

The Use of Active Teaching Pedagogical Approaches in Teaching Civic Education in Secondary Schools in Kasama and Luwingu District of Zambia

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Abstract

The paper explored the use of Active Teaching Pedagogical Approaches in teaching Civic Education in selected secondary schools of Kasama and Luwingu districts of Zambia. The paper was guided by two research objectives: to ascertain the commonly used active teaching methods in teaching Civic Education in selected secondary schools and secondly to determine the extent of engagement of learners in Civic Education lessons. The article was informed by the Social Constructivist theory which emphasizes the use of interactive and participatory methods in the teaching and learning process. Embedded Mixed Method design was dominantly used in Methodological underpinnings. The study established that contrary to the new dictates of civic education where teachers ought to employ more active teaching pedagogies, the commonly used active teaching methods were actually still the same old traditional teaching methods such as: question and answer, research work, brainstorming, and discussion. The learners were engaged in lessons through questioning and learner-centred activities. The paper recommended that school authorities should strictly monitor teacher lesson preparation of work to avoid use of same old Active Teaching Methods and secure enough teaching and learning materials to enhance the use of various and latest active teaching pedagogies in schools.

Keywords: Active Teaching Methods, Civic Education, Pedagogical Approaches

Background and Context

Over the past years there has been renewed interest in the teaching of Civic Education in Universities, Teacher Training Colleges and secondary schools in Zambia. As observed by Abdi et al (2006:57) in Muleya (2015) “Civic Education seems to be gaining ground everywhere and in the case of Zambia more attention is being paid to secondary and tertiary education curricula where the subject has been introduced with different emphasis and intentions”. The aim of Civic Education in schools is to prepare active, accountable, and knowledgeable citizens, committed to the fundamental values and principles of democracy (Center for Civic Education, 1994). Zambia like any other democratic state in the world requires a general democratic citizenry, whose specific knowledge and competences would contribute to a well-functioning society. According to USAID (2002) if the goal of Civic Education is to encourage a lasting change in democratic behavior among learners, then more active methods are necessary. Browne (2013) argues that the teaching method used to deliver Civic Education is important to enhance its effectiveness. Use of participatory and interactive methods are best-received and appear to deliver better and longer-term results (Daka, Namafe and Katowa – Mukwato, 2019). Equally, Konopka *et al* (2015) mention that active learning improves the understanding and retention of information and that it is effective to develop higher-order cognitive skills such as the problem solving ability and critical thinking among learners.

Weltman (2007:7-8) defines “active learning as a method where students are actively or experientially involved in the learning process”. While Bonwell et-al (1991) states that in active learning, students participate in the process and students participate when they are doing something besides passively listening. In this type of learning the teacher is no longer a depository and transmitter of knowledge but a facilitator to help learners discover more through active participation. Zambia’s Curriculum Framework of 2013 encourages teachers and teacher-educators to use methods that promote active learner participation and interaction. The use of these methods encourage learners to reflect, think and do rather than

reproduce from rote learning. This is also supported by Magasu et al (2020) who declared that the teaching of Civic Education should expose the learners to real life situations so that they learn from their experiences of life. Exposure to real life situation will trigger reflection and thinking, and makes education relevant to society. In this regard, teachers and teacher-educators should use teaching approaches that allow learners play an active role in the learning process (Kakupa et al, 2015; Daka, and Changwe, 2020).

Active teaching methods include all the participatory, interactive, and learner-centred teaching methods. Active pedagogical approaches includes all opportunities provided by schools in engaging students in meaningful learning experiences such as role plays, debates, mock trials, classroom deliberations, student councils, service-learning and other active teaching strategies to facilitate their development as politically and socially responsible individuals (Homana et al, 2006). Active learning fosters students' learning and autonomy, giving them greater involvement and control over their learning and giving them skills to foster life-long learning in the future (Kirlin, 2005; Daka, Namafe and Katowa – Mukwato, 2019). Active teaching methods involve the use of the mind, not just the memory. It is the process of discovery in which the learner and not the teacher is the main agent (Adler, 1982).

