

Do educators get it? Examining understanding of compulsory civic education for learners in Zambian secondary schools

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Abstract

This study explores educators' understanding of the rationale for Civic Education to be taught as a compulsory subject to learners in secondary schools in Zambia, as enshrined in the national policy on education. The study was conducted in all secondary schools of Kabwe district, guided by the Advocacy Coalition Framework Theory (ACF). Using a mixed-method approach within a pragmatic research paradigm, data were collected from 239 participants. Quantitative insights were derived from 215 respondents across 32 selected schools, including head teachers, heads of Social Science departments, heads of Civic Education sections, and Civic Education teachers who completed an online questionnaire. Qualitative data involved interviews with 24 educators and 2 Ministry of Education officials, supplemented by document analysis of national policy and curriculum frameworks. Findings underscore a robust awareness among educators of Civic Education's role in fostering informed citizenship and preparing learners for democratic engagement, focusing on four themes: (1) cultivating informed learners, (2) promoting good citizenship and social cohesion, (3) preparing learners for political engagement, and (4) enhancing critical thinking skills. Additionally, findings may inform policy and practice. Recommendations include enhancing professional development through targeted training programs, ensuring curriculum alignment with national policy frameworks, promoting interdisciplinary collaboration among departments, and establishing mechanisms for ongoing program evaluation to ensure effectiveness and continuous improvement. These recommendations aim to strengthen compulsory Civic Education implementation in Kabwe District, Zambia, fostering a knowledgeable and engaged citizenry capable of contributing positively to society.

Keywords: Civic Education; Compulsory; Educators; Examining; Learners; Secondary Schools

1. Introduction

Civic education also known as education for responsible citizenship, or democracy education can be generally understood as the provision of information and learning experiences aimed at equipping and empowering citizens with civic knowledge, skills and values (Rietbergen-McCracken, 2017). It plays a vital role in nurturing responsible citizens who can actively participate in a healthy democracy (Chong, 2018). Civic Education as a subject taught in schools equips learners with the knowledge and skills for them to understand their rights and duties, critically engage with public affairs, and contribute to a just and sustainable society (Muleya, 2019). These skills include critical thinking, communication, collaboration, and problem-solving, all essential for success in the 21st century (Coelho and Menezes, 2021; Handajani and Pratiwi, 2018; Winthrop, 2020).

Zambia's national education policy, 'Educating Our Future' (MoE, 1996), emphasises the importance of Education for Responsible Citizenship for all learners at the senior secondary level (Grades 10-12). This policy aims to cultivate a generation of citizens who actively promote democracy, human rights, and sustainable development (Ministry of

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Education, 1996). This is in line with what is enshrined in the Vision 2030 and the Zambia's 7th National Development Plan (MoE, 2024).

While Zambia's national education policy mandates Civic Education (Education for Responsible Citizenship) for all senior secondary learners (MoE, 1996), some inconsistencies exist between policy and practice. This is evidenced by the research conducted by Mtonga *et al.*, (2024), in Kabwe District secondary schools where some schools offer Civic Education as an optional subject. Such inconsistencies are also observed in the 2013 revised curriculum framework which listed Civic Education as a compulsory subject in only six out of eight curriculums giving an optional status in the other two (MoE, 2013). However, this has been rectified in the 2023 curriculum framework, to be implemented in 2025, making Civic Education compulsory across all pathways in the Zambian secondary schools.

However, Katongo *et al.*, 2013; Magasu and Hanangama, 2022, show evidence from their studies conducted locally, that Civic Education is a core subject at the senior secondary school level in Zambia, in response to Zambia's policy on education. Despite the national policy's emphasis, local research done by Mtonga *et al.*, (2024) reviewed implementation challenges for Civic Education to be taught to all learners at the senior secondary school level in Zambia. It is not clear if educators in Zambian secondary schools fully understand the rationale for Civic education to be taught as a compulsory subject at the secondary school level, as enshrined in Zambia's policy on education. This is premised on the fact that limited information exists on educators' understanding of the purpose of compulsory Civic Education for all learners at the senior secondary school level. Against such background, this study delves into addressing this gap as it examines educators' perspectives in Kabwe District secondary schools in Zambia. By exploring their understanding, the research hopes to inform educators on the ideal implementation of Civic Education and ensure all learners benefit from this vital subject.

