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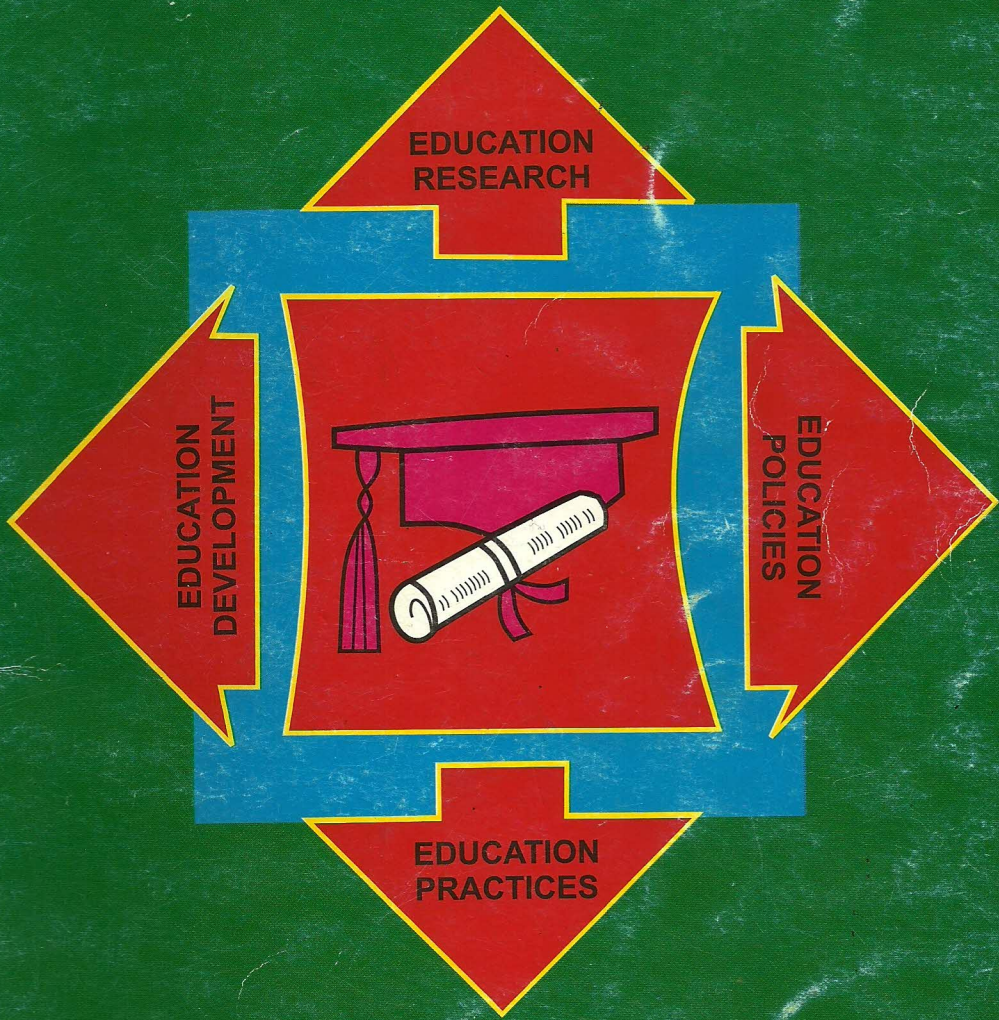EDUCATION RESEARCH

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**School of Education
The University of Zambia**

A SITUATIONAL ANALYSIS ON THE TEACHING OF GOVERNANCE ISSUES IN THE PRIMARY AND JUNIOR SECONDARY SCHOOL CURRICULUM IN ZAMBIA

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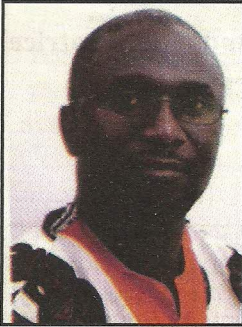
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Abstract

