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BRIDGING THEORY AND PRACTICE: THE ROLE OF EXPERIENTIAL TEACHING METHODS IN CIVIC EDUCATION IN ZAMBIAN SECONDARY SCHOOLS

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Abstract

This study examined the role of experiential teaching methods in bridging the gap between theory and practice in Civic Education in selected secondary schools in Kabwe District, Zambia. The study was guided by two objectives: to explore teachers' and learners' experiences of using experiential teaching methods and to assess how these methods contribute to the development of civic competencies. A qualitative approach was adopted using a descriptive research design. Data were collected through semi-structured interviews, focus group discussions, and classroom observations in four selected secondary schools in Kabwe District. The sample comprised four Social Sciences Heads of Department, eight Civic Education teachers, and 24 learners who participated in four focus group discussions, giving a total of 36 participants. Data were analysed thematically. The study was guided by experiential learning theory, which emphasises learning through experience, reflection, and application. The findings indicate that experiential teaching methods, including debates, simulations, role-plays, case studies, and community-based activities, can enhance critical thinking, encourage active civic participation, and strengthen civic values and attitudes. The study concludes that experiential teaching methods can contribute to bridging the gap between theory and practice in Civic Education. It recommends strengthened teacher professional development, curriculum support, and provision of teaching and learning resources to facilitate the effective use of experiential approaches in developing active, informed, and responsible citizens in Zambia.

Keywords: *Experiential teaching methods, theory and practice, civic education*

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1.0 INTRODUCTION

Civic Education is an important component of Zambia's secondary school curriculum because it seeks to develop the knowledge, skills, values, and attitudes required for meaningful participation in democratic and national development. The subject aims to nurture knowledgeable, responsible, and active citizens who can contribute constructively to society. Civic Education has been described as the transmission of knowledge and learning experiences that enable learners to participate in governance, uphold human rights, and contribute to community life (Kamboni et al., 2025). Since 2023, Zambia's education system has been moving towards more learner-centred approaches through the Competence-Based Curriculum (CBC), which places greater emphasis on the development of practical competencies rather than the acquisition of theoretical information alone (Magasu et al., 2025). Despite these reforms, however, Civic Education in some secondary schools continues to rely heavily on lecture-based approaches, limiting opportunities for learners to engage actively with civic concepts and apply them in practical contexts.

The continued use of predominantly teacher-centred approaches has contributed to a disconnect between theoretical knowledge and practical civic learning. Learners may acquire information about democracy, governance, and human rights without sufficient opportunities to apply that knowledge to real-life situations. Magasu et al. (2020) and Sakala and Tshabalala (2025) identified limited practical exposure, inadequate teaching materials, and insufficient teacher preparation as barriers to the effective implementation of participatory and experiential teaching approaches in Zambian secondary schools. These challenges may reduce the contribution of Civic Education to the development of active citizenship and meaningful civic participation.

Experiential teaching methods offer one possible way of addressing this gap. Grounded in experiential learning theory, these approaches emphasise learning through direct experience, reflection, and application (Ministry of Education, 2023). They include role-play, debates, simulations, community service, fieldwork, case studies, and project-based activities that actively involve learners in the learning process. Such approaches enable learners to connect theoretical concepts with real-life circumstances, thereby making learning more meaningful and potentially improving retention. In Zambia, Mainde (2025) and Chanda (2023) found that experiential approaches, including service-learning and community-based activities, can strengthen learners' civic awareness, participation, and social responsibility. Chanda's (2023) study in selected secondary schools in Lusaka District further indicates that experiential activities can help learners connect classroom learning with societal challenges while developing critical thinking, problem-solving, and active citizenship.

Despite these potential benefits, the use of experiential approaches in Civic Education remains constrained by overcrowded classrooms, limited instructional resources, restricted time, and inadequate opportunities for teacher professional development. In addition, assessment practices in many schools continue to place considerable emphasis on theoretical knowledge,

which may discourage teachers from adopting approaches that require extended learner participation and reflection. There is therefore a need to examine how experiential teaching methods can be used to bridge the gap between theory and practice in Civic Education in Zambian secondary schools. Understanding teachers' and learners' experiences of these approaches is important for strengthening teaching practice, improving learner engagement, and supporting the development of active and responsible citizens.

