

TEACHER COMPETENCY IN ENGAGING METHODS THAT ENHANCE SERVICE-LEARNING IN THE TEACHING OF CIVIC EDUCATION IN SELECTED SECONDARY SCHOOLS IN LUSAKA PROVINCE, ZAMBIA

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ABSTRACT

This study employed a cross sectional survey research design to assess service-learning in the teaching of civic education in selected secondary schools in Lusaka province focusing on teacher competency in engaging methods that enhance service-learning. Three secondary schools were purposively sampled as they pioneered civic education from its inception in 2004. 12 teachers were purposively selected of which 3 were heads of departments (HoDs) and 9 were civic education teachers from the sampled schools. 28 pupils from each school in Grade 12 classes that were taking civic education were selected by systematic random sampling to take part in the study so as to give equal chances of participation to pupils. Focus group discussions and questionnaires were administered to pupils while interviews and questionnaires were administered to teachers. All interviews were transcribed and were coded for themes.

Data analysis showed that there was weak engagement of active learning methodologies that would stimulate classroom and community engagement to help learners create structured reflection and critical analysis of political and social challenges. Outcomes related to service-learning were also weak. It was concluded that teachers rarely used active learning methods. The researchers recommended that an on-going in-service professional development be provided on service-learning for teachers at all levels, from novices to the veterans. There was also need to institutionalise service-learning so that it became the basis of teaching methodologies in schools as well as increasing policy and leadership in this field to achieve public goals and solve public problems.

Key Words: Service-Learning, Civic engagement, Civic learning.

1. INTRODUCTION

1.1 Background

As a relatively new pedagogy, service-learning (SL) has gained prominence in education since its emergence in the early 1990s (Hatcher, and Erasmus, 2008). It is the undeniable fact that the development of SL initiatives has been accompanied by a renewed interest in progressive education and in the philosophy of John Dewey, whose writings on the active nature of understanding and the benefits of and conditions for participatory democracy “provide an early theoretical foundation for a pedagogy in which students cooperatively engage actual social problems” (Speck and Hoppe, 2004: 19). Rosenberg (2000:8) stated that “Service-learning is a teaching strategy that combines community work with classroom instruction, emphasizing

reflection as well as action. It empowers students by making them responsible in a real-world context while giving them the support, encouragement, information, and skills to be effective". At its best, service-learning allows students to confront issues and problems in complex natural contexts. Ideally, service-learning is suited to help students develop a deeper understanding of subject matter, a practical knowledge of how community decision-making processes work, and strategies for transferring knowledge and problem solving skills to new situations. With the adoption of Outcome-Based Education (OBE) approach in Zambia moving away from Behavioural Approach (CDC, 2013) authenticates service-learning as the central pedagogical approach in achieving this educational goal. Muleya (2015) noted that Outcome-Based Education seeks to link education to real life experiences as it gives learners skills to assess, criticise, analyse and practically apply knowledge to address societal challenges. This study of assessing service- learning in the teaching of civic education in secondary schools remains, therefore, relevant to the current education mission in Zambia and pragmatic teaching of civic education for social, economic and political transformation basing on the principle of active citizenship.

Statement of the Problem

Despite the growing popularity of service-learning as a civic pedagogy in the teaching of civic education, little has been documented about its application and implementation in Zambian secondary schools. Therefore, from the background given in the preceding sections, the problem that was identified for investigation in this study was that of not knowing how service- learning was being applied and implemented in the teaching of Civic Education in selected Zambian secondary schools of Lusaka province.

Research Objective

1. To establish whether teachers are competent enough to apply service-learning methodology in the teaching of civic education.

2. METHODOLOGY

This research employed a cross sectional survey design in which the level of service-learning in the teaching of Civic Education in secondary schools was assessed. McMurray (1990) stated that research designs are a set of instructions to the researcher to gather and analyse data in such a way as to control whom and what to study. The essence of conducting a cross sectional study was to learn about characteristics such as knowledge, attitude and practices of teachers and learners concerning the level of service- learning in secondary schools in Lusaka province. Babbie (2000) pointed out that a cross sectional study uses different groups of people who differ in the variable of interest but who share other characteristics such as socioeconomic status, educational background, and ethnicity. Cross-sectional studies are used in education, but this method is also utilized in many other areas including social sciences and developmental psychology. The sample consisted of 96 respondents from three secondary schools, distributed as follows: eighty four (84) pupils were selected using systematic random sampling from three schools which pioneered Civic Education in Lusaka province in 2004; nine (9) Civic Education

teachers and three (3) head of department Social Sciences were purposively sampled. The study employed both qualitative and quantitative techniques in collecting and analysing data. The study involved three data collection techniques, namely questionnaires, interviews and focus group discussion. Quantitative data sets were analysed using descriptive statistics while qualitative data sets were coded and transcribed according to the emerging themes.