The study being reported here was part of a large scale survey of 54 selected primary and junior secondary schools from all the nine provinces of Zambia. The purpose of this study was to conduct a situational analysis on the teaching of governance issues and to assess whether the current curriculum adequately responded to issues of governance in primary and junior secondary Schools. The data were collected by using questionnaires, semi-structured and in-depth interviews and focus group discussions from a sample of 1613 informants comprising of 180 teachers, 1280 pupils, 54 head teachers, 36 Education Standards Officers, 60 College of Education lecturers and 3 eminent educationists. The study identified gaps in the current Basic School Curriculum with regard to governance issues and recommended that certain key elements of governance should be taught especially at the lower Primary and Junior Secondary School Levels. It was observed that the curriculum had not been revised to take into account key elements of governance from components such as constitutionalism, human rights, administration of justice, accountability and transparency. The study noted that knowledge on governance issues among teachers and pupils in general was inadequate, particularly for some teachers and pupils in rural areas. Inadequate learning and teaching materials on governance was one of the major challenges faced by teachers and pupils in schools.

Background

At independence in October 1964, Zambia inherited a racially segregated educational system. As such, the new political leadership under the United National Independence Party (UNIP) saw among its immediate educational priorities, the elimination of racial segregation in schools. The attainment of independence was followed by demands for changes in different institutions including education. Therefore, curriculum change was inevitable due to social, cultural, economic and political reasons. The first comprehensive educational reform exercise was aimed at improving the content and methodologies of the curriculum in order to reflect the needs of the changing society. The *Educational Reforms of 1977* regarded the school system as one of the vehicles for social and economic transformation of the newly independent Zambian society. The policy declared that the teacher was the key person in the entire educational system that would positively influence pupils in schools. Therefore, it was felt that the success of the educational reforms in Zambia depended on the commitment, competence and resourcefulness of teachers in the system (GRZ/MoE, 1977). It was noted that the reconstruction of curricula at all stages on the basis of these broad objectives was the most challenging and significant task to which much attention was to be given. It was observed that the production and provision of new teaching and learning materials was to be undertaken.

The Educational Reforms of 1977 believed that the philosophy of Humanism would bring about purposeful change in individuals and society based on the conviction that the humanity of each individual person had value. This was the central theme that was hoped would enable men and women to liberate themselves from oppression of all kinds, and to grow to their full stature in harmony with other fellows.

The second national educational reform policy launched in 1992 called *Focus on Learning* observed that the quality of education in the country had deteriorated. Focus on learning acknowledged that the curriculum was out-dated and was producing people who were unable to perform according to expectations. The government recognized the importance of community involvement in the provision of education in the country. The policy highlighted the role of adequate resources in ensuring quality education. This policy position can be appreciated against the background that at this period in the Zambian history, there was a lot of social and economic expectations as people had just witnessed political change. However, *Focus on Learning* was short livied.

The third and current national policy on education, *Educating Our Future* (1996) was formulated and built on the values of liberal democracy. The provision of education was expected to be guided by the principles of liberalization, decentralization, equality, equity, partnership and accountability. This policy led to radical changes in the education system in accordance with the changes in ideology introduced under the third republic by the *Movement for Multi-Party Democracy* (MMD) which won the first multi-party elections in 1991. The philosophical rationale for *Educating Our Future* (1996) is reflected in the Mission Statement of the Ministry of Education which reads as follows:

> *The mission of the Ministry of Education is to guide the provision of education for all Zambians so that they are able to pursue knowledge and skills, manifest excellence in performance and moral uprightness, defend democratic ideals, and accept and value other persons on the basis of their personal worth and dignity, irrespective of gender, religion, ethnic origin, or any other discriminatory characteristic.*

The Ministry of Education reviewed and restructured the Basic School Curriculum and the Basic School Teacher Education Curriculum. In order to entrench the values of liberal democracy in the education sector, the learning process in Basic Education were to be guided by democratic ideals. Learner-centered education and participatory methodologies of teaching were promoted.

In order to actualize this mission, the government which is the custodian of human rights of all individuals, including the right to education was to be concerned with how well the national education policy and practice promoted equity, efficiency, partnership, pluralism, transparency and accountability. The demands of national development required that the government pays attention to the role education play in human capital formation, particularly in developing the types of knowledge, skills, values and competencies that are necessary for economic development and social welfare. In all the three educational policy documents that have been shaping the Zambian education system since independence governance issues have not received adequate attention and thus the translations of governance issues into the school curriculum had greatly lagged behind. It was for this reason that this study aimed at identifying gaps that existed about governance issues in the Zambian primary and junior secondary schools' curriculum.