Civic Education in Zambian secondary schools seeks to develop responsible, informed, and active citizens. Despite its inclusion in the 2023 curriculum, there is concern that learners may acquire theoretical knowledge without developing the skills, attitudes, and values required for meaningful civic participation. Traditional lecture-based approaches can emphasise the recall of information about democracy, government, human rights, and social responsibility while providing limited opportunities for learners to apply what they have learned in real-life situations. Previous studies have associated this theory–practice gap with limitations in practical exposure, instructional resources, and teacher preparation (Chanda, 2023; Magasu et al., 2020; Ministry of Education, 2023; Sakala & Tshabalala, 2025; Torney-Purta et al., 2001). Experiential approaches such as debates, simulations, role-playing, community projects, and service-learning have been identified as ways of connecting classroom knowledge with practical civic experiences (Kolb & Kolb, 2005; Youniss et al., 1997). However, limited empirical attention has been given to how these methods are used in Civic Education classrooms in Zambian secondary schools, how teachers and learners experience them, and how they contribute to the development of civic competencies.

The study had the following objectives:
1. What is the role of experiential teaching methods in bridging the gap between theory and practice in the teaching of Civic Education in Zambian secondary schools?
2. How do experiential teaching methods enhance learners' civic knowledge, skills, and participation in Zambian secondary schools?

2.0 LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1 Conceptualising Experiential Learning

Experiential teaching approaches are instructional strategies that engage learners in practical activities such as role-play, simulations, discussions, service-learning, fieldwork, and project-based learning. Bringle and Hatcher (1996) define service-learning as an integration of community service and academic learning intended to promote civic responsibility and intellectual development. In Civic Education, such strategies allow learners to put democratic values and processes into practice. Simulations, including mock elections and court proceedings, can help learners understand governance and the rule of law, while debates and structured discussions can promote critical thinking and respect for differing viewpoints. Community engagement activities can also expose learners to real-world social and civic challenges (Youniss et al., 1997).

Experiential learning is a learner-centred approach that emphasises learning through direct experience, reflection, and application. Unlike approaches

that rely mainly on lectures and memorisation, experiential learning actively involves learners in constructing knowledge from real-life experiences. The approach is closely associated with David A. Kolb, whose model explains how experience is transformed into knowledge. At its core is the proposition that learning occurs through the transformation of experience. Kolb and Kolb (2005) describe experiential learning as a continuous cycle involving concrete experience, reflective observation, abstract conceptualisation, and active experimentation.

The first stage involves concrete experience, in which the learner participates directly in an activity. This is followed by reflective observation, during which the learner considers what happened and why. The third stage, abstract conceptualisation, involves developing ideas, concepts, or generalisations from the experience. The fourth stage, active experimentation, occurs when the learner applies the resulting knowledge or concepts in new situations. This cycle makes learning dynamic and provides opportunities to connect experience with conceptual understanding and subsequent action. Experiential learning can also support deeper understanding, critical thinking, problem-solving, and knowledge retention because learners are required to examine situations, make judgements, and reflect on outcomes.

2.2 Global Trends in Experiential Civic Education

Experiential teaching methods have increasingly been used to promote active and engaged citizenship. Service-learning and community participation, for example, have been adopted in different educational contexts. Reeb and Folger (2023) argue that structured community initiatives can strengthen civic understanding while fostering ethical reasoning and social responsibility. The reflective component of such programmes is particularly important because it helps learners connect practical experiences with theoretical concepts (Stevens, 2023). Simulation-based activities, including debates, role-play, and mock parliaments, have also been used to develop democratic skills. Seifert et al. (2019) highlight the value of service-learning and related participatory approaches in supporting learner engagement and the development of social and civic competencies.