1.1. Statement of the Problem

Despite Zambia's national policy on education mandating Civic Education (Education for Responsible Citizenship) compulsory for all senior secondary school learners, inconsistencies exist between policy and practice. Research by Mtonga and Magasu (2024); and Mtonga *et al.*, (2024) reviewed that; some schools offer Civic Education as an optional subject. Additionally, the 2013 curriculum framework listed it as compulsory in only six out of eight pathways (MoE, 2013). Furthermore, information on understanding educators' perspectives on the purpose of compulsory Civic Education to all learners at the senior secondary school level remains unexplored. While local research confirms Civic Education as a core subject, studies by Katongo *et al.* (2013), Magasu and Hanangama (2022), and Muleya, (2019), do not address educators' understanding of the national policy's rationale behind its compulsory status. This lack of clarity regarding educators' understanding of the policy's goals has the potential to hinder the effectiveness of the ideal implementation of Civic Education as a compulsory for learners at the senior secondary school level in Zambia. Limited information exists on whether educators fully grasp the rationale of the subject as envisioned by the national policy, to be taught to all learners at the senior secondary school. It is against this background that this study attempted to address this gap by examining educators' understanding of compulsory Civic Education in Kabwe district, Zambia. By exploring their perspectives, the research aims to bridge the disconnect between policy aspirations and school practices. Ultimately, the study seeks to ensure all learners receive a robust Civic Education experience that prepares them for responsible citizenship in the 21st century.

2. Conceptual Framework

This study, guided by the Advocacy Coalition Framework (ACF) theory (Sabatier and Jenkins-Smith, 1993), examined the understanding of compulsory Civic Education among educators in Zambian secondary schools. The ACF focuses on understanding the dynamics of policy change, particularly the role of advocacy coalitions with shared beliefs that influence policy decisions (Weible *et al.*, 2009). The study aimed to explore any potential disconnect between the national policy mandating Civic Education, advocated by policymakers, and educators' understanding of its goals.

By using the ACF, educators' belief systems regarding Civic Education to see if they aligned with the policy's vision of fostering responsible citizenship were examined (Meseguer and Siskos, 2019). Understanding educators' perspectives helped identify areas for policy-oriented learning, where policymakers gain insights into educators' challenges or learn more about the policy's intended goals (May and Pielke Jr., 2017).

This ACF-informed approach provided a deeper understanding of the situation than simply identifying a gap. It allowed for an exploration of the potential dynamics within the policy subsystem that may contribute to the gap. It suggested strategies for bridging it to ensure effective Civic Education implementation in secondary schools.

3. Methodology

This study adopted a pragmatic research paradigm, employing a mixed-method approach with a convergent parallel design (Creswell and Creswell, 2018). The convergent parallel design involved collecting quantitative and qualitative data concurrently, and merging the findings at the interpretation stage to provide a more comprehensive understanding of educators' understanding of compulsory Civic Education in Kabwe District, central province, Zambia.

The study targeted all 32 secondary schools within the district. A total sample size of 239 participants was used for both quantitative and qualitative data collection. Quantitative data was collected from 215 respondents across all 32 schools (Patton, 2022). This sample included head teachers, heads of Social Sciences departments, heads of Civic Education sections, and Civic Education teachers. An online survey with a structured, closed-ended questionnaire served as the instrument for gathering quantitative data (Creswell and Creswell, 2018).

Qualitative data collection involved two methods. First, document review where the national policy on education and the 2013 national curriculum framework were reviewed. Second, 24 individual interviews were held, comprising 22 educators and 2 officers from the Ministry of Education Individual interview guides and digital annotation tools were used as instruments for qualitative data collection (Patton, 2022; Paulus, and Lester, 2020).