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Problem Statement

In the recent past, issues of governance have been increasingly used by major cooperating partners as a minimum standard for donor support. In this sense, there has been a growing need to re-look in the school system at all levels to begin to include good governance practices in the learning and teaching process. While it is recognised that some aspects of governance specifically under democratisation as a topic or theme are already being taught in Social and Development Studies and Civics, it has been noted that the curriculum does not adequately address other key elements of governance. It is for this reason that this study was conducted to investigate the gaps that existed in the teaching of governance issues in selected primary and junior secondary schools in Zambia.

Research Design

The study employed both qualitative and quantitative research paradigms. Specifically, a descriptive survey design was used to collect comprehensive qualitative information on issues of human rights and governance. The study was designed as a survey involving collection of data relating to the gaps that existed in the teaching and learning of governance issues, the availability of teaching and learning materials that exited in schools for teaching governance issues and the teaching strategies that were employed by teachers in the teaching of governance issues. Data collection was by the use of questionnaires, semi-structured and in-depth interviews and focus group discussions.

Literature Review

In every organization, the involvement of members in its administration and management is essential to the achievement of its goals and objectives. This, in effect, means that the democratization of its administrative machinery is very crucial to effective management. Consultation among its members in decision making reduces conflict, friction, and misunderstanding. Ejiogu (1987), contends that democratization of any administrative process implies active involvement of subordinates in the decision making process. It means that those in leadership positions will have to share their managerial authority with those over whom they superintend. Such involvement, he further argued, transcends involvement of the hand, but more importantly, the involvement of the mind, the heart and head.Democratization is also essential in the administrative machinery of institutions of learning. In other words, the pupils, who are the central focus of the school system, should be involved in the decision making processes of the institutions. Treslan (1986) contends that pupils represent a significant human component within the microcosm society. According to him, pupils have been on the receiving end of the stick, that is; they have become recipients of administrative decision-making. Thus having a curriculum that adequately addresses government issues will help prepare pupils for their future citizenship.In current policy debates in South Africa there is continuous reference to the democratization of the educational system. Central to the notion of educational democracy in South Africa is the idea that democracy entails, and should enhance, greater participation. Sayed (1997) critically examined educational policies in South Africa regarding the moves toward greater democracy and participation in the education system. He examined key policy texts that have been issued by the Ministry of Education in South Africa in 1996 with particular reference to the South African Schools Bill (SASB). The examination of the policy texts focuses on key recommendations pertaining to school governance, highlighting *inter alia* the tensions and contradictions in them and the different and contradictory notions of participation. Sayed (1997) argues that the current policy texts do not necessarily enhance greater participation and may, in fact, contradict moves towards equity. The paper concludes that policy development in South Africa essentially represents a compromise between white privilege and black redress. Whilst such a compromise is arguably necessitated by South Africa's history, it is a precarious consensus that may exacerbate inequalities rather than erode them. The paper outlines and contextualizes educational policy development in South Africa and traces the call for greater democracy through a review of the struggle for democratic school governance in South Africa. The second part provides a micro-policy analysis of the genesis of the South African Schools Bill (SASB) illustrating the shifts and changes in the document.

Thereafter, the recommendations contained in SASB illuminating the potential and problems that the bills offer for the citizen participation are examined critically in relation to three critical areas of school governance, namely, the discourses of participation in South African educational policy debates, the tensions between equity and redress and the nature and form of parental participation. The origin of South African School Bills can be traced to the Hunter Commission Report on School Organization, funding and financing of schools in August 1995. The Hunter Commission proposed two categories of powers and functions of school governing bodies. 'Basic powers' were those that all governing bodies possessed and to which they are entitled. These included 'non-essential' powers such as time –tabling and budget priorities and 'recommended powers' which included school level curriculum choices (DoE 1995a:56-57). 'Negotiable powers' were those which 'provinces could provide on contract to schools or where schools could contract privately' such as maintenance of buildings. The most controversial aspect of the report was the model of school governance financing. In order for the teaching of governance issues to make an impact learners should be able to connect what they are learning to what they are experiencing at home and at school.

