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## “Service Learning and Civic Engagement: Exploring the Linkages”

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### ABSTRACT :

**Overview:** This journal article delves into the intersection between service learning and civic engagement, aiming to elucidate the intricate connections and mutual benefits inherent in their relationship.

**Body of Knowledge:** The article examines the evolving landscape of education, where service learning emerges as a powerful pedagogical tool to foster not only academic growth but also civic responsibility and community engagement. Drawing on diverse theoretical frameworks and empirical evidence, the article elucidates how service learning cultivates a sense of civic duty, social awareness, and ethical leadership among students.

**Methods:** The research design was descriptive survey with both qualitative and quantitative methods of data collection in order to attain the comprehensive results. The study sampled officials from CDC, head teachers, teachers, pupils and community members. Data was obtained from the respondents by means of interviews, questionnaires, and observation schedules. Frequency tables, graphs, figures and pie-charts were used to analyze the qualitative data. The quantitative data was analyzed by the use of software MS access, MS Excel, and SPSS.

**Results:** Through a comprehensive analysis of existing literature and case studies, the study elucidates best practices, challenges, and future directions for integrating service learning into educational curricula to promote robust civic engagement and social change. The study also found that hands-on learning, as a result of service learning experiences, has demonstrated profound effects on pupils' civic engagement.

**Recommendation:** The Ministry of Education should explore the policy implications of integrating service learning into educational curricula as a means to promote civic engagement among pupils.

**Keywords:** Civic Engagement, Curriculum, Education, Service Learning and Teaching.

### 1.1 INTRODUCTION:

The education system in Zambia existed as long as the human societies lived. This is so because education is supposed to be seen as a condition for human survival. It is the means whereby one generation transmits the wisdom, knowledge and experience which prepares the next generation for life. The type of education that existed is referred to as traditional and was essentially practical in nature to enable the individual to play a useful role in society (Chanda, 2023a). Service-learning is an experiential learning pedagogy that moves students beyond the classroom to become active participants in their learning and develop civic knowledge and skills. It refers to an educational approach that combines learning objectives with community service in order to provide a pragmatic, progressive learning experience while meeting societal needs (Mulemwa & Chanda, 2023). Service learning is as important as education itself as it brings the balance between learning goals and service outcomes. Service-learning is an educational approach that integrates community service with academic instruction. It's designed to enhance learning, foster civic engagement, and instill a sense of social responsibility in students. In service-learning programs, students apply classroom knowledge and skills to address real community needs. These projects are often collaborative efforts between educational institutions, community organizations, and students.

According to Chanda (2023), education is the process of facilitating learning, knowledge, skills, values, beliefs, and habits of a group of people are transferred to other people, through storytelling, discussion, teaching, training, or research. Education frequently takes place under the guidance of educators, but learners may also educate themselves in a process called autodidactic learning. Any experience that has a formative effect on the way one thinks, feels, or acts may be considered educational. Mainde et al (2021) says that teaching is generally characterized by the teacher giving lectures, explaining materials, and demonstrating experiments as the students take a passive role by listening, taking notes, and learning the contents of subject areas.

The concept of service-learning is not a recent phenomenon and ideas regarding the importance of connecting education to community needs have been present since the beginning of the 20th century. Although service-learning is not a relatively new pedagogy, it has gained prominence in education since the early 2010s (Hart & Donnelly, 2017). Service-learning is a teaching methodology which provides an avenue to develop students as both citizens and scholars who have the knowledge, skills and commitment to serve in an increasingly complex society (Prentice & Rosenberg, 2017).

Miller et al, (2008) pointed out that Service-Learning is centred on the Philanthropic model based on altruism and compensatory justice through charity and philanthropy; a Civic engagement model which is based on the premise that democracy demands equal participation and voice of all citizens, and a Communitarian model which assumes that a good society is one that nourishes both social virtues and individual rights based on the notion that Civic action is public action and public action is collective action. With the adoption of Outcome-Based Education approach moving away from Behavioral. Approach (CDC, 2013) authenticates service-learning as the central pedagogical approach in achieving this educational goal.