Scholars such as Kauchak and Eggen (1988) have supported the use of traditional teaching methods in schools. However, Freeman et al (2014) argue that active approaches engage learners in the learning process through various activities and debates in the classroom, instead of them passively listening to the teacher. Kirlin (2005) further affirms that the use of different active pedagogical approaches in teaching Civic Education comes with diverse benefits. It generates different skills, knowledge, and attitudes. This underscores the importance of using multiple approaches simultaneously in teaching. Drawing pupils' attention and keeping them engaged are essential points to the learning process (Daka, Sekelani, and Namafe, 2017). Active methodologies place the learners at the centre of the learning process and makes them the protagonists of discovery, rather than just passive information receivers (Konopka, 2015; Daka, 2019).).

Through active teaching approaches, pupils engage in experiences that develop fair-mindedness, and encourage recognition and serious consideration of opposing points of view, respect for well-supported positions, and sensitivity to cultural similarities and differences, and a commitment to individual and social responsibility (Chandler and Ehrlich, 2016).

Cultivating civic knowledge, civic skills and democratic values among learners require the adoption of pedagogical approaches that offer learners an opportunity to engage actively in the learning process. National Council for Social Studies [NCSS] (2008) argues that through discussions, debates, the use of authentic documents, simulations, research, and other occasions for critical thinking and decision making, students learn to apply value-based reasoning when addressing problems and issues. Reich (2002) contends that an education that attempts to develop the critical and independent reflective capacities of children is an extremely important vehicle for nurturing the capacity for autonomy.

Problem

Most literature on teaching methodologies show the benefits of using active pedagogical approaches to learners. However, there is less information on what the commonly used active teaching methods are in the teaching of Civic Education in secondary schools in Zambia. Guilfoile and Delander (2014) states that in order for learners to cultivate a commitment to civic participation and to become active members of vibrant communities, learners need regular opportunities to engage in civic learning activities from pre-school through college. Therefore, it became imperative to ascertain the commonly used teaching methods and the extent of pupil engagement during Civic education lessons.

Theoretical Context

There are a number of theories that have commonly been used to describe teaching and learning processes in a classroom. However, this paper was underpinned by the Theory of Social Constructivism which emphasizes the use of interactive and participatory methods in

the teaching and learning process. According to the theory learning happens primarily through social interaction with others, such as a teacher or a learner's peers (O'Neil and Schacter, 1997). When applied in the teaching and learning of Civic Education, both the teacher and the pupil are seen as active agents in the process. Jonas and Araje, (2002) argue that although the teacher's intervention in children's learning is necessary, it is the quality of the teacher-learner interaction which is seen as crucial in that learning process. Thus, the more a teacher uses active teaching methods in Civic Education, the more likely the learners will develop civic knowledge, civic skills and dispositions.

Literature Review

According to UNDP (2004: 5) "Civic Education is learning for effective participation in a democratic and development processes, and it is an important way for capacity development in the society by empowering people for effective civic engagement". Muleya (2015) explains that for the learners to engage in community activities they need, first and foremost, to learn the art of engagement from the teachers in the Civic Education lessons. Active pedagogical approaches permit for the engagement of learners in reading, writing, discussing and problem solving. Active teaching and learning approaches demand that learners be actively involved, learners be engaged in such higher-order thinking tasks as analysis, synthesis, and evaluation and transfer of knowledge from one situation to another (Bornwell and Eison, 1991). Similar views have been expressed by Burean (2016) who argued that active methodologies are necessary for students to learn what their roles in a democracy are and how they can make a difference in their communities and their countries.

Although lecture method can be an effective strategy for instruction, it is a well-known fact that developing of civic skills and dispositions necessary for engaged citizenship takes practice. USAID (2002) and Homana et-al (2006) report that Civic Education is most effective when methods are participatory in nature. Students cannot be expected to be civically engaged simply by reading. The

Civic education teachers therefore are required to use more active teaching methods for learners to be civically engaged. Commenting on the use of active teaching methods in Civic Education, Chandler and Ehrlich (2016) contend that it is in Civic Education where students should be given opportunities to grapple with decision-making, reaching consensus, participation in groups, and controversy in preparation for life in and outside of school.

