

Fostering active citizenship through experiential learning strategies in civic education in Nakonde District, Zambia

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ABSTRACT

This study explores the forms of experiential learning strategies in civic education that foster active citizenship among learners in four selected secondary schools of Nakonde District, Zambia, through the lenses of Kolb's Experiential Learning Theory. The study used a qualitative research approach within an interpretive paradigm and a descriptive case study design. The target population comprised Civic Education teachers and Grade Twelve learners, from which thirty-two participants were selected using purposive and homogeneous sampling techniques. The data were collected using classroom observations, semi-structured interviews, and focus group discussions, and analyzed thematically. The findings reveal a predominant use of non-immersive, classroom-based experiential learning strategies implemented inconsistently across schools. Group discussions and dramatization emerged as the most frequently utilized strategies, while debates and learner presentations are implemented consistently in only one school. Opportunities for immersive experiential learning strategies, such as field trips, community engagement activities, civic campaigns, and interaction with civic institutions, are limited across most schools. The study concludes that although experiential learning strategies are widely acknowledged as effective for fostering active citizenship, their integration in Civic Education remains constrained, largely classroom-bound, and unevenly applied. This limits learners' exposure to authentic civic experiences necessary for translating civic knowledge into practical civic action. The study contributes new insights by demonstrating that the dominance of non-immersive strategies reflects structural and institutional limitations rather than a lack of teacher awareness or learner interest. This study recommends strengthened institutional support, teacher professional development, and sustained school-community partnerships to enhance the integration of experiential learning.

Keywords: Active Citizenship, Civic Education, Experiential Learning, Experiential Learning Theory, Zambia

I. INTRODUCTION

A powerful democracy depends on the development of active citizenship, which is understood as the demonstration of knowledge, skills, attitudes, and actions that contribute to the development and maintenance of a democratic society (Folorunsho, 2023). Preparing young people for active citizenship requires a collaborative approach, with schools believed to be the best place to begin shaping learners into informed and responsible citizens who uphold democratic values and institutions (Campaign for the Civic Mission of Schools, 2011 in Alscher et al., 2022).

The ultimate purpose of teaching and learning Civic Education in schools is to provide learners with information and learning experiences that equip and empower them to participate in democratic processes (Jennifer, 2008). To achieve this goal, there is a need to adopt innovative approaches to the teaching and learning of Civic Education.

Experiential learning, understood as learning through experience or action (Azeez & Aboobaker, 2024), as a pedagogy of instruction, has been widely acknowledged as a significant aspect of Civic Education capable of fostering active citizenship. Experiential learning strategies, which appear in many pedagogical formats—including service learning, structured debates, simulations, field trips, project-based, and problem-based learning—are recognized as effective tools for developing the competencies required for active citizenship. They provide practical experiences that enable learners to develop their knowledge, skills, and attitudes more engagingly and interactively (Pacho, 2019; Halverson et al., 2025).

Kolb (2015) emphasizes the centrality of experience in the educational process, asserting that meaningful learning occurs through a cycle of concrete experience, reflective observation, abstract conceptualization, and active experimentation. This perspective aligns well with the goal of Civic Education, which aims to move beyond theoretical knowledge to the development of civic competence and active citizenship. The Citizenship Education Foundation (2012) argues that Civic Education curricula must incorporate active elements that emphasize learning by doing. Ideally,

secondary school Civic Education should provide structured opportunities for learners to experience, reflect upon, and apply civic concepts.

However, traditional teacher-centered methods, such as the lecture method, have long been a common approach used to teach Civic Education in various educational contexts. Studies such as Mickovska-Ravela (2019), Jarkiewicz (2020), Alemnge and Andongaba (2021), and Molnar (2025) indicate that experiential learning strategies are underutilized.

In Zambia, Curriculum Frameworks of 2013 and 2023 encourage teachers to employ methods that promote active learner participation, engagement, and interaction. Nonetheless, studies consistently indicate that Civic Education has been more theoretical over the years, with limited integration of practical activities that connect theoretical concepts to real-world civic experiences (Magasu et al., 2020; Magasu, 2021; Kasongo et al., 2022; Kaumba, 2023; Chanda, 2024). Guilfoile and Delander (2014) argue that developing the skills and dispositions required for active citizenship takes practice. Therefore, it is imperative for Civic Education teachers to utilize experiential learning strategies effectively.