Muleya (2015) noted that this approach seeks to link education to real life experiences as it gives learners skills to assess, criticize, analyses and practically apply knowledge to address societal challenges. Chanda (2023) noted that every education program is developed on its unique goals. This is same with Civic Education in which its general rationale is to impart civic knowledge, civic skills and civic dispositions or values to a citizen. The identification of Outcome-Based Education by the Ministry of Education in Zambia clearly shows that there is a gap between theory and practice. This study of assessing service-learning in the teaching of civic education in secondary schools remains, therefore, relevant to the current education mission. This study fits well with the seven principles of Zambia Vision 2030 namely; (i) sustainable development; (ii) upholding democratic principles; (iii) respect for human rights; (iv) fostering family values; (v) a positive attitude to work; (vi) peaceful coexistence; and (vii) upholding good traditional values. Hence, both pupils and communities benefit from pupils' involvement in community-based learning activities. The most effective civic education design includes the direct teaching of the scholarly content knowledge and the balance of participatory skills with the modelling and teaching of civic values and dispositions. Ibid (2015) consistently argued that using active civic learning pedagogical practices in the teaching of Civic Education can lead to social change and transformation of society.

Many countries around the globe have realized the need to educate citizens especially, the young people in order to secure the future of society. This requires the imparting of necessary skills and knowledge that would shape, nurture and inculcate values that could help propel the agenda of nations to bring about development (Chanda, 2023). Service learning and civic engagement are two interrelated concepts that have garnered significant attention in the fields of education, sociology, and community development. Service learning, often integrated into educational curricula, refers to a pedagogical approach that combines academic instruction with meaningful community service. It emphasizes experiential learning, whereby students engage in real-world activities that address community needs while simultaneously enhancing their academic learning and personal development.

At the heart of service learning is the notion of reciprocity, where both the community and the student benefit from the exchange. Students gain practical skills, deepen their understanding of course content, and develop empathy and a sense of social responsibility. Meanwhile, the community receives valuable support and resources, fostering positive relationships between educational institutions and local stakeholders. This reciprocal relationship is fundamental to the effectiveness and sustainability of service learning initiatives (Mulemwa & Chanda, 2023).

Civic engagement, on the other hand, encompasses a broader range of activities aimed at promoting active participation in society and addressing societal issues. It includes actions such as voting, volunteering, community organizing, and advocacy for social change. Civic engagement is grounded in the belief that individuals have a responsibility to contribute to the betterment of their communities and society as a whole. The linkages between service learning and civic engagement are manifold. Firstly, service learning provides a practical avenue for fostering civic engagement by encouraging students to actively contribute to their communities. Through hands-on experiences, students develop a deeper understanding of societal issues and are motivated to take action to address them. Service learning projects often involve collaboration with community organizations and local residents, facilitating meaningful connections and encouraging ongoing civic involvement beyond the classroom.

Furthermore, service learning promotes the development of critical civic skills and values, such as communication, teamwork, problem-solving, and cultural competence. These skills are essential for effective civic engagement and empower individuals to participate meaningfully in democratic processes and community decision-making. Chanda (2023) explained that Civic Education in a democracy is education in self-government. Democratic self-government means that citizens are actively involved in their own governance; they do not just passively accept the dictums of others or acquiesce to the demands of others. By engaging in service learning, students not only learn about social issues but also gain the tools and confidence to become agents of change in their communities. Moreover, service learning can serve as a catalyst for broader social change by fostering a culture of civic responsibility and activism within educational institutions and beyond. As students become more engaged in addressing community needs, they inspire others to join their efforts and advocate for systemic reforms. Service learning initiatives have the potential to mobilize diverse groups of individuals around shared goals, leading to more inclusive and sustainable approaches to community development.

