

Community Schooling System in Zambia: Its Evolution and Stakeholder Perspectives

Silangwa Siakalima¹, Vincent Kanyamuna^{2,*}

¹Ministry of Education, Parklands Secondary School, Chilanga, Lusaka, Zambia

²University of Zambia, Department of Development Studies, Lusaka, Zambia

*Corresponding author: vkanyamuna@unza.zm

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Abstract Community Schools play an integral part in the provision of formal education in Zambia. In the rural parts of Zambia, these schools were mainly set where there was long distance to the nearest government school, while in urban areas; they were mostly in places with large population of school age children who were unable to find access to a government school for various reasons. This work explores issues related to Community Schools (CS) in Zambia, their origin, existence, operations and how they were perceived by people. A compilation, diagnostic assessment and analysis were employed to conduct this study from existing literature. The results reveal that the concept of community schools originated in the pre-colonial days when they (CS) were known as village schools. While the demand for formal education was low during the colonial days, it skyrocketed after Zambia gained her independence in 1964. The desires of Zambians to find well-paying jobs seem to have accelerated the demand for formal education to the levels that the Zambian government was unable to cope. This motivated Zambian communities to establish community schools. From the time of origin, these schools have undergone various transformations in terms of curriculum, registration processes, management, government aid and collaboration, among others. Further revelations indicate that Community Schools were beset with numerous hardships like lack of dilapidated infrastructure, shortage of qualified teachers, overcrowded classrooms, and shortage of many other school requirements. The Zambian government, churches, donors and other Non-Governmental Organizations (NGOs) should expand the existing schools and build new ones throughout the country. They (GRZ and other stakeholders) should also consider increasing funding and other support measures to community schools like capacity building teachers in these schools using Continuous Professional Development (CPD) programmes and short funded teaching courses.

Keywords: *community Schools, SPARK, ZBEC, curriculum, village schools, formal education, Zambia*

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1. Introduction

This paper examines the literature related to Community Schools, their origin, existence, operations and how people perceive them. Literature on schools has developed and multiplied over the years. Scholars have researched, read and written down their findings, conclusions and recommendations on the operations of community schools and the purpose of their existence. However, the impact of these schools on the members of the community does not seem to have been studied in detail. The services of community schools from the point of view of the service providers and recipients did not seem to be comprehensively understood.

Firstly, a community school was defined by the defunct Zambia Community School Secretariat [1,2] and

Ministry of Education [3] to be "... a community based, owned and managed, learning institution that meets the basic education needs for pupils, who for a number of reasons, cannot enter government schools." Similarly, [1,4] define community school as "... an educational institution that is community based, owned and managed by the community." These schools provide learning that may compensate for the time lost by learners who start school at relatively older age. The compensation of time is through the use of the Skills, Participation, and Access to Relevant Knowledge (SPARK) curriculum, which covers the seven (7) years of primary school education in four (4) years [1,5]. This is done in four levels as follows: Level one covers grades one and two; level two covers grades three and four; level three covers grades five and six; and level four covers grade seven (7) work of Zambia Basic Education Course (ZBEC) curriculum as summed up in Table 1 below.

Table 1. SPARK Levels and their equivalent ZBEC grades

Level (SPARK)	Grade (ZBEC)
I	1 and 2
II	3 and 4
III	5 and 6
IV	7

However, some community schools use both SPARK and ZBEC curricula. As indicated earlier, this work aimed at examining literature that looks at community schools in Zambia. Firstly, a brief history of education showing how communities received western education during the pre colonial and colonial era is discussed. This is done in order to trace the origin and transformation of community schools. Besides discussing education during the pre colonial and colonial, this study also discusses education during the BSAC, during the British colonial rule, at independence, in the present day Zambia, and the criteria used by parents to choose a school for their children.

2. Background Study

The pre colonial period was the turning point in the history of formal education for Africans because it marked the entry of the missionaries into Africa, Southern Africa and Zambia in particular. In a quest to enable Africans read and interpret the Bible, missionaries established schools in areas where they set their mission stations. It seems thus the education system which the missionaries offered during the pre colonial era was not for career prospects; instead, its objectives ended on ability to read and interpret the Bible [6-10]. However, the indigenous Africans were not motivated to demand for more of such literacy lessons because they were reluctant to abandon their own faith for that of the European [5,9,11].

