



# Assessment on Service Learning in the Teaching and Learning of Civic Education: A Case of Selected Secondary Schools in Chongwe District of Lusaka Province, Zambia

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**Abstract:** *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. Service learning is as important as education itself as it brings the balance between learning goals and service outcomes. Therefore, the study aimed at assessing service learning in the teaching and learning of civic education at some selected secondary schools in Chongwe district of Lusaka Province in Zambia. The study employed both the qualitative and quantitative methods and a descriptive research design that sampled community head teachers, heads of departments (social sciences), teachers and from the selected schools. Data was obtained from the respondents by means of interviews and questionnaires. Frequency tables, graphs, figures and pie-charts were used to analyze the qualitative data. Quantitative data were analyzed by the use of software MS access and MS Excel. The findings revealed the teaching methods used in civic education stimulate pupils' interest in political and social issues, civic participation in the wider community and at school. Additionally, it was found that secure political and social environment in school was very important to achieve service-learning where democratic principles are upheld. Further, the findings indicated that development in civic skills and dispositions required systematic training and preparation for someone to function properly. The study, therefore, recommends that trained/qualified teachers to teach civic education, there should be adequate teaching and learning materials. Additionally, the study suggests that there should be promotion of civic education at all levels and involvement of stakeholders as well as the government.*

**Keywords:** *Assessment, Civic Education, Learning, Pupils, Service Learning and Teaching.*

## 1.1 INTRODUCTION

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). Speck and Hoppe, (2017) 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. 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.

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 civic 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 knowledge has not been matching with meaningful participation in public life (Sigmon, 1994). Therefore, a more active and participatory model of citizenship that recognized the existence of citizen responsibilities should be at the centre stage of civic education programmes. This would involve a bringing together of civic knowledge with service learning to offer holistic civic education to attempt to engage young people in the lives of their political communities and to support them in handling the challenges raised by the complexities of contemporary life (Biesta, 2017). Based on literature reviewed by the researcher, most of the research done in 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 the teaching of civic education, little has been documented about its application and implementation in Zambian secondary schools. Therefore, from the background given in the preceding sections, the problem that was identified for investigation in this study is that of not knowing how service-learning is being applied and implemented in the teaching of civic education in selected Zambian secondary schools of Lusaka province.

### 1.3. The Purpose of the Study

The purpose of this study was to assess service learning in the teaching and learning of civic education at some selected secondary schools in Chongwe district of Lusaka Province in Zambia.

### 1.4. Research Objectives

The objectives of the study were to:

- Identify the effects of service learning in the teaching and learning of civic education in secondary schools of Chongwe district in Lusaka Province, Zambia.
- Examine factors affecting service-learning in the teaching and learning of civic education in secondary schools of Chongwe district in Lusaka Province, Zambia.
- Evaluate measures that can be put in place to ensure service-learning in the teaching and learning of civic education in secondary schools of Chongwe district in Lusaka Province, Zambia.

### 1.5. Theoretical Framework

The study was guided by the theory of social learning. Social learning theorists believe that learning is a process of social participation (Lave and Wenger, 2015). The social learning methodology builds upon Dewey's primacy of experience which advocates active learning and reflection, and the evolving body of experiential learning research which entails students applying academic models to solve problems outside the classroom. Dewey advocated that a school is a democratic institution and thus should be a place where service and participatory citizenship are the norm. Many scholars look to Dewey with his social learning theory "Learning by doing" as an influential theorist in laying the foundation for service-learning theory (Eyler et al, 2017). Delli Carpini (2016) noted further that service-learning, as a relatively new social and educational phenomenon, suffers from the lack of a well-articulated conceptual framework. Dewey's educational theory and Kolb's experiential learning theory (based on Dewey's work) are most frequently used as a basis for practice, research, and analysis. In service-learning, faculty guide students in both their reflection and application of class content to help students make the best of their service experience. Learning is not a simple process of knowledge transmission from teacher to students but rather a multidimensional social practice where learning is supported by forms of apprenticeship (that is, relationships with others who have various kinds of expertise) and participation in specific, on-going social activities. In other words, students achieve academic mastery not simply by acquiring a particular body of knowledge they can recall on demand, but by developing a personal understanding of information through a process of interpersonal co-construction and problem-solving that depends on relations between themselves, university faculty and staff, their peers, and other educational partners (Ibid, 2017).

