

**EVALUATING THE PARTICIPATION OF LEARNERS' COUNCILS IN
MANAGEMENT OF THREE SECONDARY SCHOOLS, KAPIRI-MPOSHI
DISTRICT IN CENTRAL PROVINCE, ZAMBIA**

BY

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DEGREE OF MASTER OF ARTS IN EDUCATIONAL ADMINISTRATION
AND LEADERSHIP**

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I, MWEWA DAVIES, declare that the content of my thesis entitled evaluating the participation of learners' councils I management of three secondary schools in Kapiri Mposhi District, is my work and it has never been previously submitted for a degree at Kwame Nkrumah university or any other university or institution. All the sources I have used or quoted have been indicated and acknowledged by means of complete references

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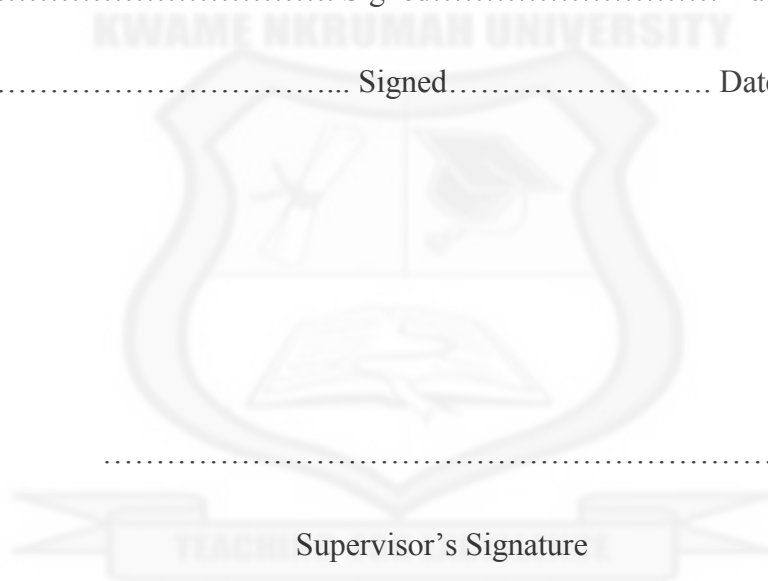
This thesis by DAVIES MWEWA is approved fulfilment of the requirements for the award of Master’s Degree in Educational Administration and Leadership at Kwame Nkrumah University.

EXAMINERS’ SIGNATURES’

Examiner 1 Signed..... Date.....

Examiner 2 Signed..... Date.....

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Supervisor’s Signature

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Date

DEDICATION

I dedicate this work to my dear wife Eunice and my children Mwansa, Chansa, Mwewa, Moyo, Walusungu, Mapalo, Ndanji and Chisha, for their encouragement, love and support for me when I was writing this paper.



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ABSTRACT

In this era of globalisation and human rights revolution, school councils play a vital role towards the management of secondary schools. To find out the establishment and assessing the operations of the school councils may help to revamp and increase the participation of school councils in Zambian secondary schools to curb pupils' unrest. The school council is one of the ways of according pupils a chance to air their grievances and be part of the school decision-making processes. This research aimed at finding out the establishment of school councils, assessing their operationalisation and to suggest the strategies that can be employed to improve their participation in the school management. The target population comprised of three selected secondary schools of Kapiri-Mposhi District of Central Province in Zambia. The Head teachers and the Deputy Head teachers, three (3) Heads of Departments and twelve (12) pupils of the school councils and two parents were sampled from each of the three selected secondary school making the total of fifty-seven (57) participants altogether. Data was collected from three different schools depending on the locality. The semi structured interview questions were used to teachers and parents while the group focus semi structured questions were used to collect data from the pupils who are members of the school council. Data was collected and analysed qualitatively using recursive abstraction analysis of data. The study revealed that the learners' school councils were established in the selected schools in Kapiri Mposhi district but were never fully utilised. The study further revealed that the learners' councils did take part in the management of the school, except that most pupils lacked skills and expertise to contribute effectively to the decision-making processes at the higher level during the council meetings. In view of the significant relationship established between school governance and school council participation in the management of schools, the extent of pupils' participation could be increased by providing capacity building to the school councillors especially to the pupils who are the major stakeholders. School management is encouraged to ensure that pupils' contributions at meetings are made to count in decision-making process even in issues of finance and school fees disbursement.