Service learning is an educational approach that combines academic instruction with community service in a mutually beneficial manner (Billing, 2016). Unlike traditional classroom-based learning, service learning actively involves students in addressing real-world issues and challenges within their local or global communities. This experiential learning method aims to cultivate a sense of civic responsibility, empathy, and social awareness in students while fostering their intellectual growth. Through service learning, students have the opportunity to apply theoretical knowledge gained in the classroom to practical situations, thus bridging the gap between theory and practice. By engaging in meaningful service projects, students not only enhance their understanding of complex social issues but also develop crucial skills such as critical thinking, problem-solving, and effective communication. Service learning empowers students to become active agents of positive change, inspiring them to be compassionate leaders who contribute meaningfully to society. Eyler et al (2017) argued that service learning not only benefits students but also brings valuable contributions to the communities being served. By engaging with community partners and stakeholders, service-learning projects address real community needs and strive to create sustainable solutions. This collaboration between educational institutions and communities fosters a sense of solidarity and strengthens social ties. Moreover, service learning encourages students to be culturally sensitive and respectful, helping to break down stereotypes and foster a deeper understanding of diverse perspectives. Communities also benefit from the enthusiasm, creativity, and energy of students, as they bring fresh ideas and perspectives to address longstanding challenges. Through service learning, students and communities form lasting partnerships that can lead to ongoing community development and positive social change.

Service-learning values application of knowledge in the community, for the common good and benefit of all by providing a real-life context for learning and show pupils the practical importance of what they are learning. Muleya (2019) noted that this approach seeks to link education to real life experiences as it gives learners skills to assess, criticize, analyze and practically apply knowledge to address societal challenges. This study of assessing service learning in the teaching of civic education in secondary schools remains, therefore, relevant to the current education mission in Zambia and

pragmatic teaching of civic education for social, economic and political transformation. Service-learning is an experiential learning pedagogy that moves students beyond the classroom to become active participants in their learning and develop civic knowledge and skills. Students who take service-learning courses work with local, national, and international non-profit and public organizations to deeply learn and practice course content by working on a real, community-identified need. Students learn the course material, get to work directly on an issue facing the community and learn about their communities in the process. By combining academic pursuit with practical real-life experience of helping others, service learning provides students with opportunities to grow in social responsibility while enhancing their personal growth and enriching the lives of people within the community they are serving (NCES, 2017).

According to Sigmon (1979), there are four different categories that define various levels of Service-Learning, using graphical representations of the two words. Each have their different advantages, and their different purposes in the world of Service-Learning. An activity such as students offering community service to an agency would classify as “SERVICE-learning”, because the service aspect is taking the forefront of the work. If a student, or a group of students studies the observation of community groups, or something along those lines, it would be classified as “service-LEARNING”, because the learning aspect is the main focus of that type of project. Now “service learning” is a little different than the last two, as the service and learning aspects are separate from each other, with neither taking the spotlight. An example of this definition would be volunteer programs within a college, that have no real connection to the academics they are pursuing. When both service and learning are of equal weight, it is seen as “SERVICE-LEARNING”, as both are being put together instead of being separated, or one taking the main focus over the other. An example of this type of service could be a group of students volunteering to serve in a certain area, but also studying the subject while putting in their service, and coming up with ideas to help improve the work they are doing. All of these variants come underneath the wing of Service-Learning, and each of them can be used at different times, depending on the circumstances.

### ***1.2. Statement of the Problem***

There has been a renewed sense of interest in education across a number of nations since the 2018s as witnessed by commission reports, books and articles by educators, scholars and journalists, but service-learning has been weak as civic engagement has not been matching with meaningful participation in public life (Robert. et al, 2014). The statement of the problem for study on service learning and civic engagement aims to elucidate the specific issues or gaps in understanding within this field. It delves into questions such as the effectiveness of service learning programs in fostering civic engagement among participants, the impact of various program designs on community development and social change, and the factors influencing sustained engagement beyond the duration of the program. Additionally, it explored the role of institutions, instructors, and community partners in facilitating meaningful service learning experiences that promote active citizenship and societal responsibility. By identifying these key areas of inquiry, researchers can frame their investigation to contribute valuable insights into enhancing the effectiveness and outcomes of service learning initiatives for both individuals and communities. Based on the literature reviewed by the researcher, most of the research done on service learning so far are concentrated in tertiary institutions thus creating a gap in secondary and elementary schools. Despite the growing popularity of service-learning as a civic pedagogy in education, little has been documented about its application and implementation in Zambian secondary schools (Mulemwa & Chanda, 2023). Hence, this study was conducted in order to ascertain the service learning and civic engagement with regard to their connection and this can the education sector achieve its objective.