In this study, identifying the specific forms of experiential learning strategies used to foster active citizenship among learners was considered central because the effectiveness of these strategies depends on resources and their practical implementation. Consequently, this study explores the forms of experiential learning strategies in Civic Education that foster active citizenship among learners in four selected secondary schools of Nakonde District, Zambia.

1.1 Statement of the Problem

The broad-ranging benefits of experiential learning strategies in fostering active citizenship are widely recognised (Azeez & Aboobaker, 2024; Halverson et al., 2025). Experiential learning as a strategy resonates well with the teaching of Civic Education in secondary schools in Zambia and is in line with Zambia's Education Curriculum Frameworks of 2013 and 2023 which emphasize for participatory and learner-centred approaches (MOE, 2013; MOE, 2023). Therefore, under the right pedagogy, Civic Education should be taught using experiential learning strategies. However, little is documented on the specific forms of experiential learning strategies teachers of Civic Education in Zambia are implementing to foster active citizenship among learners. This raises concerns about how learners are being adequately equipped with practical competencies required for active citizenship. This study therefore, aimed to explore the forms of experiential learning strategies in Civic Education that foster active citizenship among learners in selected secondary schools of Nakonde District, Zambia.

1.2 Research Objective

The purpose of this study is to explore the forms of experiential learning strategies in civic education that foster active citizenship among learners in four selected secondary schools of Nakonde District, Zambia.

II. LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1 Theoretical Review

2.1.1 Experiential Learning Theory

This study is guided by David A. Kolb's Experiential Learning Theory (ELT), which conceptualises learning as a dynamic, cyclical process through which knowledge is created through the transformation of experience (Kolb, 1984, 2015). ELT posits that effective learning occurs when learners progress through four interrelated stages: concrete experience, reflective observation, abstract conceptualisation, and active experimentation. Rather than viewing learning as passive knowledge transmission, Kolb argues that meaningful learning emerges when individuals actively engage with real situations, reflect on those experiences, generate conceptual insights, and test those insights in new contexts.

Grounded in constructivist traditions influenced by Dewey, Lewin, and Piaget, ELT emphasises experience, reflection, and interaction as central to learning (Kolb, 1984). Dewey (1938) specifically argued that education must be rooted in lived experience and democratic participation, a principle that closely aligns with the goals of Civic Education and active citizenship formation. ELT is particularly relevant to Civic Education because citizenship competence extends beyond cognitive knowledge of laws, rights, and institutions; it requires the development of participatory skills, democratic dispositions, and ethical judgement. Civic learning therefore necessitates opportunities for learners to encounter authentic social issues, deliberate on competing perspectives, and engage in meaningful civic action (Guilfoile & Delander, 2014; Hoskins & Janmaat, 2019).

This theory provided an appropriate analytical lens for several reasons. First, it offers a structured framework for identifying whether classroom practices genuinely reflect experiential processes or remain confined to theoretical instruction. By examining whether learners are exposed to concrete civic experiences, guided reflection, conceptual linkage, and opportunities for application, the study could assess the depth and authenticity of experiential implementation. Second, ELT aligns closely with Zambia's competency-based curriculum reform, which emphasises practical competence development, learner-centred pedagogy, and application of knowledge in real-life

contexts. Third, the theory provides a bridge between pedagogy and civic outcomes: if experiential stages are weak or absent, particularly reflection and experimentation, learners may acquire abstract civic knowledge without developing capacity for democratic engagement. Thus, ELT enabled this study not only to describe teaching strategies but also to evaluate their potential to foster active citizenship.

2.2 Empirical Review

2.2.1 Forms of Experiential Learning Strategies in Civic Education

The literature identifies several forms of experiential learning strategies in civic education that are associated with equipping learners with competencies needed for active citizenship. Among these, service learning which combines academic instruction with structured community service and guided reflection remains a widely studied approach because of its capacity to enhance civic knowledge, empathy, and community awareness among other competencies required for active citizenship (Celio et al., 2011; Pacho, 2019; Akin, 2021). However, scholars caution that poorly structured service activities without critical reflection may produce limited civic transformation.