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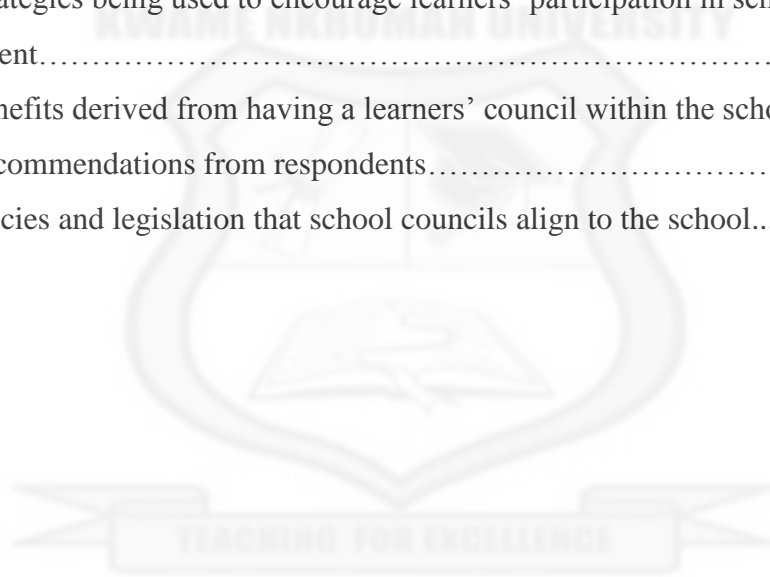
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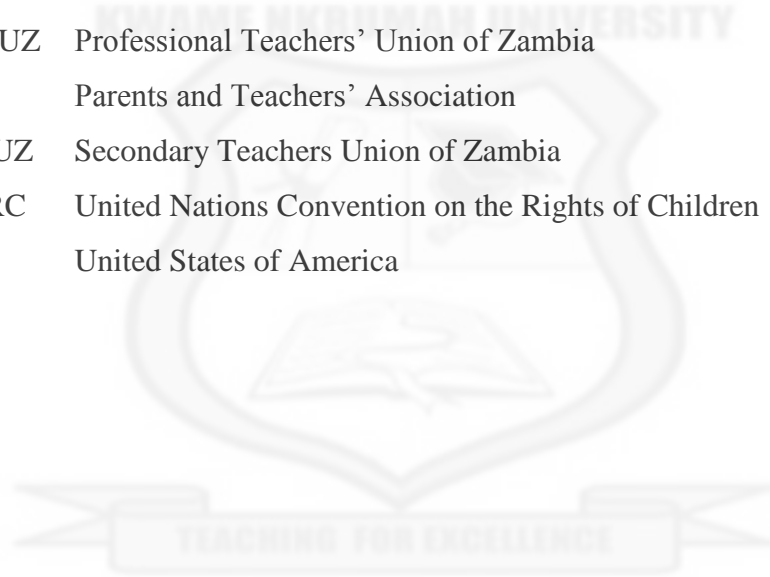
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ACRONYMS

BETUZ	Basic Teacher Union of Zambia
DEBS	District Education Board Secretary
EEDC	Europe Project on Education Democratic Citizenship
GRZ	Government of the Republic of Zambia
HOD	Head of Department
MGE	Ministry of General Education
P.U.	Production Unit
PEO	Provincial Education Officer
PEOC №	Provincial Education Office Circular Number
PROTUZ	Professional Teachers' Union of Zambia
PTA	Parents and Teachers' Association
SESTUZ	Secondary Teachers Union of Zambia
UNCRC	United Nations Convention on the Rights of Children
USA	United States of America



CHAPTER ONE

INTRODUCTION OF THE STUDY

1.0 Introduction

This chapter focuses on the orientation of the study under subheadings: Background of the study, statement of the problem, objectives (general and specific), research questions, and significance of the study, scope and delimitation of the study, limitations of the study and operational definitions of terms.