### ***1.3. The Purpose of the Study***

The purpose of this study was to ascertain service learning and civic engagement by exploring the linkages at some selected secondary schools in Lusaka district, Zambia.

### ***1.4. Research Objectives***

The objectives of the study were to:

- Determine the impact of service learning experiences on pupils' civic engagement in selected secondary schools in Lusaka District, Zambia.
- Examine the pedagogical approaches and instructional methods used in service learning programs in selected secondary schools in Lusaka District, Zambia.

### ***1.5. Theoretical Framework***

The study was guided by the Civic Education Theory. Drawing from political science and education, this theory focuses on the role of education in fostering civic knowledge, skills, and dispositions. It suggests that service learning can serve as a powerful tool for civic education by providing students with opportunities to apply classroom knowledge to real-world issues, thereby promoting civic responsibility and active citizenship (Mulemwa & Chanda, 2023). Additionally, Civic Education Theory encompasses various pedagogical approaches aimed at fostering informed, responsible, and active citizenship within societies. Rooted in the belief that democratic governance relies on an educated populace, this theory emphasizes the importance of teaching civic knowledge, skills, and dispositions. It draws from fields such as political science, sociology, and education to develop curriculum and instructional strategies that engage students in understanding democratic principles, civic rights and responsibilities, political participation, and social justice issues. Civic Education Theory emphasizes experiential learning, critical thinking, and dialogue to empower individuals to contribute meaningfully to their communities and advocate for positive change within their societies. It seeks to cultivate civic virtues such as

tolerance, empathy, and respect for diversity, preparing individuals to navigate complex societal challenges and actively participate in the democratic process.

### 1.6. Significance of the Study

Research on service learning and civic engagement holds immense significance in both academic and societal realms. Firstly, it sheds light on the interconnectedness between service learning and civic engagement, unraveling how engaging in community service activities fosters a sense of civic responsibility and active participation in societal affairs. This study delves into the depth of this relationship, potentially offering insights into how educational institutions and policymakers can enhance civic engagement through service learning initiatives. Moreover, by understanding the dynamics between these two constructs, researchers can contribute to the development of effective pedagogical approaches that not only enrich students' academic experiences but also nurture their commitment to social justice and community betterment. Ultimately, this study has the potential to catalyze positive social change by empowering individuals to become informed, empathetic, and civically engaged members of their communities. It is therefore hoped that the research findings would revitalize civic life among the pupils by fostering recognition of public and private responsibilities. This study would also awaken and engage teachers in the use of active learning methods to enhance experiential learning the essence of service-learning. Additionally, the research findings would stimulate initiative for policy and leadership direction in service-learning field among educators and policymakers.

## 2. RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

### 2.1. Study Design

The research design was descriptive survey with both qualitative and quantitative methods of data collection in order to attain the comprehensive results. Qualitative methods were appropriate to this investigation as it produced detailed data from a small group of participants, while exploring feelings, impressions and judgments. On the other hand, quantitative method made the use of questionnaires, surveys and experiment to gather data that is revised and tabulated in numbers, which allows the data to be characterized by use of statistical analysis.

### 2.2. Population, Sample and Sampling Procedure

The population for the study comprised officials from CDC, head teachers, teachers, pupils, and community members. The target population was 1500. The sample size involved a total of 150 respondents which included 2 officers from CDC, four (4) head teachers, one from each selected school. Twelve (12) teachers, three from each selected school. One hundred and twenty (120) pupils, thirty (30) from each selected school and 12 community members. The study employed both purposive and simple random sampling on different participants.

### 2.4. Data Analysis

In this research, data was analyzed qualitatively as in-depth interviews, and questionnaires were used as data collection instruments. Thematic approach was used, where data analysis started with the categorization of themes from the structured interviews, questionnaires. Charts and graphs were used to analyze data. The data gathered was analyzed according to the themes of the study and per the order of the research objectives. Data generated from the interview guide was analyzed manually and also, a combination of software MS Access, SPSS and MS Excel was used to analyze data.