Experiential approaches require careful adaptation to local educational, cultural, and institutional contexts. Digital forms of experiential learning have also expanded opportunities for civic participation through online simulations, virtual town halls, and e-service projects. However, access and equity concerns may limit the usefulness of digital platforms in low-resource settings (Andresen et al., 2020). Effective digital experiential learning therefore requires attention not only to access but also to structured reflection and meaningful participation. Contemporary discussions of civic education also increasingly connect experiential approaches with social responsibility, ethical action, and participation in community life (Jin et al., 2019).

2.3 African and Zambian Perspectives on Experiential Learning

Empirical research on experiential civic education in Africa remains limited, although available studies provide useful insights. Research in South Africa and Kenya suggests that service-learning, debates, civic action initiatives, and school-based participatory activities can support the development of

civic competencies (Pole & McGee, 2026). At the same time, large class sizes, limited teacher preparation, and curriculum constraints can hinder implementation. In Zambia, relatively little research has examined the systematic use of experiential teaching methods in Civic Education. Existing studies have highlighted limitations associated with traditional pedagogies and have called attention to the need for approaches that develop civic competencies and active participation (Morris, 2020). The literature therefore points to several gaps, including limited empirical evidence from Zambian secondary schools, insufficient attention to contextual adaptation, limited longitudinal evidence, and inadequate exploration of teacher preparedness, resources, class size, and socioeconomic conditions.

2.4 The Role of Experiential Teaching Methods in Teaching Civic Education

Experiential learning is important in Civic Education because it can transform abstract ideas about citizenship into practical experiences (Kahne & Westheimer, 2006). Civic Education seeks to develop the knowledge, skills, values, and attitudes required for effective participation in society, and theoretical instruction alone may not be sufficient to achieve this goal. Kolb and Kolb's (2005) experiential learning framework provides a basis for engaging learners with civic ideas through real-world application. Debates, simulations, role-play, and community participation place learners at the centre of the learning process. For example, mock elections and parliamentary simulations can provide first-hand experience of democratic procedures while strengthening understanding of governance and political institutions.

Experiential learning can also promote critical thinking and problem-solving, which are important dimensions of civic competency. When learners participate in community projects or examine case studies of social issues, they are required to analyse problems, consider different perspectives, and propose possible responses (Boyte, 2004). Such activities can deepen understanding of challenges such as corruption, inequality, and environmental concerns while developing learners' capacity to make informed judgements.

Experiential learning also contributes to the development of values and attitudes associated with responsible citizenship. Torney-Purta et al. (2001) argue that Civic Education involves more than knowledge; it also concerns the development of dispositions such as respect for human rights, tolerance, accountability, and social responsibility. Service-learning and community outreach can expose learners to different social realities, encouraging empathy and a sense of responsibility. These experiences can complement classroom discussion by allowing learners to engage with civic issues at both intellectual and social levels.

2.5 Types of Experiential Teaching Methods in Civic Education

Experiential approaches are important in Civic Education because they engage learners in real-life or simulated civic situations and provide opportunities to develop practical skills, values, and attitudes. These approaches emphasise activity, reflection, and application (Magasu et al., 2020). Common strategies include role-play and simulations, debates and group discussions, collaborative group work, service-learning, field visits, project-based learning, civic action projects, case studies, and community engagement activities.

Role-play and simulations are widely applicable in Civic Education. Learners can simulate civic roles and situations such as mock elections, court proceedings, or parliamentary debates. By assuming different roles, learners gain insight into multiple perspectives, which can encourage empathy, tolerance, critical thinking, and understanding of democratic processes. Debates and group discussions provide opportunities to analyse civic topics such as human rights, government, corruption, and social justice. Structured debates can strengthen reasoning, public speaking, and the ability to engage respectfully with opposing viewpoints (Koh & Hill, 2009).