Simulations and role playing activities such as mock elections and parliamentary debates are widely recognised as effective civic pedagogies that equip learners with competencies needed for active citizenship. Lin (2015) found that simulations improve learner's understanding of democratic processes and enhance communication and deliberative skills, which are foundational competencies for active citizenship. Halverson et al. (2025) further argue that such activities cultivate civic confidence and participatory dispositions, though they often remain classroom-confined.

Collaborative, project-based, and problem-based learning approaches extend experiential engagement by involving learners in collective inquiry and real-world problem solving. Owen (2024) emphasises that project-based civic learning strengthens critical thinking and collective responsibility, while Mainde et al. (2022) reports that collaborative learning encourages dialogue and shared decision-making, key attributes of active citizenship. Nevertheless, the implementation of these strategies is frequently constrained by limited instructional time, inadequate teaching and learning materials, limited funding and insufficient teacher preparedness, especially in developing education systems. Previous studies collectively demonstrate that experiential learning strategies have the capacity to bridge the gap between theory and practice in Civic Education, thereby enable learners to interactively and engagingly acquire competencies needed for active citizenship. The studies also reveal a recurring limitation, the effectiveness of these strategies is dependent on resources and how they are implemented in practice. This suggests that identifying and understanding the actual forms of experiential learning strategies used within specific classroom contexts remains critical.

2.2.2 Use of Experiential Learning Strategies in Civic Education

Despite widespread recognition of experiential learning as a significant aspect of Civic Education capable of fostering active citizenship, empirical evidence suggests that its implementation remains inconsistent across both developed and developing contexts. The use of traditional teacher-centred methods such as lecture method has long been a common approach used to teach Civic Education in various educational contexts, limiting opportunities for learners to actively participate in civic learning processes associated with active citizenship development. A study by Jarkiewicz (2020) found that most educational programmes in Europe emphasize theory over practice. Mickovska-Raleva (2019)' study in Macedonia found that Civic Education primarily focused on knowledge acquisition, while inadequately addressing the development of skills, attitudes and values necessary for active participation in society. Consequently, learners have limited opportunities to develop democratic and participatory competencies required for active citizenship. Similar patterns are reported by a study conducted in Slovakia by Molnar (2025) who notes that although experiential strategies are recognised as essential for developing active citizenship competencies, their application is minimal.

Across Sub-Saharan Africa, Civic Education reforms frequently advocate for learner-centred and participatory pedagogies intended to foster civic competence and active citizenship among learners. However, empirical research reveals a persistent dominance of teacher-centred instruction. Pacho (2019) describes prevailing practices as "banking education, "where learners passively receive information with minimal opportunity to engage in practical civic participation and democratic action.

A study conducted in Nigeria by Folorunsho (2023) and in Cameroon by Alemnge and Andongaba (2021) similarly report disconnects between curriculum intentions and classroom practice. Studies report that experiential learning strategies are rarely implemented due to challenges including limited instructional time, limited funding and insufficient teacher preparedness. In Zambian context, Civic Education is positioned as a vehicle for nurturing democratic participation within the competency-based curriculum framework. However, research suggests that classroom practice remains predominantly theoretical, thereby limiting learner's opportunities to develop practical civic competencies and participatory dispositions required for active citizenship. Magasu et al. (2020) found that although teachers report using participatory strategies, classroom observations reveal limited experiential engagement. Magasu

(2021) reports inconsistencies in applying learner-centred approaches, while Kaumba (2023) observes that Civic Education remains largely classroom-based with minimal integration of community-linked activities.

The reviewed literature demonstrates strong theoretical justification and empirical support for experiential learning strategies as a means of fostering active citizenship. However, their practical application remains limited and uneven across different educational contexts. Existing scholarship has largely focused on general pedagogical challenges or broad curriculum implementation issues, with limited attention to the specific forms of experiential learning strategies employed in Civic Education and how such forms contribute to the development of active citizenship competencies among learners. This lack of context-specific empirical evidence, particularly at the secondary school level in districts such as Nakonde necessitated the present study.