### 2.5. Ethical Issues

Permission letter from the Ministry of Education and DEBS for Lusaka district was sought in carrying out this study. Interviews were not conducted on one-to-one basis; instead, participants were grouped and identified using their titles. An informed consent was sought before collecting information from the informants and guaranteed them with security of the information they provided. Furthermore, the main objective of gathering such information was made clear to the respondents. The study avoided pressuring respondents to take part in the research. Alternatively, permission consents, assents were obtained from respondents involved in the research and the research topic was strategically selected to ensure that there was no harm whatsoever to the research respondents. In this study, the researcher was fully conscious of the need to abide by the ethical rule of respecting the privacy of individuals taking part in the research. In the same way, all the respondents of the research were to remain unidentified to the public as all their valuable views, opinions and perceptions were only known by the researcher for use only in the research and participant's identities will forever remain hidden.

## 3. FINDINGS AND DISCUSSIONS

The following findings and discussions were presented according to set research objectives:

### 3.1. Impact of Service Learning Experiences on Pupils' Civic Engagement

**Table 1: Impact of Service Learning Experiences on Pupils' Civic Engagement**

Responses	Percentage
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Hands-On Learning	25.%
Critical Thinking and Problem-Solving Skills	20%
Increased Civic Knowledge	20%
Sense of Responsibility	15%
Enhanced Communication and Collaboration Skills	10%
Empowerment and Agency	10%
Total	100%

According to the findings, hands-on learning was seen to be the highest impact with regard to service learning experiences with about 25%. Hands-on learning, as a result of service learning experiences, has demonstrated profound effects on pupils' civic engagement. Head teachers observed that through direct involvement in community service projects, students not only gain practical skills but also develop a deeper understanding of societal issues. This hands-on approach fosters empathy and compassion as student's witness firsthand the challenges faced by their community members. Moreover, actively participating in service activities empowers students to become agents of change, instilling a sense of responsibility and commitment to address social issues. By engaging in real-world projects, students cultivate critical thinking and problem-solving skills, equipping them to contribute meaningfully to their communities (Mulemwa & Chanda, 2023). Ultimately, hands-on learning through service experiences serves as a catalyst for nurturing active citizenship, inspiring students to become lifelong advocates for positive social change.

Service learning experiences have been shown to significantly enhance pupils' civic engagement by fostering critical thinking and problem-solving skills. Through these experiences, students engage directly with real-world issues within their communities, prompting them to analyze problems from multiple perspectives and develop innovative solutions (Sigmon, 1994). By applying critical thinking skills, such as analysis, evaluation, and synthesis, students can better understand the root causes of societal challenges and devise effective strategies for addressing them. Additionally, service learning encourages collaboration and communication, as students work together to effect positive change. These experiences not only cultivate a sense of civic responsibility but also empower students to become active contributors to their communities, equipped with the skills needed to navigate complex social issues and advocate for meaningful change. Furthermore, service learning experiences have been shown to significantly enhance pupils' civic engagement by fostering increased civic knowledge. Teachers explained that through hands-on engagement with community issues and projects, students not only gain a deeper understanding of societal challenges but also develop a practical awareness of how they can contribute to positive change. By actively participating in service learning activities, students have the opportunity to apply theoretical concepts learned in the classroom to real-world scenarios, thereby bridging the gap between theory and practice (Chanda, 2023). This experiential learning approach not only enriches students' understanding of civic responsibilities but also cultivates a sense of empowerment and agency, motivating them to become more actively involved in their communities and advocate for social change. As a result, increased civic knowledge serves as a catalyst for fostering long-term civic engagement among pupils, equipping them with the necessary tools and perspectives to become informed, responsible, and active members of society. Officers from CDC pointed out that service learning experiences can profoundly shape pupils' civic engagement by fostering a strong sense of responsibility. Through actively participating in community service projects, students develop an understanding of their role in society and the importance of contributing positively to their communities. Chanda, et al (2023) alluded that education is essential for helping children escape the cycle of poverty. However, hundreds of millions of young people lack the basic skills needed to take advantage of opportunities to help them succeed. Poverty is a state or condition in which a person or community lacks the financial resources and essentials for a minimum standard of living. Poverty-stricken people and families might go without proper housing, clean water, healthy food, and medical attention. Poverty refers to the lack of adequate financial resources such that individuals, households, and entire communities don't have the means to subsist or acquire the basic necessities for a flourishing life (Chanda, 2023). These experiences instill a sense of accountability towards addressing social issues and promoting positive change. Students learn to empathize with others, recognize the needs of their communities, and take proactive steps to address them. This heightened sense of responsibility not only benefits the communities they serve but also cultivates a lifelong commitment to civic engagement and social responsibility. Additionally, the study found that service learning experiences have proven to significantly enhance communication and collaboration skills among pupils, thereby fostering their civic engagement. Through hands-on involvement in community service projects, students are exposed to diverse perspectives, challenging them to communicate effectively and collaborate with peers, community members, and organizations. This interactive engagement not only cultivates empathy and understanding but also hones negotiation, teamwork, and leadership abilities. By actively participating in service initiatives, pupils learn to navigate complexities, resolve conflicts, and collectively work towards common goals, essential aspects of civic engagement. These experiences instill a sense of responsibility, empowering students to contribute meaningfully to their communities and advocate for positive change (NCES, 2017). Thus, service learning serves as a catalyst for developing vital communication and collaboration skills crucial for fostering active citizenship and civic participation among pupils.