Service-learning is another important experiential strategy. It combines community service with classroom instruction and enables learners to engage directly with social and civic challenges. Activities may include community clean-up campaigns, awareness programmes, or volunteer initiatives. Such experiences allow learners to apply civic knowledge while developing responsibility, empathy, cooperation, and commitment to community development. Collaborative group work can strengthen critical thinking, problem-solving, communication, and cooperation. Learners work together to examine problems, generate solutions, and make judgements while participating actively in hands-on tasks (Wilson et al., 2018). Project-based learning extends this approach by engaging learners in projects that address real-world civic issues, such as environmental conservation, voter education, or community development. These projects require learners to research issues, collaborate, and propose responses to social problems.

Civic action projects are learner-centred activities in which learners identify a real-world problem, conduct research, design possible solutions, and, where appropriate, take action. As a form of project-based learning, civic action projects directly connect classroom learning with democratic processes and community life. They can help learners develop civic engagement skills, identify community concerns, promote active citizenship, and exercise agency and accountability (Kahne & Westheimer, 2006). Case studies are another useful experiential teaching tool. Teachers can present real or hypothetical civic problems and ask learners to examine the issues, identify challenges, and propose solutions. This approach enables learners to apply theoretical knowledge to practical situations while strengthening analytical and decision-making skills. Case studies provide a structured way of examining complex issues from multiple perspectives (Yin, 2014).

Community engagement activities provide learners with opportunities to interact with community members, local officials, and civic organisations and to develop practical understanding of social issues and governance. Field

visits can also expose learners to institutions such as courts, local councils, police stations, and non-governmental organisations. Such experiences help learners understand how laws, regulations, and governance systems operate in practice. Internships and other supervised placements can similarly provide opportunities to apply civic knowledge, develop practical competencies, and reflect on civic roles.

2.6 Bridging the Gap between Theory and Practice

The idea of bridging theory and practice is closely associated with experiential learning theory. Kolb (2014) describes learning as a cyclical process involving concrete experience, reflective observation, abstract conceptualisation, and active experimentation. Through this cycle, learners can move from theoretical understanding to practical application. Dewey (1938) similarly stressed the importance of connecting classroom learning with real-world experience, arguing that education becomes more meaningful when learners engage with activities related to real-life problems.

In Civic Education, this perspective means that learners should not only study concepts such as governance, democracy, and social responsibility but should also have opportunities to put these ideas into practice through participatory activities. Piaget (2003) emphasised active participation in cognitive development, while Vygotsky (2012) highlighted the role of social interaction and collaborative learning in knowledge construction. Together, these perspectives support teaching approaches that enable learners to apply theoretical knowledge in practical and social contexts.

Bringle and Hatcher (1996) and Torney-Purta et al. (2001) provide further support for experiential approaches as a means of connecting theory with practice. Bringle and Hatcher (1996), for example, describe service-learning as a way of integrating academic learning with community engagement. Learners who participate in service-learning can apply theoretical knowledge to real-world social concerns while developing critical thinking and civic responsibility. Experiential activities such as simulations, role-play, project-based learning, and community engagement can similarly provide structured opportunities for learners to practise civic knowledge and skills. Experiential teaching methods such as debates, simulations, service-learning, project-based learning, and field visits provide structured opportunities for learners to apply classroom knowledge in real-world settings. Role-playing parliamentary sessions or learner council elections, for example, can provide first-hand experience of democratic processes. Field visits and community participation can further strengthen the application of civic knowledge by exposing learners to governance institutions and social issues. These activities are consistent with Kolb and Kolb's (2005) view that reflection on concrete experiences supports the development and application of knowledge in new contexts.