Quantitative data analysis was conducted using SPSS software, with results presented in the form of charts (Creswell and Creswell, 2018). Qualitative data underwent thematic analysis, with themes emerging from the data itself while maintaining focus on the research questions (Braun and Clarke, 2006). The credibility and trustworthiness of the findings were ensured through member checking and triangulation of data collection methods (Merriam and Tisdell, 2014; Sadik, 2019). Ethical considerations were paramount throughout the research process, with informed consent obtained from all participants (Sil and Das, 2017).

4. Presentation of Findings

The study aimed to explore educators' understanding of the importance of including Civic Education as a compulsory subject in senior secondary schools in Zambia, in line with national education policy. The research involved both quantitative and qualitative data from 239 participants. Quantitative data was collected from 215 respondents in 32 selected secondary schools in Kabwe District, comprising 23 head teachers, 27 Heads of Department (HoDs) in social science, 22 Heads of Section (HoS) in Civic Education, and 143 Civic Education teachers, who completed a structured online questionnaire. Qualitative data was gathered through recorded interviews with 22 participants, including 8 head teachers, 5 HoDs in social science, 5 HoS in Civic Education, 4 Civic Education teachers, from 8 selected secondary schools, and 2 key informants from the Ministry of Education, who were interviewed in person. The presentation begins with the demographic characteristics of the 215 participants who took part in the online survey, based on gender, education qualifications, and work experience.

4.1. Demographic Profile of the Participants Involved in an Online Survey

This section provides a summary of the demographics of the participants who completed a self-administered online questionnaire. It includes information on gender, the highest level of qualification, and work experience, which is presented in Table 1 below.

Table 1 Demographic Profile of the Participants

Description	Category	N	Percentage
Gender	Male	115	54
	Female	100	46
Qualifications	Diploma	24	11
	Bachelor's Degree	172	80
	Master's Degree	17	08
	Other	02	01
	0-5	60	28

Work Experience	6-10	84	39
	11-15	26	12
	16 and above	45	21

Source: Field Data, 2023

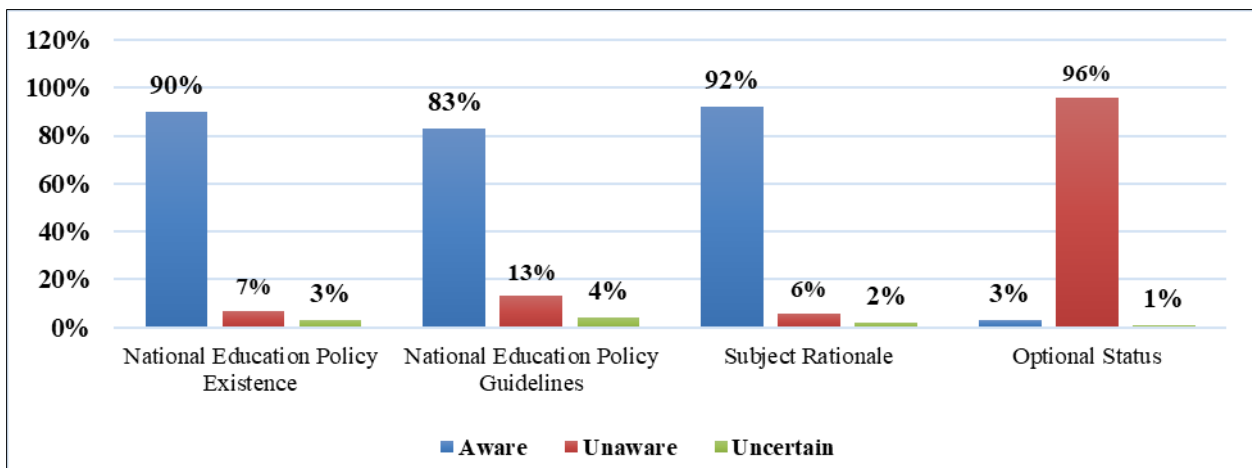
The demographic profile of the 215 respondents that participated in an online survey reveals a relatively balanced gender distribution (54% male, 46% female) and a well-qualified group with 80% holding Bachelor's Degrees. The work experience distribution is spread across categories, with the largest group having 6-10 years of experience. Involving such individuals to examine educators' understanding of the rationale for compulsory Civic Education through the lens of qualifications and work experience, along with their specific teaching subjects yields valuable insights.

