



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

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## **Authors' contributions**

*This work was carried out in collaboration among all authors. All authors read and approved the final manuscript.*

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## **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 establish the extent to which teacher's themselves 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, the 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

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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 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.*

## 1. BACKGROUND AND CONTEXT

The role and nature of Civic Education across the globe is being critically considered from different stand points. In Zambia, Muleya [1] argues that civic education can be a vehicle of social change and transformation if underpinned to relevant methodological practices. Issues of social justice have become increasingly pronounced in school curricular as a way to address systemic oppression and inequalities in societies (Wade, n.d). Chola, [2], Sakala, [3], Muleya [1] 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 [4] note the intended importance of incorporating social justice issues in the national curriculum as complimentary measures to the efforts of non-government organization and other stakeholders. Social Justice must start with the children's experience then moving towards fostering critical perspective and action directed towards social change (Wade n.d).

Zambia is greatly diversified; with above 72 ethnic groups and mutilated political system, there is need for an education system that holds the fabric of society from breakdown and political turmoil. To do this, there is need to strengthen the provisions of civic education at all levels of society. The interpretation of the civic education aims from a liberal perspective emphasizes the teaching of toleration and the maintaining of public order [5]. Central to this conception is the understanding that mutual respect and a sense of fairness is the virtue of 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 [6]. 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 own destinies and equally prevents them from taking responsibility for their moral behavior. 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 [7] have argued that teacher preparedness is a great value that teacher should possess if Civic education is to be taught effectively. Kaumba & Mkumba [8] 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 teacher's themselves are actively engaged in social justice and diversity.

### 1.1 Statement of the Problem

Without doubt civic education promotes social justice and fosters the values of co-existence in a diverse society. It has the capacity to inculcate, among others, civic values such as tolerance, respect and common good that are fundamental in the promotion of social justice. In this context, those who teach civic education are expected to be actively engaged in activities that promote social justice. In Zambia, there has been a wide spread of a cancerous tendency in which teachers that have in one way or the other participated in political, social or economic engagement being transferred and labeled as opposition by school administrators. However, there is little that is documented to demonstrate how civic education contributes to social justice and the extent to which teachers of civic education engage in activities that promote social justice. In order to appreciate the teaching of civic education in Zambia, it is paramount that

this study is conducted to establish the influence of civic education in the promotion of social justice.

## 1.2 Conceptual Framework

Diversity and social justice are inseparable to man's everyday life, it is regarded as the anchor and mirror of progress. In order to achieve meaningful democratic tendencies, there is need that appreciation and understanding of diversity is 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 the society and individual responsibilities. Defined by Warren [9], Social justice is a movement of society towards 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.

## 2. LITERATURE REVIEW

### 2.1 Critical Reflections on Diversity and Social Justice

Social justice is seen both as a process and as a goal [10], 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 [4].

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 [11] note that teachers are of the direct line of learning for the learners in the formal education system from which they learn different government legal issues and organization. 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), [12].

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 [13]. Speaking out or exercising one's displeasure has now been politically connoted to be ant-government but yet some scholars regard teaching as a political endeavor [14]. A good citizen must actively organize to address causes of injustice and suffering [15]. 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 [16] 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 & Douglas [17] 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 need to reshape pedagogical practices at teacher training institutions to allow for transformative learning. Sakala [3] 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 successful achievement of civic education goals.

Teachers experience is a valuable component to attainment of goals of education and in the tendencies to influence acquisition of values and dispositions. Teachers, regarded as role models should be exposed to service learning in order to yield social change [18]. CIRCLES [12] 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 within their school and classroom settings [19]. If teachers are not aware of the communities they live in and those of theirs, they may not be able

to connect with their learners and this can affect their classroom management and instruction [14].