### 1.6. Significance of the Study

The purpose of service learning is, in essence, to equally benefit the provider and the recipient of the service as well as to ensure equal focus on both the service being provided and the learning that is occurring. This study would contribute to existing literature on the service-learning in active teaching of civic education in secondary schools in Chongwe district of Lusaka Province, Zambia. It is 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 in Chongwe district of Lusaka province.

## 2. RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

### 2.1. Study Design

The study adopted a mixed methods approach combining quantitative and qualitative data. Exploratory and descriptive designs were as well considered appropriate as they also allowed for more flexible strategies of data collection in order to answer the research questions.

### 2.2. Research Site

The research was conducted in Chongwe district of Lusaka Province in Zambia from which respondents were also sampled.

### 2.3. Population, Sample and Sampling Procedure

The population for the study comprised of head teachers, heads of department (social sciences), teachers and pupils. The target population was 2000. The sample size involved a total of 200 respondents which included four (4) head teachers, one from each selected school. Four (4) heads of department, one from each selected school. Four (4) civic education teachers, one from each selected school and one hundred-eighty-eight (188) pupils, forty-seven from each selected school. The study employed both purposive and simple random sampling on different participants.

*Table 1: Population Sample Frame*

Sample Frame	Sample Population
Head Teachers	4
Head of Departments HODs (social sciences)	4
Civic Education Teachers	4
Pupils	188
<b>Total</b>	<b>200</b>

### 2.4. Data Analysis

Data were analyzed qualitatively as the semi-structured interview schedules were used as data collection instruments. The thematic approach was used, where data analysis started with the categorizing themes from the semi-structured interview schedules. The data gathered was analyzed according to the themes of the study and the order of the research objectives. Data generated from the questionnaires were analyzed manually by using the Statistical Package for Social Sciences (version 26) and Microsoft Excel (version 16) to come up with frequency tables, pie charts and bar graphs.

## 2.5. Ethical Issues

Permission letter from Rockview University and the DEBS for Chongwe 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 researchers 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 researchers were 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 researchers 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. Effects of Service Learning

The researcher sought to find out from the head teachers the effects of service-learning in the teaching and learning of civic education in secondary schools. Out of the 4 head teachers their responses were as follows; (25%) said very good, (25%) said good and (50%) said fair.

**Table 2: Effects of Service Learning**

	Frequency (F)	Percentage (%)
Very Good	1	25
Good	1	25
Fair	2	50
Very Bad		
Bad		
<b>Total</b>	<b>4</b>	<b>100</b>

It was also established that heads of departments (social sciences) whose contributions are usually part of the management and staff meetings stated means and deviation approaches in teaching of service-learning.