As different groups of missionaries were establishing themselves in Zambia, they began to have diverse views of the type and level of education to be offered to Africans. [12] states that some missionary groups saw education as a "... civilizing force that would become a powerful weapon against pagan beliefs which they believed bedeviled traditional culture". Besides the diverse ideas to provide a variety of education to Africans such as agriculture, the missionaries' main objective remained that of teaching the Bible to Africans [13,14].

In the history of education, the first school in Zambia which opened in 1883 was in Limulunga, Western Province comprising three boys. [12,15], confirms that, "... at Limulunga, Lewanika's summer capital, the first school in Northern Rhodesia opened in March 1883, with the enrolment of three pupils, all boys ...". This was the first village school which can be equated to present day Community Schools. [1] concluded that "There were many Community Schools in the pre colonial era in Central Africa and they were called Village Schools." This clearly indicates that the concept of community schools is not new to Zambia [4,16].

3. Education during the British South African Reign

The British South African Company (BSAC) reigned over Northern Rhodesia (N.R.) for thirty four (34) years from 1890 to 1924. In the entire period of reign the BSAC only supported one school, the Barotse National School in the Barotse district (Present day Western Province of Zambia). The rest of the formal education provision was left in the hands of the missionaries without assistance from the BSAC government [17,18,19].

[3,17] described the activities of the BSAC as those intended to destroy schools in order to keep people in the darkness of paganism and ignorance. The company failed to offer any significant aid to native teachers or build houses for them, yet they (BSAC) retained the authority to judge whether or not the native teacher was qualified to teach [13,14,20]. The criterion of the company used to assess the qualification of native teachers does not seem to be known. It thus, seems to indicate that the company aimed at seeing total failure in terms of formal education provision for the indigenous citizens. Equally, the current Zambian situation seems to be in the line of the BSAC attitude when it comes to assessment of the teacher qualifications in community schools. It does not seem to be clear how much effort government is putting to improve and retain quality education in community schools.

Realising that the activities of the BSAC were interfering with their areas of operation, the missionary groups demanded for government assistance to missionary education work at a conference in 1921 [17,21]. To this effect, in about 1923, the secretary of state appointed an advisory committee which in turn invited the Phelps Stokes Commission to investigate the type of education being offered to the African colonies. In 1924, the Phelps Stokes Commission made the following recommendations:

1. The colonial government should increase funding in form of grant in aid for the missions in order to yield better health, improved productivity and more contented people;
2. There was need for increased expenditure for the employment of qualified native visiting teachers so as to improve service delivery in village schools;
3. Each mission society to establish a central teacher training institution since trained teachers were necessary for improving the standards and efficiency of village schools;
4. Practical (skills) education and character building in education was essential for the African child;
5. The colonial government should appoint a Director of Native Education to coordinate and unify the different educational affairs of missionary societies; and
6. There should be an inclusion of African opinion on the appointment of an advisory committee on native education; these were some of the recommendations made by the Phelps Stokes Commission [1,12].

4. Education during the British Colonial Rule

The British Colonial Government assumed administration of Northern Rhodesia from the BSAC in 1924. The colonial government seemed to be more concerned with the education of indigenous Africans than the previous BSAC government. The new government immediately established a Department of Native Education in 1925 to look into the affairs of education for the indigenous Africans. Following the establishment of this department and the recommendations of the Phelps Stokes Commission, the colonial government began to participate actively in the educational sector by funding the opening up of more schools in Northern Rhodesia (present day Zambia). As a result of these changes, it is indicated that the enrollment in the village schools increased in 1925 to about one hundred thousand (100, 000) learners in two thousand (2,000) schools countrywide [1,2,17].

Further, the significant growth in the education sector was recorded in the period of 1937 to 1951. Literature indicates that during this period a number of primary schools, secondary schools, vocational training colleges, and teachers' training colleges were established in different parts of the country [22,23]. It is important however to state here that most of these schools and colleges were developed, organized and run by different missionary groups [1,24].