4.2. Educators' Knowledge of the Purpose of Compulsory Civic Education to Learners

The objective of the study was to assess the level of understanding among educators regarding the purpose of making Civic Education a compulsory subject at the senior secondary school level, per national education policy. The research question was formulated as follows: "What is the level of understanding among educators regarding the purpose of making Civic Education a compulsory subject at the senior secondary school level, as per national education policy?" This question gathered both quantitative and qualitative data, which are presented in the following sections.

4.2.1. Quantitative Findings on the Purpose of Compulsory Civic Education to Learners

In this section, we present the quantitative results obtained from 215 individuals who completed an online questionnaire. The focus of the questionnaire was on educators' knowledge of the national education policy, guidelines on Civic Education, subject rationale, and its optional status as per the revised 2013 curriculum framework. Participants were asked to select from three response categories: 'Aware', 'Unaware', and 'Uncertain'. The findings are presented on a clustered chart below, based on four different variables that were examined.

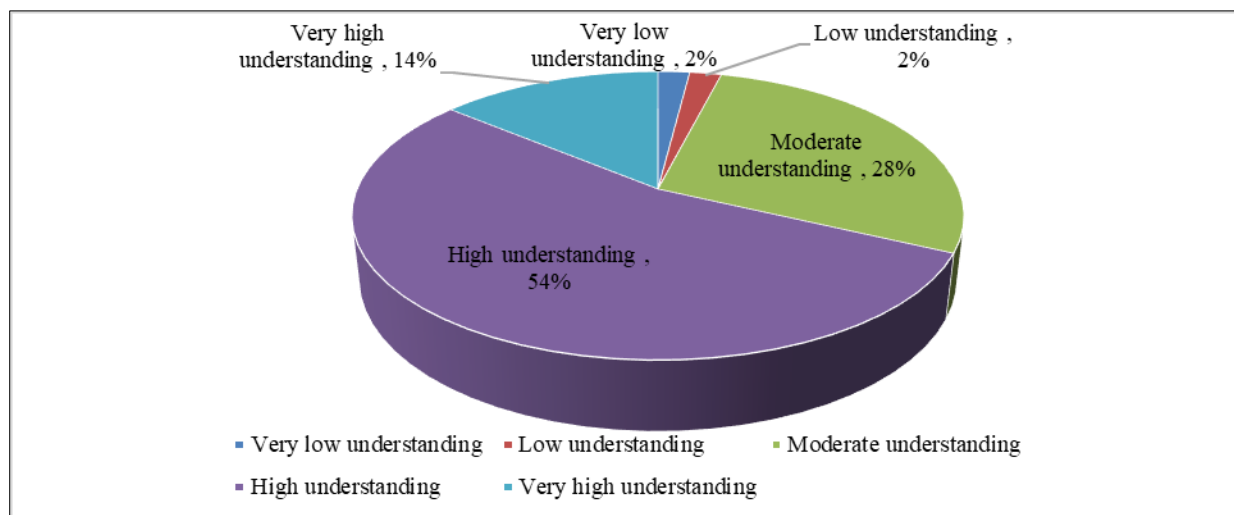


Source: Field data, 2023

Figure 1 Knowledge of CE's Policy Provisions

Educators who participated in this study showed a strong understanding of the national education landscape. An overwhelming majority (90%) were aware of the National Education Policy (NEP), with only a small percentage being unsure (3%) or unaware (7%). This high level of awareness extends to the specific policy provision regarding Civic Education (CE). Encouragingly, 83% of educators knew that the NEP makes CE a compulsory subject for grades 10-12. Although a minority (17%) were unsure or unaware of this provision, it implies that educators, in general, are well-informed about national curriculum policies. These findings present a positive outlook regarding educators' understanding of the reasoning behind compulsory CE. A remarkable 92% of respondents claimed to understand why CE is compulsory for senior secondary learners. This high level of agreement indicates alignment with the policy's objectives and the importance placed on CE within the national curriculum. However, there is a small gap in knowledge regarding the optional status of CE for specific programs like Technology, Home Economics, and Hospitality.