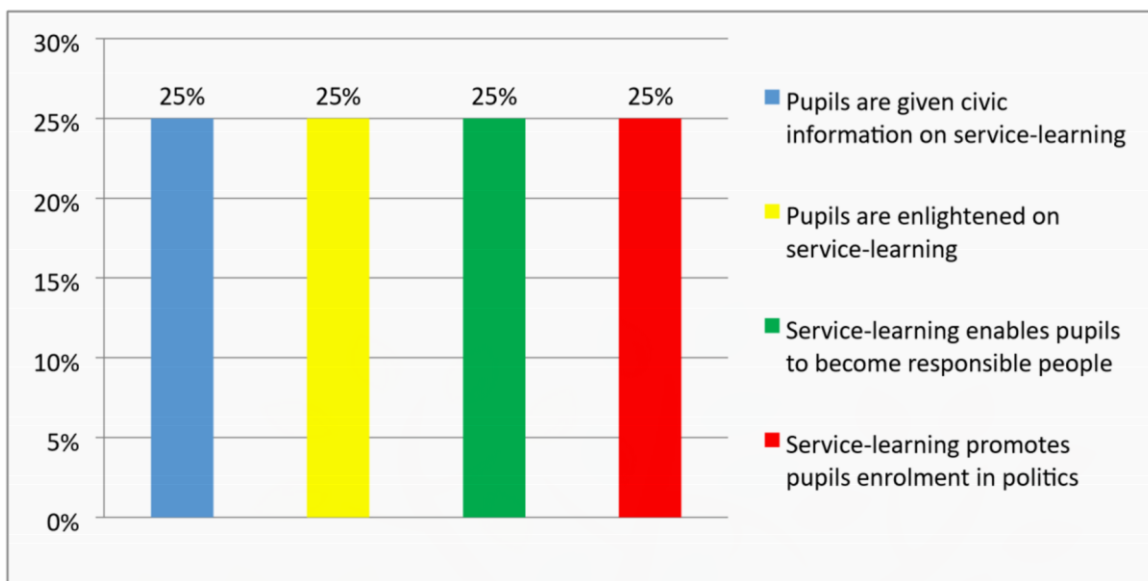
**Table 3: Means and Standard Deviation of Approaches in the Teaching of Service Learning**

	<b>Mean</b>	<b>Standard Deviation</b>
Teaching methods stimulate students politically, socially, civic participation in wider community and school	3.22	0.894
Teachers encourage pupils to make up their own minds	3.12	0.827
Teachers encourage pupils to express their opinions	3.35	0.818
Pupils' express opinions in class with different views from most of other learners	3	0.944
Teachers encourage pupils to discuss issues with people with different opinion	2.79	1.054
Teacher presents several sides of the issues when explaining them in class	2.98	1.024
Schools provide secure environment and encourage pupils to express opinions, debate and practice decision making	3.05	1.047
Pupils use skills of identifying and describing, explaining and analyzing, and evaluating, taking, and defending public issue positions	2.63	1.056
Pupils develop and continue improving skills of evaluating, taking, and defending positions	2.92	1.073

The heads of departments said teachers encouraged pupils to make up their own minds, teachers encouraged pupils to discuss issues with people with different opinion, and pupils expressed opinions in class with different views from most of other learners. These responses did not occur with variation among the responses since their standard deviations are less than one (1). The remaining statements were at least frequently done, however there was much variation in the responses as indicated by the standard deviation which are more than one (1). This

means that a good number of responses also indicated otherwise and shows teachers responses on approaches and practices used in the teaching of service learning.