3. FINDINGS AND DISCUSSIONS

Teacher competency in engaging service-learning methods

The research objective of this study was to find out teacher competency in applying service-learning methods in the teaching of civic education in secondary schools. Several statements in table were given to both teachers and pupils about the teacher competency in applying service-learning for active Civic Education learning. A comparative analysis is done later to show whether the teachers views are different from the pupils' views.

Table 1.1 Pupils' responses on teacher competency in engaging service-learning methods in the teaching of civic education in secondary schools

Teacher Competence in active civic learning methods (N=84)	Mean	Std. Deviation
Oral reports by learners	1.8	0.881
Drama/ role playing in small groups	1.73	0.91
Individual projects	2.11	1.141
Group projects	2.15	1.125
Inquiry-Guided learning	2.43	1.083
Class discussion	2.99	1.036
Presentation by learners panel from the class	2.23	1.069
Allow debate on current issues by students from class	1.9	1.037
Construction of summaries by students	1.65	0.857
Interviews	1.48	0.846
Case studies	1.58	0.885
Critical thinking	2.22	1.066
Lecture strategies	2.04	1.109

Problem-solving	2.39	1.151
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Not at all= 1, Rare occasion= 2, 3= frequently, 4 = very frequently.

The value range was from 'not at all (1)' to 'very frequently' (4). The scores of 'not at all' to 'rare occasions have been taken to represent a variable which had mean scores of 0 to 2.5 on the continuous likert type scale; ($0 \leq \text{mean} \leq 2.5$). The scores of 'frequently' to 'very frequently' have been taken to represent a variable with a mean score of 2.6 to 4 on the continuous Likert scale: ($2.6 \leq \text{mean} \leq 4$) and a standard deviation of >1 implies a significant difference on the impact of the variable among respondents. The results in table 1.1 indicated that on rare occasions most listed activities were occasionally done with the exception of class discussions which had a mean of 2.9 indicating that it was frequently done. However most means had a standard deviation of more than one indicating that in some instances divergent views existed from the expected notion of responses. Apart from class discussions the pupils indicated that most of the strategies were rarely or sometimes never used at all. It is important to note that problem solving showed a mixed view.

Table 1.2: Teachers' responses on teacher competency in applying service-learning methodology in the teaching of civic education in secondary schools

Teacher Competence in active civic learning methods (N=12)	Mean	Std. Deviation
Oral reports by learners	2.75	0.866
Drama/ role playing in small groups	2.5	0.674
Individual projects	1.92	0.515
Group projects	2.42	0.996
Inquiry-Guided learning	3.08	0.793
Class discussion	3.58	0.515
Presentation by learners panel from the class	3.08	0.793
Allow debate on current issues by students from class	3.08	0.9
Construction of summaries by students	2	0.943
Interviews	1.83	0.835
Case studies	1.92	0.9
Critical thinking	3.08	0.515
Lecture strategies	3.17	0.937
Problem-solving	3.08	0.9

Not at all= 1, Rare occasion= 2, 3= frequently, 4=very frequently.

The value range was from 'not at all (1)' to 'very frequently' (4). The scores of 'not at all' to 'rare occasions have been taken to present a variable which had mean score of 0 to 2.5 on the continuous likert type scale; ($0 \leq \text{mean} \leq 2.5$). The scores of 'frequently' to 'very frequently' have

been taken to represent a variable with a mean score of 2.6 to 4 on the continuous Likert scale: ($2.6 \leq \text{mean} \leq 4$) and a standard deviation of >1 implies a significant difference on the impact of the variable among respondents. The results in table 1.2 indicated that case studies, interviews, summary construction, group and individual projects, and drama were activities that are rarely done in the schools sampled. This was because the means were less than or equal to 2.5, the variations from the mean were also minimal. This was due to the standard deviations of values than one (1). The remaining activities were reported to be at least frequently done with the mean greater than 2.5 and less variations among the responses with standard deviation of less than one. From table 1.2 teachers indicated that individual projects are rarely used. Class discussion and critical thinking were very frequently used according to the teachers. Lecture strategies, problem solving and inquiry-guided were frequently Interviews, case studies and construction of summaries were rarely and sometimes not used by the teachers at all. While pupils indicated that active civic learning methods were not or rarely engaged by teachers for classroom instructions, teachers felt that most of the strategies are used. Below were responses from teachers, HoDs and pupils from individual interviews and focus group discussions:

Active civic learning methods are at the centre of awakening service-learning among pupils of different ages. It is the obligation of the teacher to be tactful in employing such strategies as medium of instructions. With no doubt one HOD confirmed that;

Methods such as interviews, case studies, construction of summaries, individual projects were not common among the teachers of civic education in most secondary schools. It is for this reason that Continuous Professional Development (CPD) should be strengthened to share experiences and knowledge on such issues affecting the delivery of quality education.