1.1 Background of the Study

The rapid expansion of pupils' enrolment in most Zambian Secondary schools since the attainment of her political independence coupled with the inadequate resources to cope with ever-increasing demand for educational provision has made school management much more complex and difficult enterprise now than a few decades ago. According to Fletcher (2004:18), to ensure effective and successful management, the school authority must only be innovative, resourceful and dynamic, but also be able to interact well with people both within and outside the school. According to this scholar, the schools should bring on board the staff, the pupils' boards and many other stakeholders, in order to bring about transparency and accountability.

Meaningful pupils' leadership participation in the governance of the schools is the process of engaging pupils as partners in every facet of school change for strengthening their commitment to education community and democracy. It evolves from the growing awareness among pupils and educators that young people can and should play a crucial role in the success of school improvement. A number of recent accounts have featured educators refuting the misconception that engaging students as partners in school change is about making students happy, pacifying unruly behaviour in children or letting kids run the school. However, Miller (2006:34) states that when educators work with students in schools as opposed to working for them, school improvement is positive and meaningful for everyone involved.

This is cardinal because a school is called a school with pupils as major stakeholders because whatever activity or program that comes to the institution, the core business is the learner.

Aggarwal (2014:13) also adds that while students' representatives may not participate in matters relating to the conduct of exams, evaluation of students' participation appointment of teachers and other confidential matters, their participation should be ensured in all other academic and administrative decisions taken by these bodies. Although this view appears to support student participation in decision-making, it however, confines students' involvement in decision making to specific areas of school life. It is against this background that this study sought to investigate the school council's participation in the management of selected secondary schools in Kapiri-Mposhi district.

1.2 Statement of the Problem

Research has shown that non-involvement of pupils in school decision making processes in some of the secondary schools have resulted into a lot of pupils' misconduct. One concrete example is what happened at one of the secondary schools in Northern Province in 2008. According to the Post Newspapers, issue № 1671413 (2008:1 and 4) "the pupils wanted a Rosa Minibus however; the School Board and the Parents Teachers Association opted to buy a light truck canter as the utility vehicle. According to the newspaper, the pupils ran amok and set the canter truck ablaze. This was not the only school where pupils had demonstrated and rioted as research has shown that many schools have experienced pupils' unrest due to their non-involvement in the school decision-making processes.

In order to arrest the situation, the Government of the Republic of Zambia has amended the constitution through the formulation of the Education Act of 2011. According to the Education Act of (2011:23) "the minister may by statutory instrument, establish a learners' representative council for an educational institution". The Act further provides that "the statutory instrument referred to in subsection (1) may provide for the election, tenure, functions, privileges and conduct of the learners" representative school council.

The Ministry of Education (2016:107) therefore interprets the composition of the school councils to include teachers, class monitors, some prefects, clubs and community leaders in order to implement the school council mandate. To reinforce this policy directive in 2017, Central province saw a circular from the Provincial Education Officer dated 22nd November 2017 addressed to all District Education Board Secretaries and all the head teachers to revamp the

school councils in secondary schools and make them functional. The circular further directed the formation of learners' school councils where they did not exist.

It has been six (6) years since the Ministry of General Education circulated the information. However, there seems to be cases of learners being involved in riotous behaviour. Could this mean that the schools have not accepted the formation and incorporation of learners' councils in management of schools? Could be that if the councils are formed but are never effective? These and many other questions that pertain to the subject matter are to be studied. This study aims at investigating the prevalence of learners' council in schools and the incorporation of these councils to school management.

1.3 Rationale/Purpose of the Study

The purpose of the study was to assess the involvement of school councils in the school management and to establish mechanisms of making their operations more effective.

1.4 Objectives of the Study

This study intended:

- i) To find out if school councils had been established in selected secondary schools in Kapiri Mposhi District.
- ii) To assess the extent of participation of school councils in school management in selected secondary schools in Kapiri Mposhi District.
- iii) To establish strategies to encourage participation of school councils in the school management in selected secondary schools in Kapiri Mposhi District.