2.7 CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK

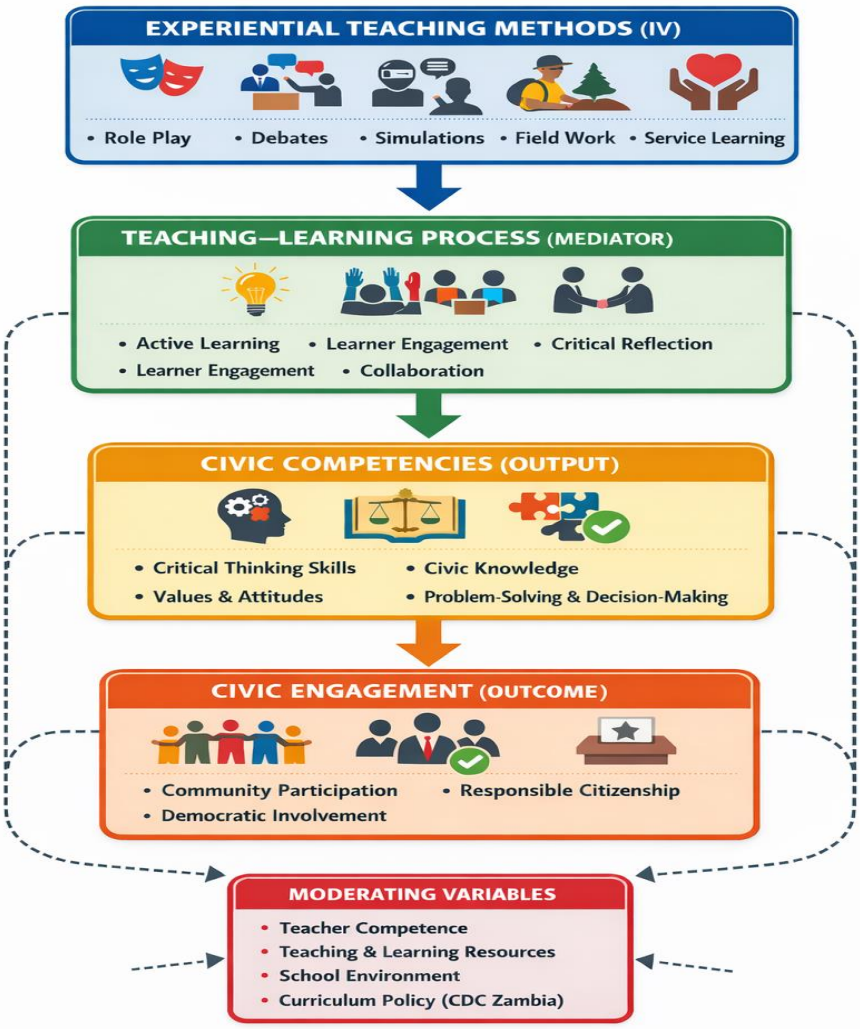


Figure 2.5: *Conceptual Framework on the Role of Experiential Teaching Methods in Civic Education*

3.0 METHODOLOGY

The study adopted a qualitative approach and a descriptive research design. It was conducted in four selected secondary schools in Kabwe District. The sample comprised four Social Sciences Heads of Department, eight Civic Education teachers, and four focus group discussions, each involving six learners. This resulted in a total of 36 participants.

Homogeneous purposive sampling was used to select participants. Data were collected through semi-structured interviews, focus group discussions, and classroom observations. The data were analysed thematically.

4.0 RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

4.1 Teachers' and Learners' Experiences of Bridging the Gap between Theory and Practice

This section presents the findings and discussion in relation to the two research questions: (1) What is the role of experiential teaching methods in bridging the gap between theory and practice in the teaching of Civic Education in Zambian secondary schools? and (2) How do experiential

teaching methods enhance learners' civic knowledge, skills, and participation in Zambian secondary schools? The findings are organised around themes that emerged from the field data.

4.1.1 Teachers' Experiences

4.1.2 Increased Learner Engagement

The study found that teachers observed higher levels of learner participation when experiential teaching methods were used. One participant argued that:

"Activities such as debates, role-playing, and group discussions encouraged learners to actively contribute to lessons."