There is widespread assumption that the school is capable of successfully bringing about any form of learning. As a result, current clamouring for transition to democratic form of government, especially in developing countries has led to additional responsibility and expectations from the school system. The slow pace of progress and outright failure of democratization efforts in some countries have led to the accusation of irrelevance on the schools. Babarinde (1994) in his paper '*Can Schools Teach Democracy?*' examined the logic of the assumptions inherent in this debate, the limits and possibilities of schooling as well as the interface of education and democracy. The paper concludes by submitting that if education is to serve as a programme of action, certain pre-requisites must of necessity be present, and that even then, success is not automatic. The question; *can schools teach democracy?* looks rather simple at first. The immediate answer might be, why not, of course, they should; if schools can teach Mathematics, Languages, Science and so forth, why not Democracy? Much of the literature of democracy and democratic transition especially in Africa, which have witnessed significant attention of late, has concentrated on issues of conceptual clarification and historical analysis, among others, without much concern for the realization of whatever ideal is involved especially from within the school system. While one cannot blame political scientists for this seeming neglect, it is the view of Babarinde (1994) that educationist should assume greater responsibility by working hand in hand with their counterparts in Political Science in order to realize this mutual goal. A Chinese saying states that: '*Whatever a nation desires, good or evil, it should throw it into schools'*. The teaching of democracy should begin with conceptual clarification. *What is democracy?* Democracy has its roots in the Greek City States. Etymologically, it is made up of two Greek words – Demos – people – and Kratos – rule. It is therefore interpreted as the rule of the people. It was a situation whereby the entire population of free-born citizens of about 10,000 BC participated directly in the governmental decisions of the city state. The definition was well rendered by a famous American President, Abraham Lincoln, as "government of the people, by the people and for the people." If the definition of Democracy is as easy and straight forward as this, one might then wonder why the concept has generated the greatest controversy and struggle over the centuries. Ake (1992) offers an insight. He argues that:

> *The problem is not, and never has been determining what democracy means*
> *but the contradictions of people's responses to its perceived implication for*
> *their power and their interests.*

In spite of this seeming simplicity of the meaning of democracy, one should exercise some caution so as not to end up frustrated by the so-called simplicity of the meaning of Democracy. Firstly, definitions from etymology have their clear limitations as words acquire new dimensions and attributes in the same way languages develop. Secondly, the profusion of literature on democracy does not support simplicity in meaning. As one is not in a position to offer the definition of Democracy, it might suffice to point out that the gap of about 2000 years between the Greek theory and practice of democracy and modern constitutionalism places apparent limitations to our wholesale adoption of the Greek definition. It is also in this light that one can identify different conceptions of democracy.Babarinde (1994) in his paper 'can schools teach democracy' further observes that the celebrated rights of liberal democracy are largely abstract rights, poor people have no chance at all of realizing most of them. Social or economic democracy on the other hand refers to a political or social system that tend to reduce social and economic differences especially those arising out of the unequal distribution of private property. While noting the above variations, it is still possible to identify certain features of democracy. Ollawa (1979) identifies liberty and equality as the critical elements. According to him, democracy assumes the participation of the general populace, equality of all men and women in the processes of government, and the freedom of choice that the individual in the society chooses government in an atmosphere unpolluted by coercion, fear and other disabilities.Against this background, the primary focus of the study was to conduct a study on the gaps in the teaching and learning of governance issues in Primary and Junior Secondary Schools and assess whether the current curriculum adequately addresses these gaps.

Findings

Pupils` Views on Issues of Governance

The analysis and discussions were done according to themes such as democracy, human rights, accountability and transparency, constitutionalism and administration of justice. The findings have thus been presented under these themes but in two categories of primary and junior secondary schools. Mostly, Focus Group Discussions (FGDs) were held with grades 4, 7 and 9 pupils from all the nine provinces in the country. Three districts were sampled in each province in all the nine provinces of Zambia. In each district two schools were sampled. Questions were asked from all the five thematic areas; democracy, human rights, accountability and transparency, constitutionalism and administration of justice.