The Village schools were beset with numerous hardships which include poor learning environment due to non-availability of infrastructure, lack of qualified teachers, poor conditions of service for the teachers, lack of teaching and learning materials, and shortage of many other school requirements. Mwanakatwe outlined the challenges encountered by these schools as follows:

The school environment was neither inspiring nor sufficiently organized to provide truly worthwhile and interesting occupations for the pupils. ... Before 1928 there were few, if any, properly qualified indigenous teachers because opportunities for obtaining a reasonably satisfactory academic education to a level of standard IV and V had been severely limited hitherto. Also teachers' pay was poor and conditions of service unsatisfactory. School equipment in the form of chalk, desks and other educational requirements was either in short supply or unavailable [23].

Parents therefore, were not motivated to send their children to school. It is interesting to note that the challenges encountered by the community schools (then village schools) almost a century ago, still exist today [20,25]. While the response from the parents in the 1920s was to withhold their children from attending school resulting into poor enrollment, today these schools are experiencing increased enrollment. This study therefore sought to find out what motivates today's parents to send their children to community schools.

It may be argued that the situation was different during the colonial government reign since parents had no alternative to village schools where they could enroll their children [26,27,28]. The parents of present day Zambia

have alternative schools to community schools, that is, the government primary schools which offer free quality basic education for the same grades parents look for in community schools [2,29,30]. The reasons for this do not seem to be fully established.

5. Education at independence

Zambia gained her independence on 24th October, 1964 from the British Colonial Reign. At the time of independence the new country had a high need of qualified human resources. Literature indicates that there were 110 200 citizens with six years schooling, 32 000 with full eight years primary course, 4 420 with junior secondary course, and 961 with Cambridge School Certificate (form V) [17,31,32]. This shows that majority of the Zambians had not pursued formal education due to a number of reasons. The reasons include being deeply rooted into traditional education which was merely for survival in one's own environment [17,27,29,31,33,34,35].

The other reason for few Africans pursuing formal education at independence was that the colonial administration made less effort to improve the education of Africans. [11,14] affirms that, "... the colonial government was reluctant to invest substantial funds in the development of human resource and ... regarded the education offered to the African to be a favour not a birth right," [1,23,36]. There was uneven distribution of educational resources countrywide. The whites never wanted the Africans to learn and engage in direct competition for white collar job [36,37].

The indigenous people, equally, did not foresee the need and opportunity for formal employment in the near future. It seems there were no role models of people who became successful by pursuing formal education, thus lacked motivation to pursue this type of education. This is in line with the findings of psychologists who place the role of models high in terms of ability to motivate people to embark on an activity. Among such psychologists are [7,38,39] who contributed significantly on the social learning Theory by arriving at a conclusion that learning takes place in a social context. This kind of learning occurs by watching the behavior of others; it is thus termed observational learning [40,41,42].

In addition to the importance of role models in education, a research carried out in Zambia with the aim of understanding the factors that made adolescents dropout of school in a rural site of Southern Zambia revealed, among other factors, that lack of role models to motivate the young people to pursue formal education was one of the causes of dropouts [43]. This seems to show the importance of role models in society, that in the absence of it, parents may not send their children to school because they would have no terms of references of the profit that come out of school.

Zambians who had formal education qualifications at the time of independence easily found employment. This increased the demand for formal education because there were direct and tangible rewards in form of employment. This was one of the turning points in the education sector; formal education became a priority to every Zambian [17,44].

In order to curb the problem of human resources at independence, the Zambian Government embarked on an immediate and extensive expansion programme of the existing educational system [45,46,47]. This was essential to attain growth, consolidate control and legitimise the new government own position in unpredictable circumstances where ethnicity and denominational barriers remained a potential menace. The new government thus embraced the process of Zambianisation of existing colonial structures to ensure that the Zambians took over the positions of leadership from the colonialists. In 1965, the government abolished school fees [2,17,41]. The abolishment of school fees in addition to the availability of formal employment for learned citizens became the source of motivation for many parents to enroll their children in schools.