The study by Muleya (2015) on the teaching of Civic Education in Zambia established that the teaching of Civic Education in schools is not firmly rooted in practices that allow or encourage a climate of open space and discussion. Furthermore, it was noted that most of the approaches that generate interest and debate among the learners were rarely adopted during teaching and teachers relied mostly on traditional approaches especially those that projected the teachers as the only source of information and knowledge thereby denying the learners opportunities of engagement and real learning. Equally, the study by Chola (2016) revealed that the level of service-learning was minimal in most schools surveyed in Lusaka Province of Zambia. Such methods rarely involved student practice or engagement in the classroom. As observed by Meyer (2003) the major flaws in civic education instructions have been failure to bring democracy to life in schools, and it remains at the stage of merely enunciating principles and describing institutions.

The model of teaching adopted within a Civic Education lessons is likely to shape the degree to which civic knowledge, skills and dispositions are instilled in the learner. According to Print and Milner (2009) successful Civic Education lessons are those that foster an open climate, where opinions are freely expressed and deliberation practiced and encouraged by the teacher. Finkel and Ernst (2005) established that exposure to Civic Education per se had weaker effects on democratic values and skills; what mattered were specific factors related to the quality of instruction and the use of active pedagogical methods employed by civic education teachers. This, therefore, implies that when a teacher employs active pedagogical approaches she/he creates a conducive classroom climate. Civic Education can be an effective tool for increasing democratic values

and skills among learners. Despite all the literature showing positive outcomes on the application of various active teaching methods in classrooms none of them have highlighted the commonly used active pedagogical methods in Zambian schools.

2. Methodology

Kombo and Tromp (2006) describe a research design as a scheme, outline or plan that is used to generate answers to the research problems. It can also be seen as an arrangement of conditions for collection and analysis of data in a manner that aims to combine relevance with the research purpose as noted by Mulenga and Kabombwe (2019) and Mulenga (2018). This study used a mixed methods design which is a process of collecting, analysing and integrating both quantitative and qualitative data sets within a single research so as to get in-depth understanding of a research problem (Creswell and Clark, 2011). Specifically the study used an embedded design which is one of the types of mixed methods designs. The embedded design involves convergent or sequential use of data, but the core idea is that either quantitative or qualitative data is embedded within a larger design (Creswell, 2005; Chipindi and Chipindi, 2016). In this study the quantitative data from the learners was embedded in the qualitative data from lesson observations, the teacher's interviews and focus group discussion. The data from questionnaires (learners) enhanced the truthfulness of data collected from the teachers and the Heads of Department as a way of triangulation (Njobvu, 2014). The researchers carried out 8 lesson observations with Civic Education teachers and 200 pupils were systematically selected to fill in a questionnaire. Secondly, focus group discussions were carried out to collect views on the extent of engagement of learners in Civic Education lessons. The researcher also conducted interviews with 8 Civic Education teachers and 4 Heads of Department for Social Sciences on the use of active teaching methods in teaching Civic Education in the selected secondary schools. Qualitative data was analyzed according to themes while quantitative data was analyzed using mean descriptive statistics.

3. FINDINGS OF THE STUDY

3.1 Commonly used Active Teaching Methods in Teaching Civic Education

In an interview with 12 teachers, who included the Heads of Department for Social Sciences, the study established that the commonly used active teaching methods among the Civic Education teachers in the selected secondary schools were *question and answer*, *research and group discussion*. Other active teaching methods such interviews, debate, role play among other were rarely used to teach Civic Education. One of the Civic Education teachers highlighted that:

In Civic Education we frequently use question and answer and sometime all class discussion where by you involve the whole class by asking thought provoking questions. This instigates discussion where each and every pupil says something.

The Heads of Department for Social Sciences (HODs) expressed various views on the used active teaching methods. The HODs similarly mentioned that teachers usually use group work, question and answer, and research work frequently to teach Civic Education. One of the HOD's explained that:

Due to inadequate teaching and learning materials, teachers are left with no choice but to use teaching methods such as lecture methods, question and answer and sometimes group work. It is rare for teachers to take learners on a field trips. And for role play I cannot remember seeing teachers employing this method frankly speaking.