After assessing educators' understanding of the rationale for incorporating Civic Education as a compulsory subject at the senior secondary level, participants were requested to select from the provided options based on their understanding of the subject's purpose for all learners from grades 10-12, as stipulated in the national education policy. Findings are presented in Figure 2 below:



Source: Field data, 2023

Figure 2 Levels of Understanding of the Purpose of CE

Figure 3 illustrates educators' understanding of the purpose of Civic Education to be taught in senior secondary school, as per national policy. Based on the results established, 4% had low to very understanding, 68% had high to very high understanding, and 28% had moderate understanding. The results highlight the need for targeted educational efforts to improve educators' understanding of the purpose of Civic Education to be taught to all learners at the senior secondary school level in Kabwe District and beyond.

4.2.2. Qualitative Findings on Understanding the Purpose of Civic Education to Senior Learners

This section presents qualitative findings from interviews with 24 educators from 8 secondary schools in Kabwe District, Zambia. Two key informants from the Ministry of Education (provincial and headquarters) were also interviewed. Secondary data was also obtained from the national education policy document and the 2013 curriculum framework. The research explored educators' understanding of the purpose behind compulsory Civic Education for senior secondary learners

Theme 1: To Produce an Informed Learner

This theme was central to educators' understanding of Civic Education's purpose. Nearly all participants emphasised the need to cultivate informed learners with knowledge of Zambia's democracy, human rights (civil, political, economic, social, and cultural), and their roles as citizens. Educators saw Civic Education as fostering responsible behaviour by increasing awareness of civic duties like respecting laws, participating in community activities, and contributing positively. This focus aligns with the national education policy document (Educating Our Future) which highlights schools' role in nurturing an informed generation through responsible citizenship education, quoted below:

Those who leave school should have knowledge and appreciation of the values that inspire society, knowledge and understanding of individual liberties and human rights, and awareness of their responsibilities to themselves, to others and to society in general (MoE, 1996:56).

In line with the above theme, secondary data obtained the national curriculum framework provides the following information:

Zambia is a signatory to the United Nations (UN) conventions on Human Rights. In view of this, learning institutions should integrate Human Rights across the curriculum by way of involving learners in activities and practices that expose them to Human Rights awareness (MoE, 2013:25).

Furthermore, the excerpt below from one of the heads of Department social sciences interviewed from school F illuminated the nature of the above theme as stated below:

Madam! My understanding of the purpose for Civic Education to be taught to all learners at senior secondary school level is to educate learners on their civic awareness and sense of responsibility.... Through Civic Education, learners also come to know their rights and responsibilities in their communities. (Field data, 2023).

These findings suggest that educators in Kabwe District hold a multifaceted understanding of the purpose behind compulsory Civic Education. They see it as essential for cultivating informed learners, responsible citizens, active participants in democracy, and individuals with strong critical thinking abilities. This aligns with the policy's goal of equipping senior secondary learners with the knowledge and skills necessary for effective citizenship in Zambia.

Theme 2: Fostering Good Citizenship and Social Cohesion in Learners

The following excerpt exemplifies the key aspects of the above theme as quoted from key informant 1, who submitted that:

The national policy on education describes education for responsible citizenship which is aimed at producing a holistic learner in all areas of life. It brings the whole person in a learner. In this case, Civic Education encompasses all the needs of a learner, inclusive of how to relate and co-exist with others including people with different cultures in society. (Field data, 2023).

In line with the above quote from primary data, secondary data obtained from the national policy on education affirms the foregoing theme as quoted below:

The education of a young person in today's world would not be complete if it did not include preparation for living responsibly within civil society. Those who leave school should have knowledge and appreciation of the values that inspire society.... (MoE, 1996:56).