Another participant stated that:

> *I was inspired to be using case study because it involves active participation and engagement, experiential teaching methods are interactive by nature.*

Learner involvement is more than a superficial classroom indicator; it is an important condition for meaningful civic learning. In Civic Education, engagement influences whether learners merely memorise democratic concepts or develop the capacity to apply civic knowledge and values in practice. Morris (2020) highlights the importance of active engagement in experiential learning. This is particularly relevant in Zambia, where Civic Education is intended to promote democratic participation, governance awareness, and social responsibility. Sustained learner participation therefore provides an important link between curriculum content and the development of civic competencies. Learner involvement can thus serve as a bridge between curriculum content and civic competency development. This finding is consistent with Kolb's (2014) emphasis on active participation and with research suggesting that learners are more engaged when they participate in meaningful activities (Jin et al., 2019). Experiential teaching methods can therefore shift the learning process from passive reception of information towards more active participation.

4.1.3 Improved Understanding of Civic Concepts

Teachers indicated that experiential methods helped learners grasp complex civic concepts more easily. A participant stated that:

> *For example, simulations of elections and court proceedings enabled learners to understand democratic processes and the rule of law in a practical manner. Teachers emphasized that learners were able to relate theoretical knowledge to real-life situations.*

Another participant stated that:

> *They are able to define and memorise the concepts when required to state them.*

Another important finding was that experiential teaching methods supported learners' understanding of civic principles. Concepts such as democracy,

human rights, governance, the rule of law, and citizenship require more than the ability to recall definitions. Learners may possess declarative knowledge while struggling to explain the implications of concepts or apply them to practical situations. Williams (2017) argues that meaningful learning is strengthened when learners connect concepts with experience. In the context of Civic Education, the ability to apply civic concepts is important because the subject seeks to prepare learners for participation in governance and community life, not only for examination success.

4.2 Learners' Experiences

4.2.1 Enhanced Interest and Motivation

Learners reported that experiential activities made Civic Education more interesting and enjoyable. One learner stated that:

> *I preference interactive methods such as debates, group work, and community-based activities over traditional lectures. These methods increased my motivation to learn and participate in class.*

Another participant stated that:

> *Experiential group work helps students because group activities create an interactive environment, keeping students motivated and reducing passivity.*

The findings indicate that experiential teaching methods can increase learners' motivation and interest in Civic Education. Learners described discussions, group projects, and other interactive activities as more engaging than conventional lectures. This observation is consistent with Williams (2017), who links experiential learning with more dynamic and relevant learning experiences. Motivation is important because it influences learners' willingness to participate, think critically, discuss civic issues, and retain knowledge. In a subject dealing with concepts such as governance, rights, and democratic participation, opportunities for active involvement can make learning more meaningful. Reeb and Folger (2023) also emphasise the value of structured experiential activities in connecting learning with community outcomes.

4.2.2 Practical Understanding of Civic Issues

The findings revealed that learners developed a deeper understanding of civic issues through experiential learning. One learners stated that:

> *These teaching methods assist me to participation in activities such as community projects and discussions on societal issues helped learners connect classroom content to real-life experiences. This made learning more meaningful and relevant.*

Another participant stated that:

> *Case studies allow students to apply theoretical knowledge in realistic settings, such as analysing government decisions, social movement, or policy impacts. This approach builds a practical understanding of civic processes and responsibilities.*

The findings suggest that experiential teaching approaches can strengthen civic competencies such as critical thinking, problem-solving, and active participation. Learners were able to examine civic concerns, consider different perspectives, and propose possible solutions. This is consistent with Torney-Purta et al. (2001), who emphasise the relationship between participatory educational experiences and civic knowledge and engagement. Experiential learning may also strengthen values such as tolerance, respect, and responsibility when learners work collaboratively and engage with community issues.