**Figure 1: Summary of the Effects of Service Learning**

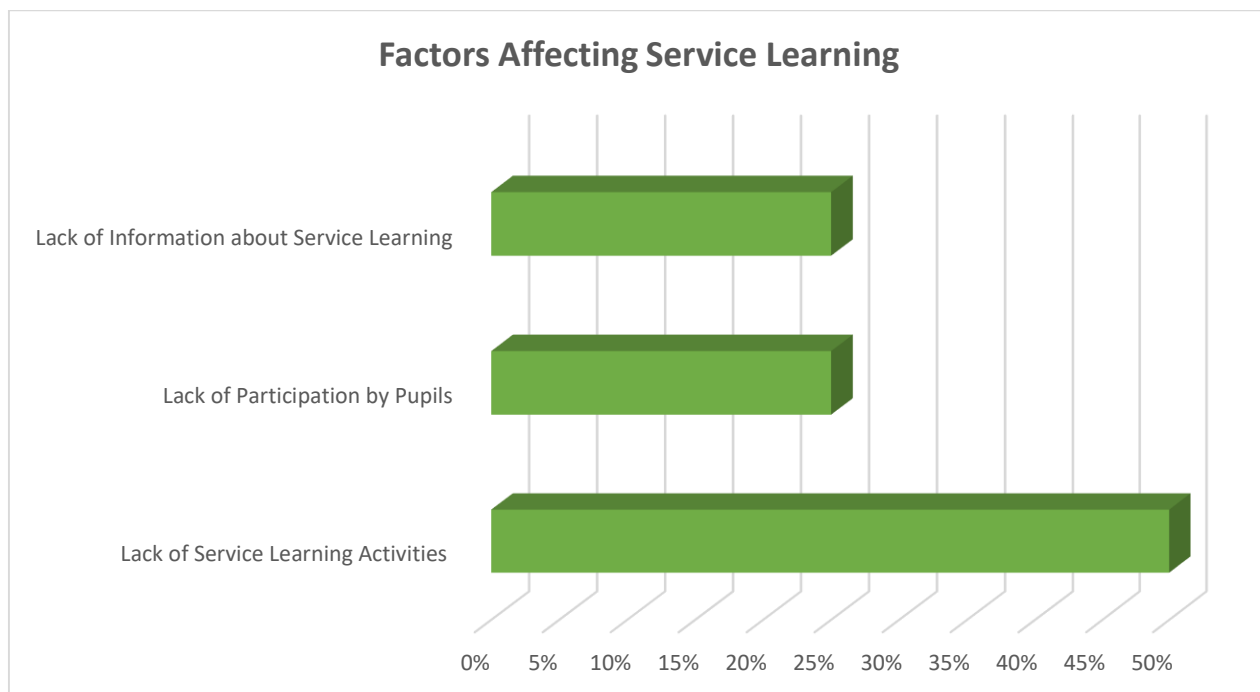


### 3.2. Factors Affecting Service Learning

The researcher sought to find out from civic education teachers how the effects of service-learning affect teaching and learning of civic education. Out of the four (4) civic education teachers, 2 (50%) said lack of service learning activities in civic education, 1 (25%) said lack of participation by pupils in service learning and another 1 (25%) said lack of information about service learning.