This view seemed to have been supported by pupils from the schools sampled who also felt that teachers rarely engaged participatory methods in lesson delivery. The male pupil being the class monitor attested that;

Lecture method dominate class activities as sometimes teachers even give me notes to write for my fellow pupils and in most cases such notes go unexplained by the teachers impacting negatively on knowledge acquisition and interest in the subject offered by such teachers. He went on to say that such approaches are a source of problems and noise from classes as pupils become easily bored with copying notes say for 80 minutes. But if pupils are actively involved such cases are kept to minimum.

On whether teachers were competent enough to use service-learning as a civic teaching methodology one female pupil pointed out that;

Mostly the commonly method used are discussion, lecture and question and answer while debate and parliament are rarely used by our teachers. She went on to say that I do not remember any time the teacher used interview, case study, construction of summaries or oral reports.

When asked during FGD if service-learning was a popular method of teaching Civic education in secondary schools one pupil reluctantly said that;

Not that prominent in that we as pupils only learn to pass examinations 'kwasila' finish". The application part is not that emphasised by both our teachers and parents as long as you pass tests and examinations then it is a done deal.

Service-learning requires strong collaboration among stakeholders to implement and realise its benefits. One male teacher lamented that;

Lack of use of active civic learning methods was due to school arrangement concerning timetable of 40 minutes and afternoon classes adding that such methods require a lot of time and careful planning. He went on to say that there are less incentives to encourage us to actively engage participatory methods as school management every time complain that the school has no money but when it comes for sports huge sums of money are given.

The above view seemed to have been supported by a number of teachers in separate interviews. There is need for mutual collaboration among the school stakeholders. Another female teacher bitterly complained that;

School management do not help with necessary support to encourage teachers use active methods for example we see school buses going in town even for more than four (4) times a day but when we request for a bus for education tour or to attend a court session the answer is there is no fuel or no money. She further said such answers put the teachers off to actively employ active learning methods. It is evidently clear that even pupils get excited to move away from the usual classroom arrangement and concentration and knowledge retention is high when pupils are exposed to experiential learning within the community of practice or outside school premises.

The HoD with vast experience in teaching the subject also shared similar sentiments with other teachers on the use of interactive teaching methods. The HoDs had the following to say;

Our teachers face many problems during their work (low student learning motivation, inadequate experience of using interactive methods, the overloaded textbook is difficult for the students to understand, short teaching time, lack of materials and supplies, cooperation with local self-administrative bodies, communities are not supportive, the school principal and other administrators complain about the noise when we use interactive methods).

After cross checking the responses from teachers and pupils, both methodological approaches are affirmatively agreeable that teachers do not or rarely engage active civic learning methods in teaching service-learning. While teachers had fair rating of engaging such methods, pupils who are recipients of learning instructions clearly indicated in both quantitative and qualitative data sets that there was weak engagement of active learning methods in secondary schools sampled.

4. DISCUSSIONS

Competency of teachers to engage service-learning methods

As can be observed from table 1.1 for pupils' responses on the use of active or participatory methods by civic education teachers, with the mean of $(1 \leq \text{mean} \leq 2.5)$ which concentrated on options of 1= not at all, 2= rare occasions, clearly showed that such methods are rarely put to use as a means to give instructions to learners. Most statistical data indicated that such critical methods are rarely used. However when cross checking table 1.2 for Teachers responses claimed to participate in most of these activities while the pupils claimed that only class discussions were significantly done. This can be interpreted that there is gap between theory and practice as teachers may be aware of the methodology but were not being practiced. Pupils who were the recipients of such knowledge showed that such methodologies are not a common feature of lesson delivery among the teachers.

