expressing their views. This is a worrisome tendency for subjects/courses that require people with a critical view. For social justice to be

possible, dispositions that lead to its creation should be attained by the teachers or teacher candidates.

Horenczyk and Tatar (2003) observed that teachers are ill-equipped in dealing with multiculturalism. Wedekind (2001) for example, indicated that teachers in South Africa do not have the knowledge, experience or in some cases the dispositions to address matters of race and culture in their classroom. In a society like Zambia where classrooms are culturally heterogeneous, teachers need the knowledge, skills and experience required to address the diversity leading to social justice. The results demonstrate that teachers did not take a keen interest in campaigns that addressed discrimination on matters of creed, race or tribal differences. Wedekind (2001) suggests that it is the teachers who can change the way learners see many aspects of multi-lingual, multicultural and ethnically diverse societies.

The main fear of different countries lies in the concept of politicized education. The question of whether civic education or citizenship education should discuss and address government affairs: policies and politics still point to a challenge as many pundits think that education must remain neutral. Yumoto (2017) discusses the question of politicizing education from a Japanese perspective and concludes that if teachers are made to participate in controlled education policies and political controversy and stooped from freely participating in democracy in and out of school, citizenship education or Civic Education will be static thereby impacting negatively on the progression of active citizens. The silent nature of teachers on many aspects outlined in the results including their participation in petitions, and policies of social, political and economic nature, describes the voice of an oppressed teacher stripped of the ability to speak, discuss or dialogue the construction of knowledge that should serve the face of participation within and outside the school premise.

Equally teacher silence pinpoints a poorly prepared teacher in participating in controversy, open dialogue and any meaningful active participation therein. In the study by Oulton et al (2004), there is a suggestive conclusion that teachers felt unprepared to present controversial topics in the classroom and that pedagogies of presenting controversial topics were in itself a controversy. This lack of preparedness can be a reflection of what Sakala (2016) called unresponsive teacher training.

## **Conclusion**

Social justice implies that people's rights are respected and accorded the same opportunities. The vulnerable must receive adequate care. No discrimination based on race, religion, language or tribe, or political inclination. Social Justice then must regulate the obligations a man has to the community. The study's findings demonstrate that teachers even though are aware of the important role that civic education plays in society, they still take a silent approach to participating in social justice activities themselves within their local community. This would only mean a mismatch in theory and practice among teachers. There is recognition that diversity and social justice must be given priority in the teaching and delivery of Civic Education in Zambia. The subject is well-centred to prepare citizens for active participation but to do so, there is a need for a shift in pedagogical practices.

## **Consent**

As per international standard or university standard, Participants' written consent has been collected and preserved by the author(s).

## **Ethical Approval:**

As per international standard or university standard guideline participant consent and ethical approval has been collected and preserved by the authors.

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