As stated by the HoD from school C, as a way of reinforcing the theme that emerged submitted the following view:

What I can say is that the purpose of Civic Education can be understood from the fact that Civic Education is a living subject which plays a crucial role in fostering good citizenship and social cohesion among learners. It enables learners to know about the importance of respecting others, embracing diversity, and working together for the common good. This subject instils a sense of belonging and shared responsibility in learners, (Field data, 2023).

This study highlights Civic Education's crucial role in nurturing responsible citizens and fostering social cohesion among learners. These qualities are essential for a harmonious and well-functioning society. The program instils values of tolerance, respect, inclusivity, and community engagement – vital building blocks for social cohesion.

Theme 3: Preparing Learners for Political and Democratic Engagement

This theme highlights Civic Education's role in preparing learners for active participation in Zambia's democratic processes. Participants across categories emphasised the importance of equipping learners with knowledge of the nation's government structure, political institutions, and their functions. Civic Education was seen as providing insights into how political systems operate, including the roles of elected officials, the legislative process, and the importance of citizen participation in governance. Educators further highlighted Civic Education's role in fostering informed and engaged citizens. They explained how the curriculum helps learners understand the principles and practices of democracy, such as voting, elections, and political participation. Ultimately, Civic Education aims to empower learners to effectively exercise their democratic rights. The foregoing responses are reflected in the excerpt below, as noted by key informant number 2.

What I can say on this one is that Civic Education equips learners for active participation in the democratic process and ensures that every learner understands the political systems of their country. The subject equips learners with the knowledge to actively engage in their political processes and be able to make informed decisions as responsible citizens (Field data, 2023).

In line with the above response, one of the teachers of Civic Education from school H echoed similar sentiments, as contained in the excerpt below:

As a teacher of Civic Education, what I can say as to why Civic Education is expected to be a compulsory subject to all learners at the senior level is that the subject ensures that every learner, regardless of their background, gains a comprehensive understanding of how the political systems of this country work, and provides a foundation for informed citizenship and active participation in our democracy (Field data, 2023).

Educators expressed a strong consensus that Civic Education equips learners for active participation in Zambia's democratic processes. By providing practical knowledge of government functions, the subject empowers learners to become informed and engaged citizens.

Theme 4: Building Critical Thinking Skills in Learners

Building critical thinking skills in learners is another theme that emerged from data as expressed by the educators. By engaging with complex social and political issues in the curriculum, learners develop the ability to analyze information critically, evaluate different perspectives, and make informed decisions. This critical thinking empowers them to become well-informed and discerning citizens who can tackle societal challenges. Educators further highlighted the link between critical thinking and active citizenship, as these skills enable learners to analyse government actions and participate effectively in the governance system. In line with the above submissions, a head teacher from school D stated as follows.

To respond to your question on my understanding as to why Civic Education ought to be taught as a compulsory subject is by considering the primary goal of making Civic Education compulsory to all learners from grade 10-12. I understand it as a subject that fosters critical thinking skills in learners. Learners need such skills as they engage in different discussions. Such skills are important because learners can apply them to question, evaluate, and form their opinions on civic matters (Field data, 2023).

In a similar line of thought, key informant 2 in the following quote echoed the sentiment made by the head teacher from school D, who evidently stated:

What I can say is that; Civic Education compulsory imparts critical thinking skills in learners to enable them to critically analyse policies, evaluate the impact of government decisions, and engage in constructive debates. These skills empower learners to participate actively in civic life (Field data, 2023).

Concerning equipping learners with 21st-century skills a teacher of Civic Education from school, A was quoted as follows:

What I can say is that Civic Education equips learners with civic knowledge, civic skills and civic dispositions. Madam, society is dynamic, the world is ever-changing. In Civic Education, learners have an opportunity to be imparted with 21st-century skills such as critical thinking, collaboration, and digital literacy. (Field data, 2023).