Democracy

50% of the pupils were able to define the concept of democracy using their Civics knowledge but were unable to breakdown the concept by giving examples of democratic practices done at home, school or local communities. Their understanding of democracy was only at national level and the responses were mainly limited to issues of presidential and parliamentary elections. There were variations in responses between pupils in the urban and rural areas. For instance, while pupils in rural schools were able to give basic characteristics of a democratic leader, they could not give examples of undemocratic practices done at home, school, local community or at national level. Some of the basic examples given of a democratic leader included leading by example, listening and respecting the opinions of other people, being tolerant, honesty and not corrupt. On the other hand, children in the urban areas seemed to have a broader understanding of democracy.

This could clearly be seen from what they highlighted as characteristics of democracy such as electing their own prefects, discussing and making school and classroom rules and taking part in some decisions made at home. Examples given of undemocratic practices at home were mostly given by pupils from urban schools; these included lack of freedom of movement, parents imposing decisions on their children without consulting them and unequal distribution of household chores. Examples of undemocratic practices at school included teacher discrimination of pupils on the basis of social status. At national level examples given were lack of freedom of the press and no free and fair elections

Clearly, pupils in urban schools appeared to have a better understanding of the concept of democracy as they were able to mention some democratic practices done at home and school. Some pupils stated that they were consulted by their parents about important decisions in the home during family meetings. Conversely, 70% of pupils from rural schools did not seem to have any idea on how they could participate in decision making at home, school, local community and national level. For most of them democracy was only practical at national level during the elections of presidential and parliamentary candidates.

Human rights

During the focus group discussion, pupils were asked to give examples of human rights. 80% of them were able to give examples of human rights that they had learnt such as the right to life, right to education, right to belong to any political party of their choice, right to shelter, and right to freedom of speech. As regards violation of human rights, most of the examples came from pupils in the urban areas. These included forcing children to perform household chores dictated by parents, overloading children with work especially girls and restricting the movement of children. It was noted that some pupils, especially those from rural schools could hardly think of examples of violation of human rights. In fact, most pupils could not explain why it was important for the government to ensure that human rights were respected in the nation. It must be stated however that, the overall picture clearly showed that most pupils did not seem to understand that human rights go with responsibilities. For instance, 86% of them could not explain some of their responsibilities at home, school, and community and in the nation at large.

However, a few pupils, especially from urban schools were able to explain some of their responsibilities at home such as helping in household chores, obeying parents or their guardians. Responsibilities at school included working hard at school, obeying school rules, respecting authority, obeying school rules and reporting misbehavior. Examples of responsibilities at national level included voting for leaders, paying taxes, participating in national development and taking care of government property. We further asked pupils to indicate civil society organisations that were actively involved in the implementation of human rights programmes in the country. It was observed that most pupils in rural schools could not give examples of organizations that protected human rights in Zambia. However, some pupils in urban schools were able to give examples such as the Human Rights Commission, FODEP, YWCA/YMCA and Victim Support Unit under Zambia Police. This was a clear indication that most of the civil society organisation concentrated their operational activities in the urban areas.

Accountability and transparency

As regards accountability and transparency, 55% of pupils especially those from urban schools demonstrated an understanding of the concept of accountability and transparency. They described accountability and transparency as being responsible for one's actions or being able to explain one's actions and being open and honesty in one's dealings. An example of accountability and transparency at home included budgeting. 20% of pupils explained that their parents or guardians asked them to participate in the making of family budgets every month. Examples of transparency given at school included pupils getting to know how school funds were used through their representatives. Asked whether it was good for a leader to favour friends, relatives or people from one's tribe, 90% of pupils condemned nepotism, tribalism and corruption as bad practices in a nation. On the improvement of accountability and transparency at home, school, community and national level, some pupils suggested that at home children should spy on the activities of family members. At community and national levels most pupils had no ideas.