Community members alluded that service learning experiences have proven to be powerful catalysts for fostering empowerment and agency among pupils, significantly impacting their civic engagement. Through these experiences, students actively engage with their communities, addressing real-world issues and gaining a deeper understanding of societal challenges. As they collaborate with local organizations and stakeholders, they develop a sense of efficacy and ownership over their ability to effect positive change (Chanda & Zohaib, 2024). Service learning empowers pupils by providing them with opportunities to apply classroom knowledge to practical situations, allowing them to see the direct impact of their actions on the community. Moreover, by participating in meaningful service projects, students cultivate a sense of agency as they recognize their capacity to make a difference and become active contributors to society. This heightened sense of empowerment and agency not only enhances students' civic engagement during their school years but also lays a foundation for lifelong commitment to social responsibility and active citizenship.

### 3.2. Pedagogical Approaches and Instructional Methods used in Service Learning Programs

The research findings on pedagogical approaches and instructional methods used in service learning programs indicated that experiential learning is a powerful pedagogical approach and instructional method often utilized in service learning programs to enhance students' understanding and engagement. It emphasizes hands-on experiences, reflection, and application of knowledge gained through real-world activities. In service learning, students apply academic concepts and theories to address community needs, fostering a deeper understanding of social issues and promoting civic responsibility. Bringle (2006) said that by immersing themselves in meaningful service projects, students not only contribute to positive social change but also develop critical thinking, problem-solving, and interpersonal skills. Experiential learning in service programs encourages students to connect classroom learning with real-life situations, leading to a more holistic educational experience that prepares them for active citizenship and lifelong learning.