During the interviews with teachers, several methods were mentioned as being used. However these claims contradicted what was observed during lesson observations. Out of 8 lessons observed only 3 lessons had used class discussions while the rest used a combination of question and answer and brainstorming. The fact is that most of the active teaching methods that generated discussion and debate among

pupils were missing in the teaching Civic Education. This may make it difficult to achieve the aims of the subject. Consequently, this affects the development of civic skills and dispositions necessary for democratic citizenship.

The quantitative results from pupils’ questionnaire on the commonly used active teaching methods in teaching Civic Education in the selected secondary schools of Kasama and Luwingu districts showed similar trends to the teacher’s responses during the interviews. The respondents were asked to rate the statements on the use of active teaching methods in the table using the Likert scale of: 1 = Not at all, 2 = Rare Occasions, 3 = Frequent, 4 = Very Frequent. The findings are presented in Figure 2 and Table 1 respectively.

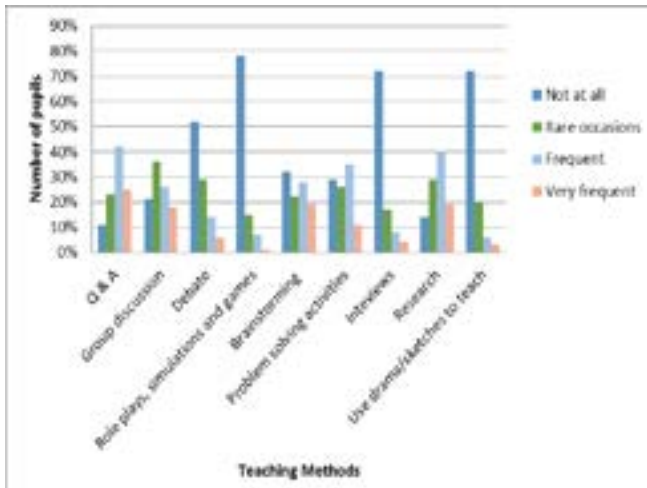


Figure 2: Pupil’s responses on the use of Active Teaching Methods

Figure 2, shows that the most frequently used teaching method was the ‘Questions and Answer’ at 42 per cent, followed by Research work and Brain Storming at 29 and 28 per cent respectively. While the least used teaching methods were role play, interview and drama. The study further established that lack of teaching and learning materials and over enrolment among the sampled classrooms contributed largely to the usage of traditional teaching methods. One

of the HODs revealed that:

Some of the active teaching methods require a lot of time and a lot of teaching and learning materials to use. In some classes the learners are too many were by using teaching methods that will involve all the learners maybe difficult. This has contribute to usage of traditional teaching methods to save on time and ensuring the completion of the syllabus....

3.2 Extent of engagement of learners in teaching and learning of Civic Education

The findings on the extent of pupil engagement in Civic Education are presented in table 2 below. The respondents were asked to rate the statements in the table using the Likert scale of: 1= strongly disagree, 2= Disagree, 3=Neutral, 4=Agree, 5=Strongly Agree.

Table 2: Show the means and standard deviations on the extent of engagement of learners

One-Sample Statistics		
Lesson Progression	Mean	Std. Dev
Does the teacher encourage you to actively participate during the lesson?	4.48	.820
Does the teacher encourage you to respect opposing points of view during class discussions?	4.09	.968
Does your teacher allow you to make presentations during the lessons?	3.70	1.249
Does your teacher use teaching methods that allow you to participate during the lessons?	4.20	.933
Does your teacher allow you to interact/ working together with other pupils in class during lessons	3.71	1.310

Note: 1= Strongly Disagree, 2= Disagree, 3=Neutral, 4=Agree, 5=strongly

Table 3: Show the views of pupils on the questioning techniques in CE lessons.