1.5 Research Questions

- i) Do school councils exist in the selected secondary schools of Kapiri-Mposhi District?
- ii) To what extent do school councils participate in the management of the selected secondary schools of Kapiri-Mposhi District?
- iii) What strategies can be put in place to encourage the participation of the school councils in the management of the selected secondary schools in Kapiri Mposhi District?

1.6 Significance of the Study

This study was important because it provides data on participation of the school councils in the governance of the secondary schools. Furthermore, it might inspire other scholars to further carryout further research on school councils and other government policies.

1.7 Delimitations of the Study

This study was confined to the school Management members of the school councils and few selected pupils from secondary school councils and some parents from the selected secondary schools in Kapiri-Mposhi District of Central Zambia.

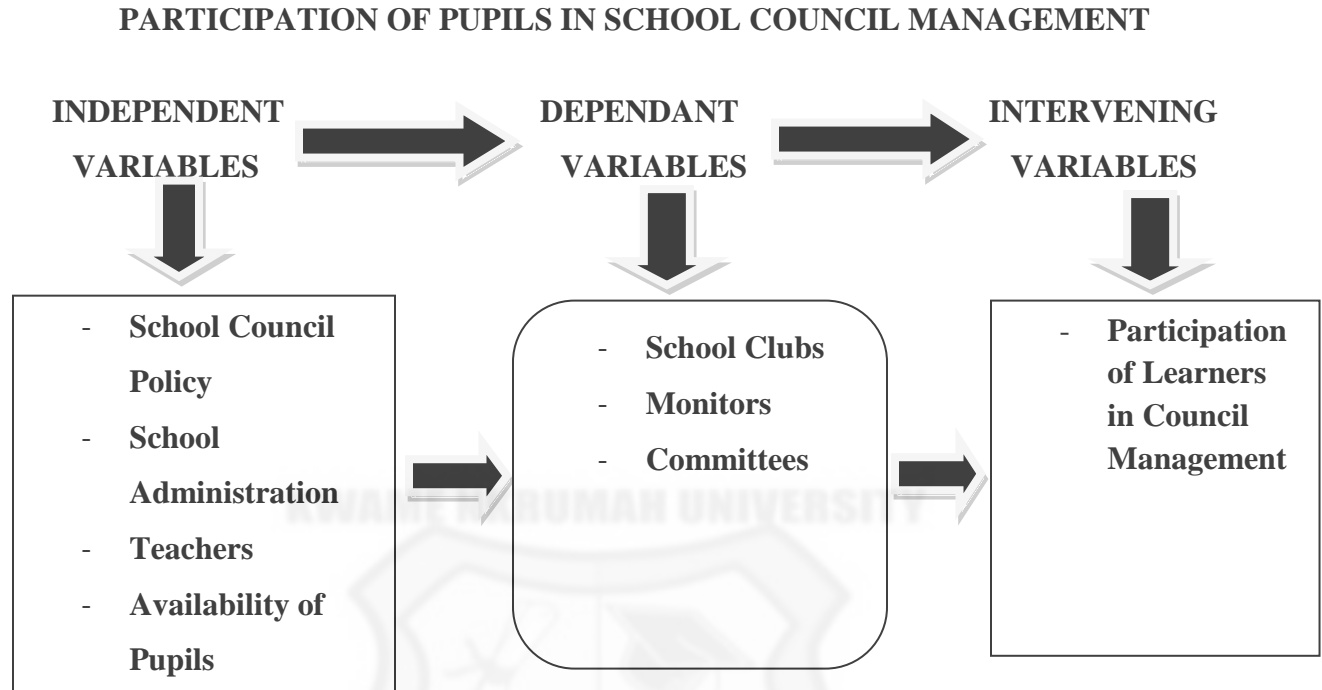
1.8 Limitations of the Study

This study was limited because it was restricted to few secondary schools, which were near the town of Kapiri-Mposhi because of the logistical problems. In addition, some Head teachers were not willing to give information for fear of exposing their weaknesses or lapses in the management of their schools. Besides, some respondents were not willing to give adequate information due to lack of understanding of the topical issue. Apart from that, the results might not represent the general view of the operations of the school councils in the secondary schools in Kapiri-Mposhi District of Central Zambia.