Constitutionalism

We further asked pupils to explain what they understood by the constitution. 40% of pupils were able to partially define the constitution. Again, pupils from urban schools appeared to have more knowledge on constitutionalism. 50% of pupils from urban schools even explained that the constitution was the supreme law of the land, the law which society uses in organising, defining and limiting the powers of government. Others explained that the constitution was law that society uses to organise itself. Asked why it was important for people to respect the constitution, some pupils explained that peace and order in a nation could only prevail if the constitution was respected. Pupils in urban schools were able to give examples of clubs and societies that had constitutions, for example Boys Brigade, Girls Brigade, Boy Scouts, Choir, Debate Club and so forth. To further probe whether pupils understood some of the contents of the constitution, they were asked to suggest some provisions in the constitution that might need amendment. 20% of pupils from urban schools suggested that the declaration of Zambia as a Christian nation was discriminatory as there were other religions practiced in Zambia. In addition, they suggested that the voting age should be reduced to 15 because young people were the majority in the country. On policy changes, pupils especially in urban schools suggested that the free education policy from Grade 1 to University should be re-introduced in order to enhance access to education for every citizen. It must be noted, however, that 80% of pupils especially those in the rural areas did not seem to understand the constitution making process as well as the constitution changing process.

Administration of Justice

On administration of justice, pupils had rudimentary understanding on the administration of justice. 47% of pupils explained that administration of justice was about fair treatment of people in courts of law. However, most pupils from rural schools could not give examples of unfair administration of justice. 35% of pupils from urban schools explained that unfair administration of justice was seen through cases taking too long in courts of law and unfair judgement of cases due to corruption. On organisations involved in administration of justice, most pupils from rural schools could not give examples of such organisations (promoting administration of justice) in Zambia. However, 60% of pupils from urban schools gave examples of organizations such as CCJP, ACC, Victim Support Unit and Drug Enforcement Commission.

Syllabus Coverage on Governance

At primary level, the material on governance issues is covered under Social and Development Studies (SDS), which integrates four subjects namely, Geography, History, Social Studies and Religious Education. At the junior secondary school level, the material on governance issues is covered in Civics and is taught by specialised teachers. As already noted, there is no specialisation at primary level. Thus, generalists are assigned to teach SDS on the basis of their adequate or inadequate knowledge acquired at college.

At the primary school the SDS syllabus is designed in such a way that it prepares the learner physically, socially, culturally, emotionally, economically and spiritually. It also provides opportunities for the development of skills, knowledge, values and attitudes necessary for an individual in society as reflected in the grades 4, 5, 6 and 7 pupils textbooks. (Manda, Mweene and Simbeya, 2007; Mayondi, Musonda and Simasiku, 2010)

In terms of coverage of governance issues, it was noted that there was variation according to the level of learning difficulty. At the lower primary level (1-4) the curriculum is limited mainly to information on basic human rights, democracy and the constitution under the theme, Living Together. This limitation in curriculum coverage was also noticed in the pupils' responses which were mainly homogeneous with much emphasis on rights and very little mentioned on the duties and responsibilities of citizens. This could be a gap in the realisation of the general learning outcomes as envisaged by the MoE at basic school level. In fact, most of the pupils at this stage were not familiar with issues on governance, which gave an indication that the curriculum at this stage does not expose pupils to important topics which are pertinent to promotion of democratic principles.

At upper primary level (5-7) governance issues under *Living Together* mainly covered topics such as: government; constitution; parliament; corruption and the importance of international relations in development. At the lower primary level children did not appear to be very conversant with governance issues. At junior secondary level, (8-9), the trend was different from what was found in SDS. Topics were not integrated but there are coming out as stand alone. Key topics such as democracy, constitution, human rights and government were covered. In as much as the curriculum coverage was quite extensive at this stage, the study found that other issues on governance such as transparency, accountability, credibility and administration of justice were rarely discussed and if they were discussed then it was the resourcefulness and initiative of individual teachers.

Teaching and Learning Resources

The quality of teaching in any education institution is mainly measured by the availability of teaching and learning materials. In this study, it was pertinent to establish the availability of teaching and learning materials on issues of human rights and governance. Overall, it was revealed that teaching and learning materials at all levels were not adequate. Most of the schools surveyed had inadequate or no teaching and learning materials at all. This desperate situation in all the schools

Visited had also been revealed in a recent study that was done by Luangala and Mulenga (2011). The inadequacy of these materials had serious implications on the delivery of quality education. It was also noted that teachers and lecturers in most cases use their personal copies of textbooks and other initiatives to teach SDS and those that did not have copies and other alternatives could just skip the sections dealing with governance.