III. METHODOLOGY

3.1 Research Paradigm

This study was grounded in the interpretivist research paradigm, which assumes that social reality is constructed through individuals' experiences and meanings (William, 2024). The interpretivist stance was appropriate because the study sought to understand how teachers and learners perceive and enact experiential learning strategies within Civic Education classrooms, aiming to generate in-depth insights into participants' lived experiences rather than measuring predetermined variables.

3.2 Research Approach and Design

A qualitative research approach was employed, allowing exploration of complex educational practices within natural settings and capture of participant's perspectives in rich detail (Mohajan, 2018). Given the context-specific nature of experiential learning practices, a descriptive case study design was adopted. Case study research enables detailed examination of contemporary phenomena within real-life contexts, particularly where boundaries between phenomenon and context are not clearly evident (Zainal, 2007).

3.3 Study Site and Participants

The study was conducted in Nakonde District and involved four purposively selected secondary schools, coded as School A, School B, School C, and School D to ensure anonymity. The selection of multiple schools allowed for comparative insights across different institutional contexts. A total of 32 participants took part: eight trained Civic Education teachers and twenty-four Grade 12 learners. The inclusion of both teachers and learners enabled triangulation of perspectives on classroom practice. Purposive sampling was used to select Civic Education teachers based on subject specialisation and direct involvement in teaching Grade 12 classes (Kombo & Tromp, 2006). Homogeneous sampling was employed to select learners enrolled in Grade 12 Civic Education; ensuring participants shared relevant learning experiences (Omona, 2013). In each school, one focus group discussion consisting of six learners was conducted, resulting in four focus groups overall.

3.4 Data Collection Methods and Instruments

Multiple qualitative data collection methods were employed to enhance credibility through triangulation. Semi-structured individual interviews were conducted with the eight Civic Education teachers using an interview guide, allowing flexibility while ensuring systematic exploration of key themes (Saunders et al., 2019). Interviews focused on teachers' understanding, application, and perceived effectiveness of experiential learning strategies. Focus group discussions were conducted with learners using a focus group discussion guide. Focus groups are particularly useful for exploring shared experiences and generating interactive dialogue (Denscombe, 2007), enabling learners to describe classroom experiences, levels of participation, and perceptions of how Civic Education prepares them for active citizenship.

Classroom observations were conducted using an observation checklist to examine actual implementation of experiential learning strategies during Civic Education lessons, allowing documentation of teaching practices directly rather than relying solely on self-reported accounts (Howitt, 2019). The checklist focused on identifying evidence of experiential elements such as learner participation, reflection collaboration, and application of civic concepts.

3.5 Data Analysis

Data were analysed using thematic analysis, which involves identifying, organising, and interpreting patterns of meaning across qualitative data sets (Salleha et al., 2017). Interview transcripts, focus group discussions, and observation notes were carefully reviewed and coded. Emerging categories were grouped into themes aligned with the study objectives. Findings were presented thematically and supported with verbatim excerpts to enhance authenticity and credibility.

3.6 Trustworthiness

Trustworthiness was ensured by addressing credibility, transferability, dependability, and confirmability as proposed by Lincoln and Guba (1985). Credibility was enhanced through methodological triangulation, using interviews, focus group discussions, and classroom observations to cross-verify emerging findings (Creswell & Path, 2018), and prolonged engagement in the field. Dependability was promoted through maintaining a detailed audit trail of the research process, including documentation of data collection procedures, coding decisions, and theme development (Nowell et al., 2017). Confirmability was supported through reflexive practice, whereby the researcher remained aware of personal assumptions and documented reflections throughout to minimise bias (Morrow, 2005). Transferability was addressed by providing thick descriptions of research context, participants, and findings to enable readers to determine applicability to similar educational settings (Shenton, 2004).