As a result of various efforts made by the Zambian government, the expansion of existing schools and building of new ones sprung up throughout the country. This translated into increased school enrolment, for instance, in Form I, the enrolment increased from 4, 639 in 1964 to 19,254 in 1974. At primary level it increased from 378, 417 to 964,475 from 1964 to 1978. The secondary and tertiary education was also taken care of. This resulted into the opening of the University of Zambia in 1966 to ensure training of the much needed human resources [14,20,48].

6. Education in Present Day Zambia

The Zambian government continues to pursue the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) and the Education for All (EFA) goals. One of the targets set was to achieve universal Primary Education (UPE) by the year 2015. In an effort to achieve EFA goals by 2015 the Zambian government undertook the following measures:

- a. Introduced the Basic Education Sub Sector Investment Programme (BESSIP) from 1999 to 2002 in order to increase enrolment levels as well as improving the quality of education;
- b. Declared free education from grade 1 to 7 in 2002, so as to increase access and retention to quality primary education;
- c. Abolished compulsory wearing of uniforms in schools for grades 1 to 7; and
- d. Introduced the School Feeding Programme (SFP) in some schools [1].

These measures were aimed at reducing the barriers to access quality education especially for the orphans and vulnerable learners. The measures seem to have yielded positive results because the country recorded high enrollment rate in basic education. For instance, the net enrolment ratio rose from 85% in 2004 to 95% in 2005 [49,50,51]. In view of these efforts and positive results that the Zambian government through the ministry of education was scoring in government schools, it remains unclear why the number of community schools continues to increase. This is one case that prompted this study to find out what arouses the Zambian communities' interest in community schools leaving the government schools [2].

The Ministry of Education held a joint review meeting in February, 2007, under the theme "Three Rs"

which translated into Reflection, Realigning and Rejuvenating the provision of quality education in Zambia. It was revealed at this meeting that the ministry of education faced the challenge of attaining the EFA goals as well as those of the Millennium Development [2,33,52].

The Zambian government is expected to provide quality formal education to all the citizens. Unfortunately, due to lack of resources, or probably misplaced priorities, the government has been unable to provide this service. Hundreds of thousands of school-age-children are out of school due to a number of reasons. Many Zambians attribute their failure to pursue formal education to lack of resources and school places [46,48].

Following the reintroduction of free basic education by the Zambian government in the year 2002, it was expected that the lack of resources as reason for failure to enter school would be eliminated. The government directed that learners from grade one to seven would not pay school fees, and would equally not be forced to wear a uniform. The reason for this was to afford all school age children an opportunity to enter school and remain until they complete at least primary education [2,26,53].

6.1. Establishment of Community Schools in Zambia

The concept of the present day Community Schools in Zambia was started in 1992 by Dr Janice Stevens an American woman, in association with the Charity Sisters. She started a school in an open field in Misisi Township of Lusaka. The school was known as Misisi Open Community School. More such schools were opened in Lusaka within a short period of time. By 1995, these schools came under one registered organisation known as Zambia Open Community Schools (ZOCS) which became the first Non-governmental Organisation to run community schools in Zambia [1,14,32].

The community schools then spread throughout the country. According to [9] community schools increased from 123 in 1997 to more than 1,300 in 2003 countrywide. In 2006, statistics show that there were 2, 700 community schools with an enrolment of 470, 000 learners [54]. The numbers of community schools were increasing during the time of Free Basic Education (FBE) in government schools. It still seems unclear why these community schools continue to record increased enrollment.

[32] writes that "Community schools have developed out of a need for additional school places and relevant education for out of school children and youths". He further revealed the results of the 1990 census which showed that about 700,000 school age children were out of school. In relation to Kelly's views, some scholars [2,55] assert that community schools play a central role in the Zambian education system. These schools were founded by communities to meet the basic educational needs of the orphans and vulnerable children who were not able to meet the costs of education in government schools. Community schools were mainly administered by parents in the community in which they were located. The schools were said to be increasingly receiving support from government, churches, donors and other Non-Governmental Organizations (NGOs) [51,56]. The current

research therefore, sought to establish how much of this documented support influence parents' choice of community schools for the education of their children.