**Figure 2: Factors Affecting Service Learning**

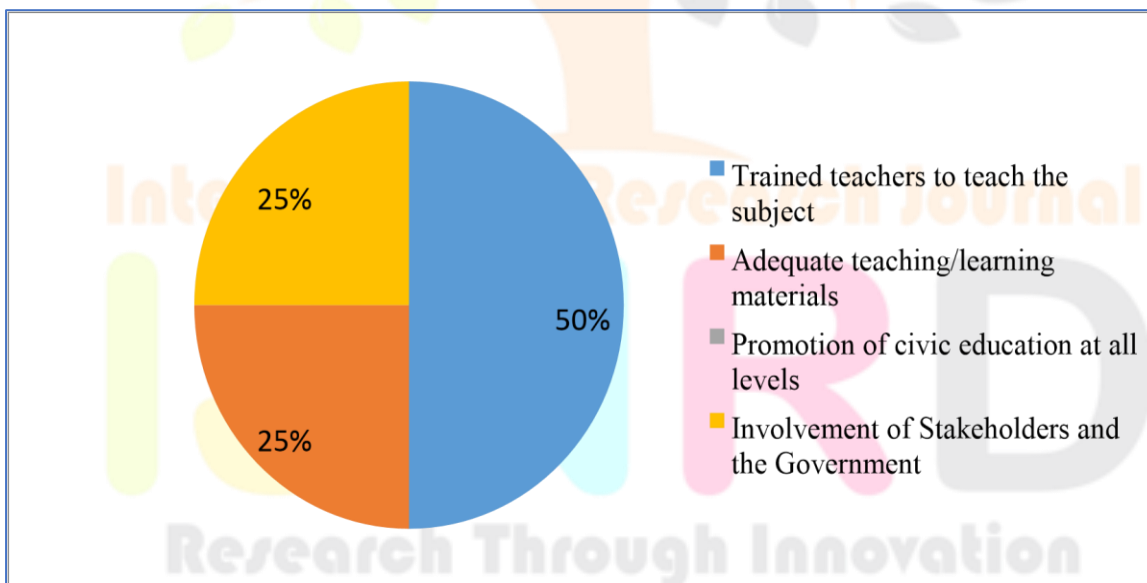




### 3.3. Measures to Enhance Service Learning

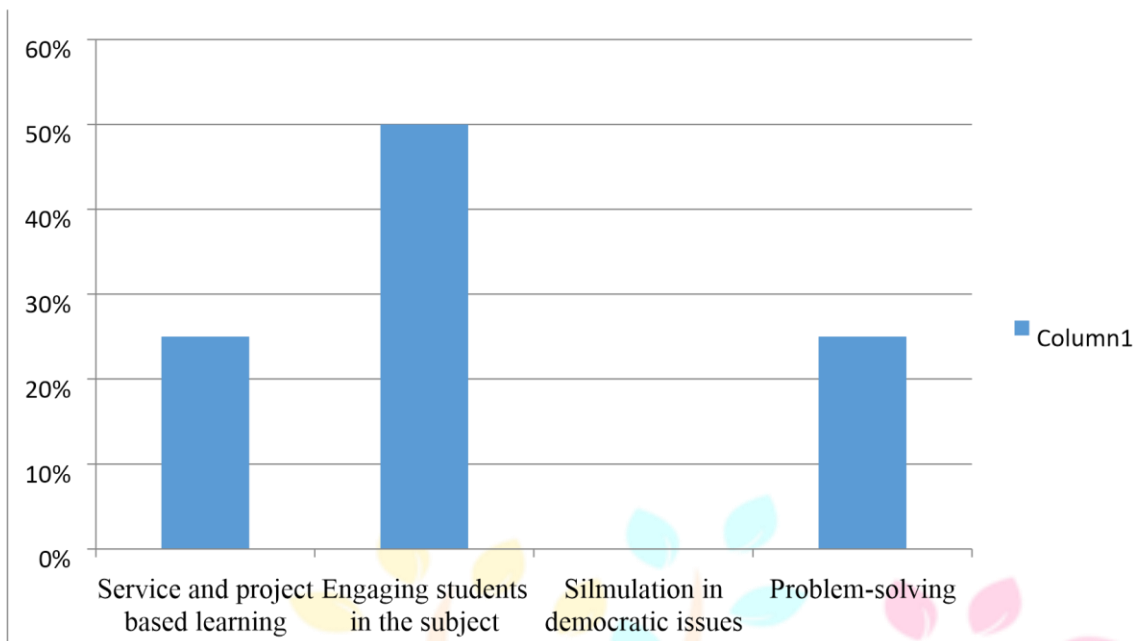
The researcher sought to find out what measures can be put in place to ensure service-learning in the teaching and learning of civic education.

*Chart 1: Measures to Enhance Service Learning*



Out of the four (4) Head-teachers, 2 (50%) of them recommended having trained teachers to teach the subject and promote civic education at all levels. 1 (25%) recommended having adequate teaching and learning materials and 1 (25%) recommended involvement of stake holders and the government.