4.2.3 Development of Confidence and Communication Skills

Learners indicated that experiential teaching methods improved their confidence, especially in speaking and expressing opinions. A learner stated that:

> *Through debates and presentations, am learning to develop communication skills and the ability to engage in constructive discussions on civic matters.*

Another participant stated that:

> *Instead of merely receiving facts, students are encouraged to ask questions, gather information, analyze evidence, and develop their own conclusions about civic issues. This method aims to make students active participants in the learning process, often engaging them in exploring complex societal, governmental, and ethical questions that affect their lives and communities.*

The findings further indicate that practical teaching methods can strengthen learners' communication and interpersonal skills. Civic participation requires confidence in expressing ideas, listening to others, defending positions with evidence, and participating in collective decision-making. Magasu et al. (2025) emphasise the importance of learner participation and practical competencies within the Competence-Based Curriculum. In this context, experiential methods can provide learners with opportunities to speak, ask questions, gather information, analyse evidence, and develop conclusions about civic issues. Such opportunities may be particularly valuable where classroom interaction has traditionally been teacher-centred.

4.3 Influence of Experiential Teaching Methods on Civic Competencies

4.3.1 Development of Critical Thinking Skills

The study found that experiential teaching methods enhanced learners' critical thinking abilities. One teacher noted that:

> *Learners were able to analyze issues, evaluate different viewpoints, and propose solutions to societal problems. Activities such as case studies and debates played a significant role in fostering these skills.*

Another participant stated that:

> *I was inspired by Inquiry-based method in civic education because it is*

an approach that emphasizes critical thinking, questioning, and investigation. Instead of merely receiving facts, students are encouraged to ask questions, gather information, analyze evidence, and develop their own conclusions about civic issues.

Critical thinking is central to Civic Education because democratic participation requires citizens to consider different viewpoints, assess evidence, and make informed judgements. Experiential learning can provide opportunities for learners to question information, examine competing perspectives, and investigate civic problems. Torney-Purta et al. (2001) and Youniss et al. (1997) emphasise the importance of civic knowledge and engagement in preparing young people for participation in democratic life. In the Zambian context, such skills are relevant to issues including governance, accountability, corruption, and social policy. Developing critical thinking therefore supports learners' ability to engage constructively with civic information and public issues.

4.3.2 Promotion of Active Civic Participation

Experiential learning encouraged learners to participate in civic-related activities both within and outside the school environment. A teacher stated that:

Learners reported increased involvement in school governance, community initiatives, and discussions on national issues. This indicates that experiential methods contribute to the development of active citizenship.

Another participant stated that:

It involves active participation and engagement; experiential teaching methods are interactive by nature.

The findings suggest that learners who experienced experiential teaching methods were actively involved in civic-related activities. Active civic participation is an important dimension of democratic learning because it moves learners beyond knowledge acquisition towards practical engagement. Kolb and Kolb (2005) and Youniss et al. (1997) associate participatory learning experiences with the development of agency, responsibility, and commitment to civic values. In this study, activities such as debates, community initiatives, and school governance provided opportunities for learners to practise civic participation within and beyond the classroom.

4.3.3 Strengthening of Civic Values and Attitudes

The findings showed that experiential teaching methods helped instill important civic values such as respect, tolerance, responsibility, and teamwork. A participant stated that:

Through group activities and community engagement, learners developed a sense of social responsibility and appreciation for diversity.

Another participant stated that:

This hands-on guided learning experience involves students engaging in real civic roles, such as shadowing government officials, participating in community organizations, or working with advocacy groups.

The findings indicate that experiential activities can contribute to the development of civic values such as respect, tolerance, responsibility, and teamwork. Civic Education concerns not only what learners know but also how they understand and respond to social responsibilities. Kolb (2021) highlights the importance of experiential learning in connecting experience with reflection and development. In a pluralistic society, opportunities to work collaboratively and encounter different perspectives can help learners appreciate diversity and practise responsible participation.

4.3.4 Application of Knowledge in Real-Life Contexts

A key finding of the study was that experiential teaching methods effectively bridged the gap between theory and practice. A teacher stated that:

Learners were able to apply classroom knowledge to real-life situations, such as understanding governance through simulations or addressing community issues through projects.