3.7 Ethical Considerations

Ethical principles were strictly observed. Ethical clearance was obtained from the Mulungushi University Directorate of Research and Graduate Studies. Permission to conduct the study was granted by the District Education Board Secretary in Nakonde District. Informed consent was obtained from all participants prior to data collection. Participants were informed about the study's purpose, their voluntary participation, and their right to withdraw at any time without penalty. Confidentiality and anonymity were assured by coding schools and participants and securely storing all research data.

IV. FINDINGS & DISCUSSION

4.1 Findings

4.1.1 Predominant use of Non-immersive Classroom-Based Experiential Learning Strategies

The study found that non-immersive classroom-based experiential learning strategies have become the predominant form of experiential learning strategies utilised by teachers to prepare learners for active citizenship. These strategies mainly include group discussions, dramatisation, question and answer techniques, debates and learner presentations. These strategies encourage some level of learner participation, however remain largely confined within classroom settings and provide limited opportunities for learners to engage with real civic environments or practical civic action. Group discussions and dramatisations emerged as the most frequently mentioned strategies across the selected schools. One teacher from School A explained:

"We usually do active group discussions and dramatisations" (a teacher from School A, October 6, 2025).

Similarly, a teacher from School B stated:

"Group methods, group study, dramatisation, debate and Socratic question and answer," (a teacher from School B, October 7, 2025).

Another participant mentioned using:

"Group discussion, question and answers and dramatisations," (a teacher from School D, October 12, 2025).

The teacher responses suggested that classroom based participatory strategies are acknowledged as an important strategy for fostering active citizenship among learners. However, learners' accounts revealed inconsistencies between reported teaching practices and actual classroom experiences. When learners in focus group discussions were asked to describe how Civic Education was usually taught in their classes the learners indicated that their teachers rarely engaged them in participatory methods in lesson delivery. It was also discovered that learners in School D never participated in debate or dramatisation throughout their years of secondary schooling.

"We have never had any debate and drama in civic education, only occasional group discussions," (a learner from School D, October 12, 2025).

Compared to other schools, School B demonstrated relatively stronger implementation of classroom-based experiential learning strategies. Teachers reported regular use of debates, learner presentations, dramatisation and group study activities. Learners' responses in the (FGD) and lesson observation corroborated teachers' accounts, suggesting greater learner involvement during Civic Education lessons.

"Most of the times we are given subtopics in groups which we present in class...sometimes we argue out points...and also we do dramatisations," (a learner from School B, October 8, 2025)

The lesson observation in School B further confirmed higher levels of learner participation and interaction. During the observed lesson on the topic Environmental Education learners presented the lesson focusing on suggested legal actions to prevent pollution and promote environmental management. The activity involved learners identifying environmental challenges within their communities and possible legal interventions, demonstrating active learner engagement and development of competencies required for active citizenship.

However, lesson observations across the selected schools revealed variations in implementation of participatory methods. In Schools C and D, it was observed that teachers largely relied on lecture methods despite having manageable class sizes. Learner participation during the observed lessons was minimal, with lessons mainly characterised by teacher explanations and note giving. This suggested continued dominance of teacher-centred methods despite of policy emphasis on participatory and learner-centred approaches.

In School A, the observed teacher attempted to connect classroom content to real life civic issues by incorporating examples related to the topic "Corruption" this helped learners relate civic concepts to societal realities, however the lesson still lacked active learner involvement and participatory activities.

4.1.2 Limited Opportunities for Immersive Experiential Learning Strategies

The study found that opportunities for learners to participate in immersive experiential learning activities such as field trips, community engagement programmes, civic campaigns and interactions with civic leaders and institutions were limited across the selected secondary schools. While some schools occasionally organised civic related activities, the activities were reported to be infrequent and not systematically integrated into Civic Education lessons. One teacher from School A explained that learners had once participated in a traditional ceremony for the Namwanga people as part of experiential civic learning.

"We did go to the traditional ceremony for the Namwanga people. Learners were able to see the traditional dances, the food. So they had a real-life situation and experiences," ~ (a teacher, October 6, 2025).

The response suggested that immersive civic experiences were recognised as important in helping learners connect classroom concepts to real life civic experiences. However; learners in School A indicated that opportunities for external civic exposure were extremely rare throughout their years of secondary schooling.