The majority of learners in community schools belong to the poorest and vulnerable social strata. The findings of researches [2,46] showed that community schools were attended by a relatively large number of orphans that almost one in every three children in community school had lost her/ his mother, father or both parents. The lack of parental support may negatively affect the academic performance of the learners. For instance a research conducted [1,46] to analyse the situation of community schools in central province of Zambia, revealed that due to lack of parental support many orphans fail to attend school on regular basis, while many of them were too hungry to concentrate in class when they attend lessons at school [45,57]. Furthermore, [58] undertook a quasi experimental study to investigate the loss of parents, academic performance, and psychosocial adjustment of grade five children in Zambia. From her findings, she concluded that children with both parents alive outperformed those in the parental loss category in mathematics [24,36,59].

[4,5], reports that three key factors were identified as reasons for the establishment of Community Schools. These were non-availability of government schools in a particular area; inability of parents and/or guardians to pay the Parents Teachers Association (P.T.A.) fees, uniforms and user charges; and the age restrictions in Government Schools. In view of these findings, it seems clear that community schools are a significant alternative in the provision formal education to school age children.

[11,19,42,43,52,54,56,60,61] identified some factors that determined the location of a community school. [54] explained that the location of most rural community schools was determined by the distance to the nearest government school while in urban areas, these schools were set up in places with large population of school age children who are unable to find access to a government school because of cost [1,54]. The reintroduction of free basic education policy from grade one to seven was expected to eliminate the issue of school costs as a reason for not accessing government school. The surprising thing is that the numbers of community schools have continued to grow with literature continuing to give school fees as a reason for establishment of these schools [16,28,30,32,33,36,44,62,63].

6.2. Registration of Community Schools

The Zambian government recognises the existence of community schools as an important supplement to the formal school system. Literature shows that the ministry of education set up regulations and quality control procedures to make sure that the community schools were formally registered and quality upheld in order to receive government support. [2,49] asserts that community schools could be formally registered and recognised if they enrolled children who:

1. have never been to school, yet older than basic school age entry;
2. have no alternative formal education in the community;

3. are orphans and vulnerable children; and
4. have no access to formal school system.

It seems unclear whether all community schools follow the conditions of registration before setting up a school. [9] listed specific criteria for registration of community schools, that is, through stages of accreditation: developmental, intermediate, and full. The criteria related to infrastructure, enrollment, teachers, curriculum, and materials were specified for each stage. The community schools sponsored by Non-Governmental Organisations could receive the following kinds of assistance towards meeting the laid down criterion; Training for teachers and PCSC members; Scholarships for teachers to attend teacher training colleges and obtain teaching certificates; Investments in school infrastructure, including the provision of school furniture; Provision of teaching and learning materials, including textbooks; and Development of sanitation and water facilities [56].

Following the dissolution of the Zambia Community Schools Secretariat in 2006, the registration of community schools is done direct with the Ministry of education through the District Education Board Secretary's office. However, it is recorded that most schools were started without the prior knowledge of the District Education Board Secretary [21,49,64].

7. Types of Community Schools

There are variations among community schools compared to government and private schools. The variations are mainly as a result of the source of support they receive towards meeting the administrative costs of a school. [54] describes three types of community schools as follows:

1. The schools that were set up and managed by the community and almost depend entirely on the support of the community. These are community schools that are severely under resourced.
2. The community schools that are founded and sponsored by the Church or Non Governmental Organizations (NGOs) with the intention of turning over the ownership and operations to the Parent Community School Committee (PCSC). In such schools it is common to find the Church or NGO representatives remain in charge of management of the school; and
3. The community schools sponsored by individuals. Such schools are run like private schools with little or no involvement of the parents or community in which the school is located [25,53,65].

8. Management of Community Schools

Community schools are normally managed by the Parents Community School Committee (PCSC). It is the PCSC that are tasked with the responsibility to register a community school with the Ministry of Education, to recruit teachers, and mobilise resources among other duties. A PCSC comprises the representatives of parents, teachers and prominent members of the community. Apart from the District Education Standards

Officer, a community school is accountable to the PCSC [2,18,25,51,58,66,67,68,69,70].