Another participant stated that:

Experiential teaching methods are hands-on learning, because it helps engage students and deepen understanding and real-world applications where teachers recognize the value of connecting civic concepts to real-world issues.

A central finding of the study is that experiential teaching methods can help bridge the gap between theoretical understanding and practical application. Traditional approaches may focus heavily on the transmission and recall of information without providing sufficient opportunities for learners to use that information in real-life situations. The ability to apply civic knowledge is central to the purpose of Civic Education because concepts such as rights, responsibilities, the rule of law, and governance acquire practical meaning through action. Kolb and Kolb (2005) emphasise the importance of transferring learning from concrete experience to new contexts. In Civic Education, application can involve participation in community decision-making, school governance, democratic activities, and efforts to address local problems. In Zambia, this is particularly relevant because the Competence-Based Curriculum places greater emphasis on practical competencies. Where teaching remains heavily examination-oriented, learners may be able to define civic principles while struggling to apply them. Strengthening opportunities for application can therefore help connect classroom learning with participation in community life.

4.3.5 Integration of Classroom Learning With Community Experiences

The study found that activities such as service-learning and community engagement provided learners with opportunities to interact with real societal issues. A participant stated that:

> *If the integration is properly done it enhances the learners understanding of civic responsibilities and strengthened their connection to the community.*

Another participant stated that:

> *Using experiential group work helps because students learn by engaging in hands-on activities, making the learning experience more engaging and effective.*

Learners indicated that activities such as service-learning, community projects, school clean-up initiatives, and local governance simulations enabled them to apply classroom knowledge in real-world situations. Integrating classroom learning with community experiences is important because Civic Education is intended to prepare learners for active, informed, and responsible citizenship. Without opportunities to apply concepts beyond the classroom, civic knowledge may remain abstract and disconnected from behaviour (Torney-Purta et al., 2001). Magasu et al. (2020) similarly highlight the importance of practical learning experiences in developing civic competencies. In Zambia, community-based activities can provide opportunities for learners to understand local governance, socioeconomic issues, and citizen responsibilities while participating in community life.

5.0 CONCLUSION

This study examined the role of experiential teaching methods in bridging the gap between theory and practice in Civic Education in selected secondary schools in Kabwe District, Zambia. The findings indicate that debates, simulations, role-plays, group work, case studies, service-learning, and community-based activities can enhance learner engagement, deepen understanding of civic concepts, strengthen critical thinking and communication skills, and encourage active civic participation. The findings also suggest that experiential approaches can support the development of civic values such as respect, tolerance, responsibility, teamwork, and appreciation of diversity. More broadly, the study indicates that experiential teaching methods can connect classroom learning with real-world civic experiences and therefore contribute to the practical aims of the Competence-Based Curriculum. However, effective implementation requires appropriate teacher preparation, adequate teaching and learning resources, sufficient time, and supportive assessment practices.

6.0 RECOMMENDATIONS

Based on the findings of the study, the following recommendations are proposed:

Teacher Training and Professional Development

Schools and education authorities should provide continuous professional development that equips Civic Education teachers with practical knowledge and skills for designing, facilitating, and assessing experiential learning activities. Training should include strategies for managing large classes, facilitating discussions and simulations, and using locally available resources.

Promotion of Community Engagement

Schools should strengthen partnerships with local communities, civic organisations, public institutions, and other relevant stakeholders so that learners can participate in structured civic activities. Such partnerships can provide opportunities for community-based projects, service-learning, field visits, and interaction with civic institutions.

Provision of Teaching and Learning Resources

Schools should be supported with adequate teaching and learning materials, including textbooks, audiovisual resources, digital tools, and locally developed materials that can facilitate experiential activities. Where resources are limited, teachers can be encouraged to use locally available and low-cost materials.

Assessment Reform

Assessment practices should provide opportunities for learners to demonstrate practical civic competencies in addition to recalling theoretical knowledge. Formative assessment, reflective activities, project work, presentations, and performance-based tasks can complement conventional examinations and provide evidence of applied learning.

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