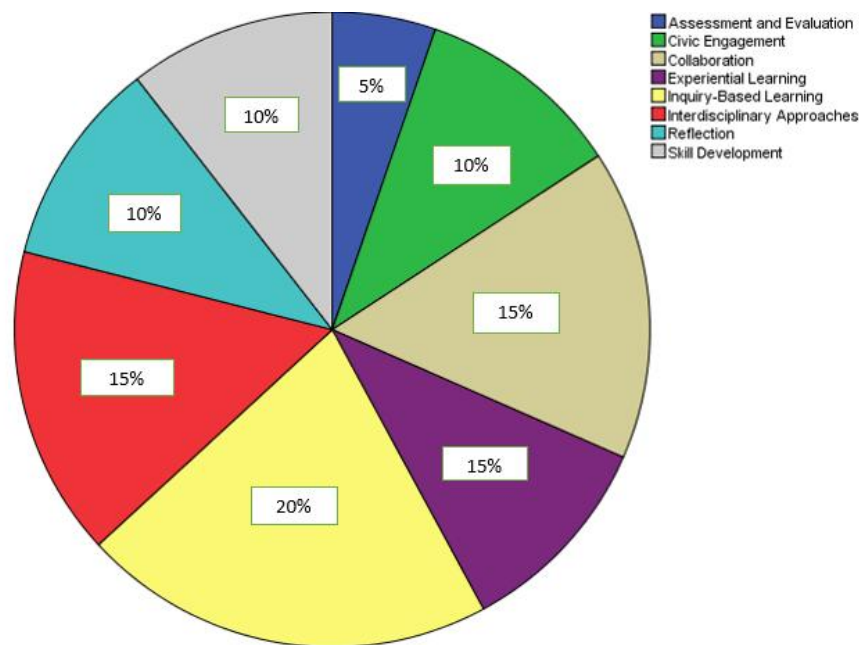
According to the teachers, reflection as a pedagogical approach and instructional method plays a pivotal role in service learning programs, enriching the educational experience by fostering deeper understanding, critical thinking, and personal growth. Through structured reflection activities, students engage in a cyclical process of examining their service experiences, connecting them to course content and real-world issues, and considering their own values and assumptions (Biesta, 2017). This deliberate introspection encourages students to explore the complexities of community needs and social justice, cultivating empathy and a sense of civic responsibility. Moreover, reflection enables learners to recognize the interconnectedness between theory and practice, enhancing their ability to transfer knowledge to future endeavors. By integrating reflection into service learning programs, educators empower students to become active participants in their own learning, preparing them to be informed, engaged citizens committed to positive social change. The head teachers added by saying that Inquiry-Based Learning (IBL) serves as a dynamic pedagogical approach and instructional method, particularly valuable in Service Learning Programs (SLPs). At its core, IBL nurtures curiosity, critical thinking, and problem-solving skills by placing learners at the center of their educational journey. In SLPs, this method empowers students to explore real-world issues, fostering a deeper understanding of societal challenges while simultaneously addressing community needs. Through hands-on experiences and collaborative projects, students actively engage with communities, identifying issues, posing questions, and seeking solutions through systematic inquiry (Chanda & Siyunda, 2023). IBL within SLPs cultivates not only academic knowledge but also empathy, cultural awareness, and social responsibility, enriching both student learning and community development. By intertwining academic concepts with practical application and community engagement, IBL stands as a powerful tool in shaping socially conscious, proactive citizens prepared to tackle complex global issues.

CDC officers explained that collaboration serves as a cornerstone in service learning programs, intertwining pedagogy with real-world application. By fostering collaborative environments, students engage in reciprocal partnerships with community stakeholders, leveraging collective expertise to address authentic challenges. This finding was supported by Biesta, (2017) who explained that this approach not only enhances academic learning but also cultivates essential life skills such as communication, problem-solving, and empathy. Through collaborative efforts, students gain a deeper understanding of social issues and develop a sense of civic responsibility. Additionally, collaboration empowers learners to co-create knowledge, encouraging active participation and ownership of their learning journey. Mainde et al (2022) added that civic education is designed to equip learners with knowledge; skills and values that enable them to practice their civic rights and perform duties as responsible citizens at personal, local, national and international levels. Civic Education increases the level of civic awareness by raising civic awareness (civic knowledge) and capacities (civic skills and dispositions) of the population. Ultimately, by integrating collaboration as both a pedagogical approach and instructional method, service learning programs nurture socially conscious and empowered individuals poised to enact positive change in their communities. The officials added that assessment and evaluation are integral components of service learning programs, serving as pedagogical approaches and instructional methods that ensure both student learning and community impact are maximized. Through systematic assessment, educators can gauge the effectiveness of service learning experiences in achieving academic goals, fostering civic engagement, and promoting personal development. Mpolomoka et al (2023) noted that for a long time now, educators have had divided opinions on the best methods of assessing pupils. Although some educators advocate for the use of traditional assessments such as multiple choice test items, matching test items, short answer test item, true/false test items and other forms of objective test items, others advocate for more contemporary approaches to assessments such as portfolio test items, journal critique test items and research essay test items. Evaluation methodologies, such as pre- and post-tests, reflective journals, and rubrics, provide valuable insights into student comprehension, skill acquisition, and attitude shifts. Additionally, ongoing assessment enables instructors to tailor instruction to meet diverse learner needs and adapt service projects to address emerging community challenges. By emphasizing reflection and self-assessment, service learning programs cultivate critical thinking, empathy, and a sense of social responsibility among participants. Ultimately, the integration of assessment and evaluation enhances the transformative potential of service learning, empowering students to become active citizens committed to positive social change (Mulemwa & Chanda, 2023).