1.9 Conceptual Framework

The main concept of the study was based on the good school management practices anchored on transformation leadership which enhances motivation, integration, moral and performance of followers through a variety of mechanisms (Obadara, 2013). Given such existing structures in an institution such as a school, the researcher intends to investigate the role of the students' councils in school management. This is necessary because the councils are presumed to be part of the school management system.

Figure 1.1 Conceptual Framework



Source: Researcher (2020)

1.10 Operational definition of key terms.

School council: Composition of teachers, class monitors, prefects, school club leaders and community members. A school council is group of students who are elected to represent the views of all pupils and to improve their school. "School council" means all kinds of school-based groups run by students, including student forums and youth parliaments.

School management: The Headteacher, Deputy Headteacher, Head of Departments, Head of Sections and student council.

School administration: The Head teacher and the Deputy Head teacher

Participation: taking part, incorporated, or being involved in the decision-making.

1.11 Conclusion

This chapter is the introductory chapter for the study aimed at investigating the participation of school councils in selected secondary schools in Kapiri Mposhi district. The chapter has shown the statement of the problem and study objectives concerning the study. The study background and conceptual framework have also been presented.



CHAPTER TWO

REVIEW OF THE RELATED LITERATURE

2.0 Introduction

Literature review illustrates the books studied, scholarly articles, and any other sources relevant to a particular issue, area of research, or theory and by so doing, provides a description, summary, and critical evaluation of these works in relation to the research problem being investigated (Greene, 2007).

This study chapter highlights the literature review on the topic under study in order to establish what is already known about the subject of student councils. It covers subtitles such as; previous studies done; students' council establishment; global trends in stakeholder engagement in education and; relatedness and knowledge gap. The literature reviewed is based on the study objectives.

2.1 Stakeholder Participation

Stakeholder participation in organizational management is always considered from two main perspectives. First, from a normative perspective, stakeholder participation is regarded as an ethical issue (Namita, 2014), as it takes into consideration the legitimate interests of the identified stakeholders, necessitating a stakeholder-oriented operational framework policy in the organization. The normative perspective provides an ethical and moral framework that reflects not only economic imperatives but also the human-centered values of the organization in its goals (PMBOK, 2014).

Second, and in contrast, is the instrumental perspective, which investigates how stakeholder participation can be used to achieve the performance objectives of an organization (Namita Gupta. 2014). The instrumental perspective seeks to find out how stakeholders can be used as a tool in strategic decision making to achieve predetermined objectives (Charvat, 2003). For instance, Moira (2015) states that a strategic management model requires an organization to address the concerns of their stakeholders, as doing so will boost the organization's financial and management performance. This perspective involves the personalization of the organization's

relationships with its stakeholders, the particularization of each stakeholder's interests, and the raising of managerial awareness of organizational decisions, processes, and policies to achieve the organization's objectives (Lock, 2000). In organisational management, stakeholders should be identified and brought in as partners to explore more widely the anticipated development challenge as perceived by different stakeholders (Charvat, 2003, emphasis added). This will provide a platform to articulate the relationship model required in the decision-making mechanism to achieve the stated goals (Meredith, *et al* 2014). Similarly, the identification of the stakeholders is done early in a project to understand key stakeholders' "positions and perceptions about the proposed change" (Kachali. 2015). Above all, the involvement of stakeholders makes it possible to seek their views and identify how individual stakeholders can contribute to meeting the identified challenges.

The researcher agrees with Namita (2014) where instrumental perspective of stakeholders where and understanding can be investigated to appreciate stakeholders' participation how they can be used to achieve the performance objectives of an organization. In schools, the students' participation is not being viewed as a must but as a way in understanding how students can influence the total performance in all angles of development.

2.2 Students Councils Establishment

School councils are collective associations of parents, teachers and secondary pupils who work together to effectively support and enhance pupils' learning. They provide a means for members of the school community to provide advice and consult with the head teacher and to advise the Board or the Charter Board (Whitty & Wisby, 2007).

The existence of the school council in Zambia can be traced back to 1970 when the government of the Republic of Zambia amended the constitution by coming up with Education Act that gave a policy direction of coming up with the school councils. As a result, several amendments through parliamentary subsidiary legislations have followed the latest being the Education Act of 2011 that re-enforced the establishment of school council in both primary and secondary schools to bring about collaboration with pupils in the running of public schools.