One-Sample Statistics		
Questioning	Mean	Std. Dev
Does your teacher's questions allow you to think critically?	4.22	.875
Do you ask questions freely during the lessons?	4.61	.664
Do you answer questions asked by your teacher freely?	4.48	.776
Do you understand the teacher's questions during the lessons?	4.11	.932
Does your teacher clarify questions asked by the pupils during the lessons?	4.23	.934
Are you given enough time to find answers to the questions given by your teacher?	4.12	.995

Note: 1= Strongly Disagree, 2= Disagree, 3=Neutral, 4=Agree, 5=strongly Agree

Table 2 and 3 show the means and standard deviations generated after the learners responded to the questions under the second objective. The mean scores show that the responses were falling in the range of agree and strongly agree, meaning that there was strong agreement that the learners were strongly engaged in the teaching and learning process. The results in table 2 and 3 indicate that the teachers engaged learners during lesson progression, questioning time and through various academic activities. The highest mean score was on if the learners asked "questions freely during the lessons" with the mean score of 4.61 while the least activity was on having class discussions and group work with a mean score of 3.58. However, there was much variation on statements which indicated the standard deviations more than one (1). This meant that a good number of respondents also indicated that they were not engaged in the lesson activities

DISCUSSION

The findings or results are given context as noted by Mulenga and Mukaba (2018); Musilekwa and Mulenga (2019). This study found that teachers in the sampled secondary schools frequently used Question and Answer, Brainstorming, Research work and sometimes

Discussion in teaching Civic Education. Active teaching methods such as Role play, Debate, Drama among others were rarely or not used all. Although the teachers had mentioned a number of active teaching methods as being used in teaching Civic Education, very few of them who were observed actually employed the said methods during lesson observations. This finding is in agreement with the findings of Magasu (2020) who revealed that teachers in secondary schools still used teacher-centred strategies. Lecture method was the most commonly used pedagogical approach in most Civic Education lessons. Similarly, Muleya (2015) and Torney- Purta (2001) in Zambia and America, respectively, established that the teaching of Civic Education was dominated by teaching methods that do not engage learners in problem solving and critical thinking. Further, Muleya (2015) revealed that the teaching of Civic Education in schools was not modelled on pedagogical principles and practices that encourage engagement of the learners during teaching and learning processes. The study also exposed higher levels of engagements of learners during Civic Education lessons. This level of engagement of learners in Civic Education, however, is inconsistent with the study done by Nnemdi (2014) in Nigeria who reported that students were not engaged in the teaching-learning process of civics education and they did not contribute in the teaching learning process. Although, learners in this study, to a larger extent indicated that they were fully engaged during Civic Education lessons, it may be difficult to ascertain the quality of engagement. The learners could have based their engagement on the techniques that were meant to improve traditional teaching methods such as question and answer as most of the active teaching methods that invoked active participation from the learners were rarely used.

Contrary to the finding of the study by Hess and Posselt (2002), where students generally had positive attitudes about classroom discussion, the opposite was true in most the lessons that were observed in this study. Most of the lessons observed and in Focused group discussion, the levels of creativity among learners were minimal and optioned answers were rare from the pupils. This situation casts doubt on the quality of learner engagement.

Besides, some of the pupils were passive throughout the lesson while a few dominated in giving answers. Cross (1987) observed that when students are actively involved in learning the task, they learn more than when they are passive recipients of instruction. This is consistent with the theory of Social Constructivism which postulates that learning happens primarily through social interaction with others, like teachers or learner's peers. This theory provided a comprehensive base of interrogating the kind of relationship and extent of usage of active pedagogical skills in the teaching discourse of Civic Education.

Conclusions and Implications

There are only a few active teaching methods being used in the teaching of Civic Education. These methods included question and answer, research work, brainstorming and sometimes group discussion. Active teaching methods which engage learners in critical thinking such as role play, debates, and simulations among other were rarely used to teach Civic Education. Teaching methods that may have allowed learners to engage with lesson content were not used in most lessons observed. This limited use of active teaching methods in teaching Civic Education may lead to having a population of learners who are not ready to engage in community or society activities because of lack of skills, values and right attitudes to engage in social, political and economic activities. Besides, there is over usage of traditional teaching methods which may lead to loss of interest among learners.

Recommendations of the Study

1. School administrators should encourage and monitor the use of a variety of active teaching methods and techniques to teach Civic Education.
2. Continuing Professional Development programs (CPDs) must be promoted to develop teachers' competency in using active teaching methods. Besides, through CPDs teachers must look at the best way to use active teaching methods to teach Civic Education

3. Teachers must provide meaningful interaction between learners and the subject content through the use of diverse teaching and learning activities.

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