Moving on, the pupils narrated that skill development as a pedagogical approach and instructional method in service learning programs integrates hands-on experience with academic learning, fostering a holistic educational experience. It emphasizes practical application of knowledge and skills gained in the classroom to real-world contexts, enhancing their' abilities to navigate complex problems and contribute meaningfully to their communities. Chanda (2023) added that civic dispositions, like civic skills, develop slowly over time and as a result of what one learns and experiences in the home, school, community, and organizations of civil society. Through service learning, they engage in reflective practices, identifying and honing skills such as critical thinking, communication, teamwork, and leadership while addressing societal needs. This approach not only enriches their academic growth but also cultivates their civic responsibility and social awareness, empowering them to become active, empathetic citizens (Jacoby, 2003). Service learning thus serves as a powerful tool for promoting personal and professional development alongside academic achievement, preparing students to thrive in diverse environments and make positive contributions to society. They further explained that civic engagement as a pedagogical approach and instructional method in service learning programs fosters active citizenship and community involvement among them. Through hands-on experiences in real-world contexts, they not only gain academic knowledge but also develop practical skills and a sense of social responsibility (Delli Carpini, 2016). By collaborating with local organizations or communities to address societal challenges, they deepen their understanding of issues such as poverty, environmental sustainability, or healthcare disparities. This approach encourages critical thinking, empathy,

and cultural awareness as students navigate diverse perspectives and engage in meaningful dialogue with community members. Moreover, by applying classroom learning to address community needs, students experience the tangible impact of their education, empowering them to become lifelong agents of positive change.

Community members observed that interdisciplinary approaches in service learning programs represent a dynamic pedagogical approach and instructional method that integrates various academic disciplines to address real-world issues and community needs. By merging knowledge and methodologies from multiple fields such as sociology, environmental science, psychology, and economics, students gain a holistic understanding of complex societal challenges. Chanda (2023) explains social challenges as a state of affairs that negatively affects the personal or social lives of individuals or the well-being of communities or larger groups within a society and about which there is usually public disagreement as to its nature, causes, or solution. Social challenges are common problems in present-day society and one that many people strive to solve. This approach fosters critical thinking, problem-solving skills, and empathy as students collaborate across disciplines to develop innovative solutions. Moreover, interdisciplinary service learning promotes civic engagement and social responsibility by empowering students to apply their academic learning in meaningful ways to benefit communities (Lave & Wenger, 2015). Through hands-on experiences, reflection, and mentorship, students not only deepen their academic understanding but also cultivate a sense of purpose and a commitment to lifelong learning and service.



**Figure 1: Pedagogical Approaches and Instructional Methods used in Service Learning Programs**

#### 4. CONCLUSION

In conclusion, the exploration of linkages between service learning and civic engagement reveals a symbiotic relationship that enriches both individuals and communities. Service learning not only fosters a sense of responsibility and empathy in participants but also cultivates essential skills for active citizenship. By engaging with real-world issues and collaborating with diverse stakeholders, individuals not only contribute meaningfully to societal needs but also develop a deeper understanding of social dynamics and systemic challenges. Moreover, service learning initiatives often catalyze long-term civic involvement by instilling a commitment to social justice and collective action. Therefore, fostering robust connections between service learning and civic engagement is crucial for nurturing informed, empowered, and compassionate citizens who actively contribute to positive social change.

#### RECOMMENDATIONS

The following are actions that should be taken on the basis of the findings of this study:

- The Ministry of General Education and Ministry of Higher Education in collaboration with teacher education institutions should establish pre-service and in-service teacher education programmes to develop the capacity of teachers to provide high quality instructions in service learning.
- The Ministry of Education should explore the policy implications of integrating service learning into educational curricula as a means to promote civic engagement among pupils.

- School administrators should engage with community organizations, non-profits, and government agencies to establish partnerships for service learning projects.
- School administrators should develop assessment tools to measure the outcomes of service learning on civic engagement during and after learning.
- Class teachers should be encouraged to continuously assess and refine their teaching approach to integrating service learning and civic engagement.

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