The then Zambia Community School Secretariat (ZCSS) was established in 1996 to monitor and coordinate the affairs of the community schools in the country. The body (ZCSS) signed the Memorandum of Agreement with the Ministry of Education (MoE) in 2001 [15,27,71]. The agreement recognized the ZCSS as the sole umbrella body for community schools in Zambia. The terms of memorandum of agreement between government and the Zambia community school secretariat granted the communities, NGOs and Churches, the freedom to open a community school and then formalize it for government support. The available literature [68] indicates that the ZCSS actively managed the affairs of the community schools in the country up to the year 2006 when it was dissolved due to gross financial mismanagement [2,6,8,12,20,37,71]. The DEBS offices in each district took the role of managing the affairs of the community schools after the dissolution of the national umbrella body for community schools, that is, the Zambia Community School Secretariat.

[6,40,45,66] states that registered community schools receive support from the Ministry of Education in form of grants, text books, and professional guidance and in some instances GRZ teachers are seconded to the community schools. In 2005, the Ministry of Education directed the districts to allocate thirty percent (30%) of the sector pool funds to community schools. The community schools which had a working PCSC and has been in existence for at least two years, were eligible for grants to pay teachers' allowances. This study intended to establish the degree to which government support of community schools influenced parents to take their children to these schools.

9. Curriculum

The community schools mainly use the multi-grade system due to their limited size. Initially these schools used the Skills, Participation, and Access to Relevant Knowledge (SPARK) Curriculum as opposed to Zambia Basic Education Course (ZBEC) Curriculum used by government schools. The SPARK curriculum completes seven year primary education in four years (see Table 1 above). As more learners of community schools today enroll at the age of seven, the SPARK curriculum has become less relevant, since it was aimed at reducing the years of primary education for older children who entered school between nine and sixteen years old [24,65]. The majority of community schools now follow the ZBEC curriculum [15,38,47,55,73].

10. Criteria Parents Use to Choose a School

Parents have various preferences of the type of school they wish their children to attend. [52] indicates the preferences of parents for schools. [53] lists some of the features of a school parents like best:

1. teachers who take a personal interest in the child;
2. discipline and teacher respect;

3. small classes;
4. close proximity to home; and
5. effective and efficient communication between school and home; and many more.

After listing the type of a school parents like the most, [52,53] turned to the features of a school which parents dislike. Among the dislikes of parents:

1. a school which lacks discipline;
2. a school with teachers who have no interest in the welfare of a child;
3. poor physical appearance of the schools;
4. overcrowded classrooms;
5. schools located far from home; among other dislikes of parents.

Some, if not all, of [53] findings are what literature describes most of the Zambian schools, especially the Community Schools. [37] indicates among the challenges encountered by community schools as poor infrastructure, unqualified teaching staff, overcrowded classrooms and poor sanitation. This research was designed to find out the preferences of Zambian parents when choosing a school for their children.

The findings reported by [37,52,53,61] were in line with one of the stages in Maslow's hierarchy of needs, that is, the safety needs. For instance, the dislike of schools which are overcrowded symbolises the sense of safety parents have for their children. It is clear from Maslow's assertion that without satisfying the safety needs, it is difficult for the child to find motivation to learn effectively [3,13,21,22,24,33,42,50,71]. This study focused on finding out to what extent parents consider safety needs when choosing a school for their children.

11. Conclusion

This paper has shown that the concept of community schools has its origin in the pre colonial days when these schools were known as village schools [1,24]. While the demand for formal education was low during the colonial days, it rapidly rose after Zambia gained her independence in 1964. The desires for Zambians to find a well paying job seem to have accelerated the demand for formal education to the levels that the Zambian government was unable to cope with. Large numbers of dropouts, inability to meet school costs and other hindrances to enter government schools motivated Zambian communities to establish community schools. Literature has shown how government tried to meet the MDGs by abolishing school fees among other measures. However, the parents continued to take their children to community schools and the numbers of community schools continue to increase.

12. Recommendations

It is important for government to step effort to ensure community schools receive full support in terms of infrastructure development, capacity building the human resources, strengthening partnership with local communities, churches and other Non Governmental Organizations in the establishment of community schools and increase support for quality education.

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