Though in different subject, on teacher competency, this study is consistent with the findings of Mulenga (2015) who concluded that student teachers and graduate teachers did not have sound understanding of the subject matter they were to teach and pedagogical knowledge and skills to effectively teach English language in secondary schools. It is an undeniable fact that teachers play a crucial role in supporting the learning experience of young people and adult learners. The conjoining of content and process in teaching and learning of civic knowledge, skills, and virtues has become central in the teaching of civic education. Mulenga (2015) clearly stated that central to any discussion of teacher preparation is a judgement about what content knowledge and skills teachers possess so that they are able to teach effectively. In their development of curricula and classroom lessons, teachers should recognize that civic virtues and skills, intellectual and participatory, are inseparable from a body of civic knowledge or content. Therefore, teachers' competency to use service-learning as a civic teaching method should be institutionalised as a core form of classroom instructions.

According to the previous researches the more appropriate approaches in teaching civic education at school are active learning styles such as debates, research projects, workshops, CDs, Internet, and DVD, than lectures (National Council for the Social Studies (NCSS), 2007). The topics in civic education have to be presented in a way that enables students to develop the skills of active participation and cooperation with others. Unfortunately, a number of our teachers seem not to share this view. These findings were in line with the national education reports which criticized the passive, impersonal nature of instructional methodologies and called for a pedagogy that was more active and involving, that enabled learners to take more responsibility for their education, and that brought them into direct contact with the subjects of their study (National Centre for Educational Statistics, 2010).

The verbatim showed that service-learning was not a common feature among teachers and pupils of sampled schools. It is for this reason that teachers should be given the freedom to shape the school curricula, engage in shared research with other teachers and with others outside of the school, and to play a central role in the governance of the school and their labour (Pasek, Feldman, Romer and Jamieson, 2008). Educational empowerment for teachers cannot be separated from issues of power and governance. Educators should be valued as public intellectuals who connect critical ideas, traditions, disciplines, and values to the public realm of everyday life. Further these scholars Pasek, et al (2008) employed educators at the same time to

assume the responsibility of connecting their work to larger social issues, while raising questions about what it means to provide students with the skills they need to write policy papers, be resilient against defeat, analyse social problems, and learn the tools of democracy, and learning how to make a difference in one's life as a social agent.

Freire (1970) Critical pedagogy, unlike dominant modes of teaching, insists that one of the fundamental tasks of educators is to make sure that the future points the way to a more socially just world, a world in which the discourses of critique and possibility in conjunction with the values of reason, freedom and equality function to alter, as part of a broader democratic project, the grounds upon which life is lived. Relevant to this study, Mulenga (2015) convincingly argued that the rationale for the competency-based teacher education curriculum design forces teacher educators to take a hard look at what their curriculum is designed to accomplish and to review carefully the way they go about accomplishing it. Best practices in service-learning include a combination of classroom instruction through which students gain the necessary foundational and professional skills, and experience and action on genuine community needs (Eyler, Giles, Stenson and Gray (2001). Through this combined approach students are able to take their knowledge bases and apply them to address an array of societal problems. The application of this pedagogy includes the offering of structured time for students to step back and reflect on their hands-on experience in the community setting and consider their roles and responsibilities as citizens of a society.

5. CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Arising from the findings, it can be concluded that the level of service-learning is minimal. Among the common challenges include those to do with engagement of active learning methods such as interview, case study, fieldwork, trigger films, construction of summaries, problems sets, guest speakers, projects on actual policy proposals, debates, media and internet assignments, journal writing, and in simulations. Such methods are rarely practices or engaged as form of instructions in classroom lowering pragmatic nature of learning and knowing. Today, more than ever before, young people need to understand how democracy works and how they can help to keep and improve it by being active participants. The use of participatory methods stimulates learners' interest for self-learning.

Recommendation

1. Arising from the minimal engagement of active civic learning methods among the teachers it is recommended that pre-service and in-service teacher education programmes be established by the Ministry of General Education and Ministry of Higher Education in collaboration with teacher education institutions to develop the capacity of teachers to provide high quality instruction in service-learning. Hence, there is need to provide on-going in-service professional development on service-learning for teachers at all levels, from novice to veteran.
2. Since it was revealed that service-learning was weak, programme, and financial supports for Service-Learning in secondary and primary Education should be initiated and

intensified by the Ministry of General Education. Policy at all levels should support high-quality service-learning experiences in primary and secondary education. It must be aligned with the various cultures, conditions, and structures of public education.

Recommendations for future research

1. Further studies should be done to cover grant aided and private schools in order to have a comparative data in this area of study.
2. A study should be done on a large scale to cover the whole province so that the picture of service-learning offered in the whole province can be ascertained.
3. A study should be done on the challenges facing schools on implementation of service-learning.
4. A study should be done to assess service-learning in the teaching of Civic Education in Colleges and universities of Education.

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