The foregoing responses emphasise that making Civic Education compulsory serves the purpose of building critical thinking skills in all learners. It encourages them to think critically about complex civic issues, which is essential for informed and engaged citizenship in a democratic society. By establishing the understanding of the purpose of Civic Education to be taught as a compulsory subject at the senior secondary school level in Zambia, findings imply that educators see Civic Education as a multifaceted subject that equips senior secondary school learners with the knowledge, skills, and values necessary for responsible citizenship.

5. Discussion of Findings

The quantitative analysis of respondents' self-assessed understanding revealed a predominantly positive outlook. A significant majority reported a clear understanding of the purpose of compulsory Civic Education at the senior secondary school level, as detailed in the national policy on education. This understanding can be attributed to their awareness of the national education policy, its provisions, and the rationale for making Civic Education a compulsory subject.

Qualitative findings provided an in-depth understanding of the quantitative results, pointing to major themes regarding the purpose of Civic Education: producing informed learners, fostering good citizenship and social cohesion, preparing learners for political and democratic engagement, and building critical thinking skills. These themes corroborate the quantitative results, emphasising the multifaceted role of Civic Education.

The qualitative findings highlighted the role of Civic Education in enlightening learners about their fundamental human rights and responsibilities. It increases learners' awareness of civic duties, respect for laws, community participation, and positive societal contributions. Educators' acknowledgement of Civic Education's role underscores both its educational and broader societal implications, fostering active and responsible citizenship.

The qualitative data also revealed perspectives on Civic Education's role in fostering good citizenship and social cohesion. By promoting an understanding of diverse cultures and backgrounds, the subject is pivotal for fostering an inclusive and cooperative society. Testimonies from key informants and learners underscore its role in developing responsible, law-abiding, and contributing members of society.

Additionally, findings highlighted Civic Education's significant role in preparing learners for active participation in the democratic process. Understanding government structures, functions, and democratic principles nurtures an informed electorate and cultivates future leaders. Educators' insights align with the broader discourse on Civic Education's importance in nurturing political literacy and active civic engagement.

Furthermore, the findings emphasised Civic Education's role in enhancing learners' critical thinking skills through discussions on complex social and political issues. The subject encourages critical analysis, evaluation of different perspectives, and informed decision-making. Educators' recognition of Civic Education as instrumental in enhancing critical thinking skills highlights its transformative potential in nurturing analytical and discerning individuals.

Overall, many educators feel confident in their grasp of the objectives and significance of Civic Education. The results suggest that a substantial portion of the participants have knowledge of its purpose and recognise its role in producing informed learners, fostering good citizenship, preparing learners for political engagement, and building critical thinking skills. Their understanding aligns with the goals of Civic Education and supports its effective implementation.

However, the analysis also highlights respondents with lower understanding levels, indicating a potential gap between the intended objectives of the national policy on education and practical comprehension among educators. This discrepancy emphasises the need for further research to address potential gaps and implement targeted awareness strategies to improve understanding.

The findings are consistent with existing literature, emphasising the importance of civic awareness and engagement among learners. Scholars such as Alzarouni (2022), Davies and Fisher (2018), Swalwell and Payne (2019), and Santika et al. (2022) highlight Civic Education's pivotal role in nurturing informed and responsible citizens. Locally, Muleya (2019), Magasu and Kayaya (2022), and Magasu et al. (2020) report that Civic Education aids learners in becoming active, informed, and critical thinkers, equipping them with relevant skills for public engagement. Tolstenko et al. (2019) affirm that Civic Education aims to develop an informed and engaged public, and Kahne and Westheimer (2017) and Jayadiputra and Karim (2020) highlight their role in promoting civic participation and critical thinking.