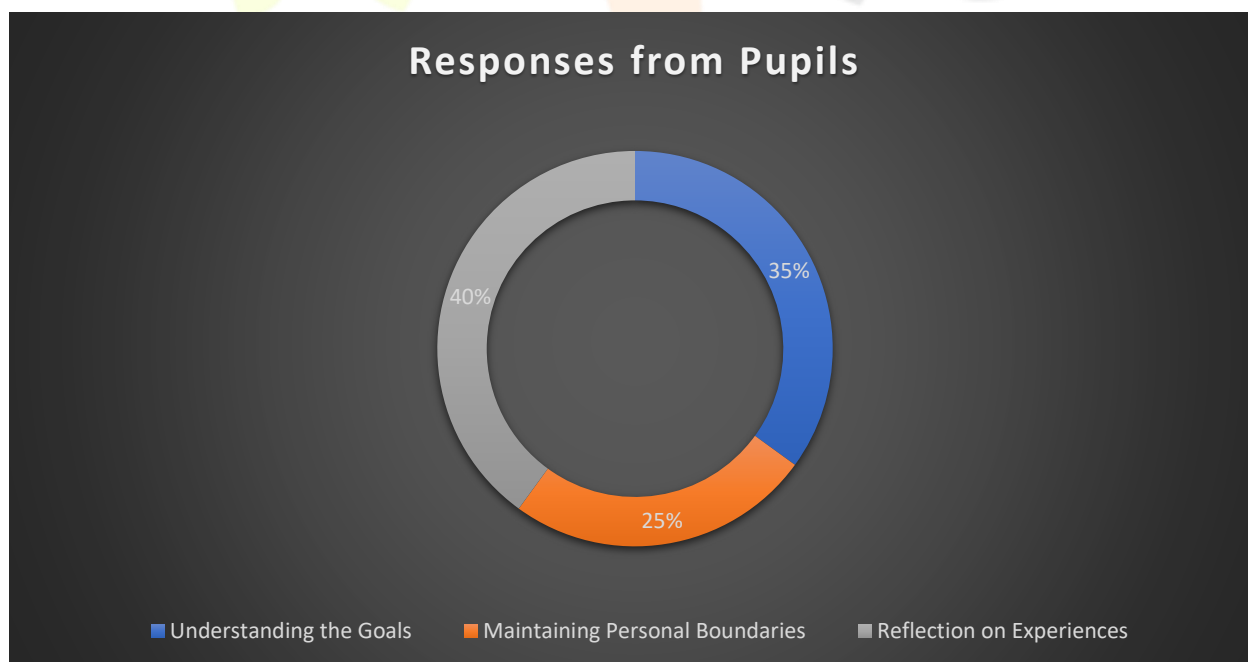
*Figure 3: Responses from HoDs (Social Sciences) On Measures to Enhance Service Learning*



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Out of the four (4) HoDs (social sciences), 1 (25%) recommended service and project-based learning, 2 (50%) recommended engaging students in the subject and 1 (25%) recommended problem-solving.

**Chart 2: Responses from Pupils On Measures to Enhance Service Learning**



Out of the 188 pupils selected, (35%) recommended understanding that the pupils must know and understand the goals for service learning. (40%) recommended that pupils need to have enough time to reflect and critically analyze their experiences with regards to service learning and (25%) recommended that pupils should be able to maintain personal boundaries and be clear about their availability and goals for their service hours with their teachers.

#### 4. CONCLUSION

The conclusion drawn from the results obtained on the variable for assessment approaches and practices that can enhance service learning in the teaching and learning of civic education in secondary schools in Chongwe District and this gives a good indicator of interactions between teachers and learners both in and outside classroom. Arising from the findings, it can be concluded that the level of service learning was minimal. Such methods were rarely practices or engaged as form of instructions in classroom lowering pragmatic nature of learning and knowing. There was lack of positive active public deliberations among the learners towards issues of public concern and participation in politics. Politics has been ill labelled by the older generation as a dirty game hence, alienating political participation from secondary school pupils and the youth in general which service-learning should help address if fully institutionalized. The four sampled schools in this study therefore failed short of their expectation to offer service-learning to their pupils regarding the specifications of the social learning theory as propounded by Dewey and later by Kolb.

#### 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 General Education should ensure that the people who work in schools; teachers, support staff, administrators help learners build lives of great purpose and potential by instilling essential knowledge and skills.
- The Ministry of Education need to integrate service-learning into the curriculum and to encourage students to see their own intellectual work as valuable.

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