"From grade 8 to 12 we have never had any field trips, no guest speaker, or engaged in any community activities," ~ (a learner, October 6, 2025).

Similar findings emerged in Schools C and D where learners consistently reported limited participation in field trips and organised civic engagement activities. Nevertheless, some learners in School C acknowledged occasional interaction with civic institutions such as the Forest Department and Gender Office.

"It was a nice experience. The Forest Department came and engaged us in a tree-planting activity," ~ (a learner, October 10, 2025).

The findings suggested that while some schools occasionally integrated practical civic activities to foster active citizenship among learners, these experiences lacked continuity and structured integration into Civic Education learning. In School D, a teacher mentioned occasional tree planting and cleanup activities although learners still perceived Civic Education as largely classroom confined.

"It happens, but not always... planting of trees towards the rainy season and cleaning at the community clinic," ~ (a teacher, October 12, 2025).

Learners in School D expressed strong desire for greater civic exposure beyond classroom instruction.

"We would like to go out and see how civic activities happen, not just learning from the classroom," ~ (a learner from School D, October 12, 2025).

Compared to the other schools, School B again stood out demonstrating relatively stronger implementation of immersive experiential learning strategies. Learners confirmed participation in a school based cleanup campaign, field trip to the court and a project-based/problem-based activity which helped learners connect classroom knowledge to practical civic processes.

"We conduct cleanups every Saturday within the school through the 'Keep School B Clean Campaign,'" ~ (a learner, October 8, 2025).

Another learner added:

"We had a field trip to the court last year. It helped us understand what we learn in class about the legal system," ~ (a learner, October 8, 2025).

Across the sampled schools, learners consistently expressed willingness and interest to participate in more meaningful civic engagement activities despite the limited opportunities provided by schools.

"We have never engaged in campaigns... but there is a lot we can contribute to communities on various topics such as substance abuse," ~ (a learner from School A, October 6, 2025).

Another learner similarly stated:

"I want to educate people in my community on the effects of violence and substance abuse; however, we are not engaged in campaign activities," ~ (a learner from School C, October 10, 2025).

The findings suggested that although learners' demonstrated motivation and readiness to engage in community oriented civic activities, schools provided limited structured opportunities for learners to translate civic knowledge into practical civic action.

4.2 Discussion

This study explored the forms of experiential learning strategies in Civic Education that foster active citizenship among learners in four selected secondary schools in Nakonde District, Zambia. The findings revealed predominant use of non-immersive classroom-based experiential learning strategies and limited opportunities for immersive experiential learning. These findings are discussed in relation to existing literature and Kolb's Experiential Learning Theory.

4.2.1 Non-immersive Classroom-Based Strategies: Incomplete Experiential Learning

The study established that non-immersive classroom-based experiential strategies including group discussions, dramatisation, question and answer, debates, and learner presentations have become the dominant form of experiential learning strategies employed in the selected schools. These strategies provide learners with opportunities to engage with civic concepts through discussion, reflection and collaborative interaction. This finding resonates well with Nelson and Kerr (2006) who argues that participatory classroom practices are essential in developing civic knowledge and democratic understanding among young people. Similarly, Magasu (2021) found that interactive classroom methods in Civic Education enhance learner engagement and conceptual understanding.

However, the findings also reveal inconsistencies in implementation of these strategies across schools with some teachers continuing to rely heavily on lecture method despite policy emphasis on participatory and learner-centred approaches. This finding supports Magasu (2021) who observed a gap between teachers reported practices and actual classroom implementation.

While classroom-based experiential strategies contribute to the development of foundational civic knowledge, they provide limited opportunities for learners to apply civic understanding in real social contexts. Youniss and Levine (2009) argues that while classroom deliberation is essential, it must be complemented by real-world civic engagement to fully nurture active citizenship. From Kolb's (2015) Experiential Learning Theory perspective, these classroom-based strategies mainly support reflective observation and abstract conceptualisation, as learners discuss, analyse, and interpret civic issues but provide limited opportunities for concrete experience and active experimentation which are essential stages in the experiential learning cycle. The findings therefore indicate that the experiential learning process in the selected secondary schools remains partial rather than holistic. This implies that learners may develop civic knowledge and awareness but have limited opportunities to test ideas, practise civic skills, or engage in meaningful civic action. This partial enactment constrains the development of active citizenship dispositions such as responsibility, agency, and sustained participation.