It must be pointed out here that the teachers guide is critical in the teaching and learning processes. It is a critical tool in the sense that it guides teachers in the delivery of effective lessons to the learners. This problem has the potential of undermining effective teaching and children learning not only in the area of governance but in all the subject areas offered in the school system. It was also revealed that due to the non-availability of teaching and learning materials in the area of governance, most teachers had developed a negative attitude towards the subject and tended to concentrate on subjects like Mathematics, English and Science where information was readily available.

The nature of civics as a subject area is also a challenge. Like many other disciplines, Civics is not static simply because civics deals with current issues affecting human life in the social and political domain. This in itself poses a serious challenge in as far as the production of teaching and learning materials is concerned. This is because the curriculum needs to be kept abreast with current issues which means reorganising teaching and learning materials on a regular basis. It is in this regard that most of the respondents suggested that the Ministry of Education should strengthen the use of ICTs in schools as this would enable teachers and pupils to access latest information on political and social affairs across the globe. It was also revealed that a number of topics required a constant updating and this meant that information on these areas had to be sourced from somewhere, which in most cases was not available.

Key findings in this study can be summarised as follows;

1. This study had revealed that they were a lot of gaps in the content of all the thematic areas that were investigated. This had lead to teachers and learners only covering part of what they were supposed to have taught and learnt about governance issues.
2. The study had also shown that there is a huge difference between learners in rural areas and those in urban areas in the sense that learners in urban areas have a better understanding of most governance issues than those in rural areas. This difference could be associated with the fact that learners in urban areas do not only learn governance issues at school but have greater chance of accessing some of the issues through the media.
3. It is also vital to mention that the study observed that topics such as accountability, transparency and administration of justice are not part of the school syllabus and hence not taught in both the primary and junior secondary schools. In cases where they were taught, it is as a result of the teacher's initiative and innovativeness. These topics are some of the current issues that have emerged in governance issues.
4. The study had further revealed that in primary school governance issues scantly feature in the lower primary level but are mainly concentrated in grades 6 and 7. This situation has lead to a weak foundation been laid in primary schools regarding governance issues.
5. Another key finding of this study was that the teaching and learning of governance issues in both primary and junior secondary schools is not supported by adequate and appropriate teaching materials to the extent that most teachers find it extremely difficult to facilitate the teaching and learning of the subject. For instance, there was a critical shortage of pupils textbooks and teachers guides in all the schools that were visited.

Conclusions

The study explored the development of governance issues in the Basic school curriculum. It was noted that some governance issues were already being taught in schools while others were either not taught or inadequately taught. This study also found that knowledge on governance issues among the educators and the pupils in general is still lacking and in some instances inadequate.

Recommendations

From this study the researchers have made the following main recommendations:

1. The syllabus in civics and SDS should provide adequate coverage of topics on the constitution, human rights and democracy and include topics on accountability, transparency and justice. These topics should not be bunched in one grade but be spread throughout the grades at different depths.

2. The Ministry of Education should urgently provide adequate and appropriate teaching and learning materials for civic education at all levels of the primary and junior secondary schools.

3. The teaching of governance issues should be more practical rather than theoretical by giving real life examples to learners and should highlight the fact that human rights go with responsibilities.

4. The school system should help pupils to experience democratic practices in the schools, for example, getting pupils involved in electing their own leaders, i.e. prefects, class monitors and so forth. If pupils are given chance to choose their own leaders they will live to appreciate and support democratic ideals.

5. The syllabus needs more information on the violation of human rights in relation to responsibilities. Pupils need to know institutions or organizations that protect human rights in Zambia and around the world.

6. Pupils need to understand why the government should promote the respect for human rights in a country.

7. The concept of governance should be broken down. Governance should not be seen as applying to national level only. Governance can be seen at various levels starting with the family, school, local community and the nation.

8. The syllabus needs more information on the administration of justice and the types of courts in Zambia.

9. There should be continuous in-service training of teachers in basic schools on current trends and issues of governance such as transparency and accountability, human rights and administration justice.

10. The Ministry of Education should urgently review the teacher education curriculum so as to include current governance issues.

11. More Colleges of Education in the country should introduce civic education on their teacher education programmes for basic schools to address the shortage of civic education teachers in schools.

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