Furthermore, studies by Alam (2022), Smith (2019), and Schmid et al. (2020) underscore the significance of integrating civic knowledge into the curriculum to foster responsible citizenship. The themes identified in this study, such as fostering good citizenship, promoting social cohesion, and building critical thinking skills, resonate with works by Chanda et al. (2024); Campos and Garcia (2018), Shapiro and Brown (2018), Lee (2020), Mora (2024), and Santika et al. (2020), who emphasise Civic Education's role in nurturing democratic values and critical reasoning. Jones and Evans (2020) assert that Civic Education encompasses fostering critical thinking, problem-solving, and collaboration as essential 21st-century skills. Smith (2021) and Mansilla and Jackson (2022) highlight the need for digital literacy and credible information evaluation as fundamental for informed civic participation in a globalised world.

The findings are in line with the Advocacy Coalition Framework (ACF) theory used in the study. They show how educators' perspectives and the ACF theory interact, emphasising the importance of different groups working together to influence policy implementation through shared beliefs and collaborative actions (Sabatier and Weible, 2019). The identified themes such as producing informed learners and fostering good citizenship, reflect the core principles of the ACF theory and show support for Civic Education in nurturing responsible citizenship. The ACF theory also underscores the role of conflicting beliefs among educators' which can lead to different policy outcomes, as seen in the study's identification of respondents with a limited understanding of Civic Education's purpose (Dowding, 2018; Howlett *et al.*,

2017). This highlights the complexity of policy implementation and the importance of educators' awareness and engagement in ensuring successful policy outcomes. The study's findings support the importance of stakeholder awareness in effective policy implementation, consistent with the ACF theory's emphasis on resource mobilisation and information dissemination among advocacy coalitions (Pierce and Osei-Kojo, 2022).

6. Conclusion

This study provides a comprehensive exploration of educators' understanding regarding the compulsory inclusion of Civic Education in senior secondary schools in Kabwe District, Zambia. The quantitative analysis revealed a high level of understanding regarding national policy mandates, with the majority of educators acknowledging Civic Education as compulsory for grades 10-12. Moreover, qualitative findings elucidated four key themes: the cultivation of informed learners, promotion of good citizenship and social cohesion, preparation for political engagement, and enhancement of critical thinking skills. These themes highlight the multifaceted benefits of Civic Education, emphasising its crucial role in equipping learners with civic knowledge, skills, and values necessary for responsible citizenship. Implications from this study suggest the need for targeted educational interventions aimed at strengthening educators' capacity to effectively deliver Civic Education. By enhancing pedagogical approaches and curriculum alignment with national policy goals, educators can better empower learners to navigate civic responsibilities and engage meaningfully in democratic processes. Such efforts are pivotal in fostering a cohesive and informed citizenry capable of contributing positively to societal development in Zambia.

6.1. Recommendations

The following are the recommendations made:

Ministry of Education to enhance educators' professional development by developing targeted training programs and workshops focusing on Civic Education for educators across the country. These initiatives should aim at deepening understanding of national policy mandates, effective teaching strategies, and the integration of civic values across the curriculum, with a view of empowering educators to deliver engaging and impactful Civic Education content.

Ministry of Education to strengthen curriculum alignment of Civic Education with national policy frameworks and educational goals, as well as updating curriculum materials to reflect current societal issues, human rights principles, and democratic processes relevant to the nation to move with time. Regular reviews and revisions should involve collaboration among education authorities, curriculum developers, and educators to minimise gaps.

Ministry of Education to monitor and evaluate the implementation of compulsory Civic Education by establishing mechanisms for ongoing monitoring and evaluation of the implementation process to collect feedback from educators and learners to assess the effectiveness of compulsory Civic Education, identify areas for improvement, and measure outcomes related to civic knowledge, skills, and attitudes.

Secondary schools to advocate for adequate resource allocation and funding to support the implementation of quality Civic Education programs, facilitate comprehensive curriculum delivery, professional development opportunities, and access to updated instructional materials.

These recommendations are aimed at strengthening compulsory Civic Education implementation in Kabwe District, Secondary Schools and across Zambia, equipping all learners with the knowledge, skills, and values necessary for active citizenship and societal participation.

Compliance with ethical standards

Disclosure of conflict of interest

The authors declare that there is no conflict of interest regarding the publication of this article.

Statement of informed consent

Informed consent was obtained from all individual participants included in the study, and were informed of their rights.

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