4.2.2 Limited Immersive Experiential Learning: A Structural Constraint

The study further revealed that immersive experiential learning strategies such as field trips, community engagement activities, civic campaigns and interaction with civic institutions were limited and unsystematically implemented across the selected schools. Although isolated examples such as court visits, tree planting activities and school based clean-up campaigns were reported, these activities were infrequent and often dependent on individual school initiative rather than deliberate pedagogical planning. These findings corroborates previous studies in Zambia that report limited integration of community-based civic learning in secondary schools (Magasu et al., 2020; Magasu, 2021; Kasongo et al., 2022; Kaumba, 2023). Nelson and Kerr (2006) emphasise that effective Citizenship Education requires a shift from learning about citizenship to learning through citizenship. The limited opportunities for learners to participate in real civic experiences suggest that this transition remains weakly realised in the selected secondary schools.

Importantly, learners expressed strong willingness to engage in community sensitisation, advocacy campaigns and other forms of civic participation. This finding suggests a latent potential for civic responsibility, indicating that schools have an untapped resource in their learners who could contribute meaningfully to their communities if given the right platforms. This further suggests that learner motivation may not be the principal barrier. Rather, the absence of organised school-based civic platforms, inadequate institutional support and limited collaboration between schools and community stakeholders appear to constrain immersive experiential learning opportunities.

From the perspective of Kolb's (2015) Experiential Learning Theory, the limited exposure to real-world civic experiences restricts learners' ability to engage in concrete experience and active experimentation, which result in an incomplete experiential learning cycle. By implication; this partial implementation constrains the development of practical civic competencies and weakens the capacity of Civic Education to prepare learners for meaningful democratic participation.

V. CONCLUSION & RECOMMENDATIONS

5.1 Conclusion

This study explored the forms of experiential learning strategies in Civic Education that foster active citizenship among learners in selected secondary schools of Nakonde District, Zambia. The findings revealed that experiential learning is predominantly characterised by non-immersive, classroom-based strategies such as group discussions,

drama, debates, and learner presentations which are applied inconsistently across schools. Opportunities for immersive experiential learning, including field trips, community engagement, civic campaigns, and interaction with civic institutions remain limited and unsystematic. While classroom-based strategies support the development of civic knowledge, their confinement within classroom settings restricts learners' ability to translate knowledge into practical civic action. Importantly, the study shows that dominance of non-immersive strategies reflects not a lack of teacher awareness or learner motivation, but structural and institutional limitations, including absence of organised platforms for sustained civic engagement. Consequently, experiential learning remains partial, constraining the development of active citizenship competencies among learners. Strengthening teacher professional development, establishing school-based civic engagement platforms, and promoting collaboration between schools and community stakeholders are essential for enhancing experiential learning and fostering active, responsible, and engaged citizens.

5.2 Recommendations

Based on the findings, the following recommendations were proposed to enhance experiential learning. Since the study found that Civic Education teachers still use traditional teaching methods, strengthening of Continuous Professional Development (CPD) activities in secondary schools is needed to equip Civic Education teachers with practical skills for designing, implementing, and managing experiential learning activities. There is also a need for deliberate integration of classroom-based participatory strategies with structured community engagement activities to enable learners to transition from civic knowledge acquisition to practical civic action. Schools should establish and institutionalise structured frameworks such as civic clubs, debate societies, mock parliament programmes, and community service programmes to provide sustained opportunities for learners participation in civic processes throughout their secondary education. Furthermore, stronger collaboration between schools, local government institutions, and civil society organisations is essential to facilitate learner exposure to real-world civic environments and enhance the development of active citizenship competencies.

Declaration of Interest

The authors declare that they do not have any known competing financial interests or personal relationships that could have appeared to influence the work reported in this paper.

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