Due to the deepening of racial, ethnic, cultural, language and religious diversity, in many states [20], Civic education must be transformed in order to respond to the core issues required to sustain diversified society. Even though the Zambia curriculum emphasizes certain values as backbone to Zambia's democracy, the school system has not changed what to teach and how to teach. Adams, Bell, & Griffins [10] have argued that 'to change what to teach is to change the strategy to teach it'. Tonya & Douglas [17] makes a valid comment that teaching with a commitment is difficulty 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 need to include active learning and interactive pedagogy in achieving social justice education [10]. Pedagogies of such nature teach learners values of democracy which Tonya and Douglas [17] 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 [4], 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 [21]. Susan [22] 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 work for common good.

## 2.2 Components of Social Justice

Four important components that matter to social justice have been identified by Cipolle [22]. 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 Fig. 1.



Fig. 1. Adopted from Cipolle [22]

To create the elements of self-awareness, there is need that teachers 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 be able to work with others, this implies having the opportunity to interact with people of different background, cultures or races in order to give meaning to living with others [22]. In multicultural societies, teachers may find it difficult teaching diversity and social justice if the democratic values of equality and justice are not prevalent in government institutions or schools [13]. 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.

## 3. METHODOLOGICAL APPROACHES

Methodology is a bedrock on which any research is anchored. It provides a roadmap on how a research can be successfully conducted. This study employed an explanatory design in which descriptive statistics were used in analyzing the responses of the participants. The study focused on showing percentages with regard to how teachers responded to each component on a likert scale. This is because the study focused on determining how active teachers participated in the promotion of social justice having exposed to civic education, which advocates for social justice. 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. To collect data from the participants, questionnaires and document review were used.

## 4. FINDINGS

**Teachers Perceptions about the role of Civic Education in social justice and diversity:** On a likert scale of 1 to 5, in which 1 was strongly agree and 5 strongly disagree, teachers were asked to rate a series of statements with regard to 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 on 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, demonstrates the strong attachment teachers give to the importance of civic education in social justice and diversity. Teachers show a positive agreement to the role they can play in engaging in social activism. The results show that teacher perceive making society better as sole responsibility endowed on them.

**Teacher's participation in activities addressing social justice and diversity concerns:** A number of activities were explored to check how actively engaged teachers are in matters of social justice and diversity. If the percentages are high on 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 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 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) of more than once with cumulative percentage of 63.6%.

## 5. DISCUSSION

The lack of active engagement among teachers depicts the nature of passiveness that civic education has taken in schools in the attempt to

cause social change and transformation. Teachers are themselves not trained to engage and thus cannot influence engagement among the learners in classroom. Eleni, Bree and David [14] argue for teachers being 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 campaign and signing petitions. Erlich & Gindi [11] 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 [23] observed that teachers are ill-equipped in dealing with multiculturalism. Wedekind [24] 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. Society like Zambia were classroom 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 keen interest in campaigns that addressed discrimination on matters of creed, race or tribal differences. Wedekind [24] suggest that it is the teachers who can change the way learners see many aspects multi-lingual, multicultural and ethnically diverse societies.

The main fear from different countries lies in the concept of politicized education. The question to 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 [25] 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

**Table 1. Teachers perception about 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 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 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 councilor	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 protest/rally)	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 company's behaviour	45.5	27.3	9.1	7.3	10.9	
8	Activity sought information on company's behavior/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 initiatives	60	14.5	12.7	3.6	9.1	
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 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	

in petitions, policies of social, political and economic nature, describes 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 pin points to a poorly prepared teacher in participating in controversy, open dialogue and any meaningful active participation therein. In the study by Oulton et al [26], there is a suggestive conclusion that teachers felt unprepared to present controversial topics in classroom and that pedagogies of presenting controversial topics was in itself a controversy. This lack of preparedness can be a reflection of what Sakala [3] called unresponsive teacher training.

## 6. CONCLUSION

Social justice implies that people's rights are respected and accorded 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 finding demonstrate that teachers even though are aware of the important role that civic education plays in society, they still take a silent approach in 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 centered to prepare citizens for active participation but to do so, there is need for a shift in pedagogical practices.

## COMPETING INTERESTS

Authors have declared that no competing interests exist.

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