Learning institutions in Zambia have continued to grapple with disciplinary problems such as pupils' unrests, truancy and alcohol abuse in investigating the causes, effects and Implications of pupils' riots in secondary schools. Kumwenda (2010:18) asserts that this violent conduct is not only inimical to society but can also toss the educational machinery out of gear. A major factor that accounts for pupils' riots conduct is poor management practices, which often exclude pupils from participating in school governance. Consequently, learners show disapproved of how the school is run through violent class boycotts and strikes. The detrimental effects of such conducts transcend individual schools by cutting across the entire education system and wider society. Because of these noble causes, the Government of the Republic of Zambia through the Ministry of Education came up with school councils.

The Ministry of Education defines a student/learner council as an elected body of students, learners, teachers and parents whose day today mandate is to represent the interests of pupils according to the dictates of the school council constitution (MOE 2014 Pg 12). They serve as learners' parliament where each leader represents the constitution such as class or hostel representatives in the case of boarding schools. These school councils bring out different problems affecting the general welfare of the school particularly the pupils. The practice of establishing school councils is to shift towards the learner centred leadership approach embedded within the democratic governance of schools. As a management model, the effectual democratic involvement of pupils in governance bodies can be beneficial to individual learners and the entire community.

In the recent past, the governance of the secondary schools in Zambia was just in the hands of the school administration, boards and the parents' teachers' association committees (PTA). Despite having pupil's representatives in these institutional statutory bodies, they had a little say because they were regarded as unknowledgeable, childish and immature. For this reason, pupils were considered as figureheads or simply as placeholders with little realisation that they were the major stakeholders for their education. This resulted into a lot of pupils' unrest in schools. Due to the revolution of human rights, democratic governance and globalization accompanied by freedom of speech, there has been a paradigm shift in the way secondary schools and higher institutions of learning are being run. They have adopted an open democratic governance system

of involving all the major stakeholders especially the learners as per ministry of education policy as below:

In view of the above, the Ministry of General Education (2017:107) has advocated for the formation of the school council that provides pupils with an opportunity to engage in constructive and structured partnership with teachers, parents and school managers in the operations of their schools. This is enshrined in the Education Act of 2011, which states that school councils can create a sense of ownership of the school and its activities among the learners or pupils' population. The Education Act of 2011 in the Ministry of General Education (2017:108) further asserts that the establishment of the school council gives pupils an opportunity to acquire the sort of communication, planning and organisational skills which will be of benefit to them in their future lives. It enables pupils to take responsibility for project and to demonstrate that they can manage and conclude such projects.

Participation is the state of causing an effect or becoming actively involved, or speeding up the action or decision-making. Participation generally is the bringing about of an effect, physical or moral, by gradual process; controlling power quietly exerted, agency force or tendency of any kind. According to Ibijola (2010:14) the history of the students' participation in the management of schools is dated back to the 19th Century when Bell introduced the method of drilling older children who later taught the young ones. By not doing so, the teacher's efforts become multiplied. The scholar further asserts that the rationale for student participation is desirable, and identified them to include enhancement of student's commitment and performance and that most of the problems leading to student unrest could be resolved if students are allowed their rightful place in the institutional governance.

Roger Hart's 'ladder of participation' (Hart 1992), which is shown in Table 2.1 below illustrates how pupils' voices become clear in a school setup.

Figure 2.1 Learners' Participation: from tokenism to citizenship

Degree of Participation	Child-initiated, shared decisions with adults	Children have the ideas, set up the project, and invite adults to join with them in making decisions.
	Child-initiated and directed	Children have the initial idea and decide how the project is to be carried out. Adults are available but do not take charge.
	Adult-initiated, shared decisions with children	Adults have the initial idea but children are involved in every step of the planning and implementation. Not only are their views considered, but they are also involved in taking the decisions.
	Consulted and informed	The project is designed and run by adults but children are consulted. They have a full understanding of the process and their opinions are taken seriously.
	Assigned but informed	Adults decide on the project and children volunteer for it. The children understand the project, and know who decided they should be involved and why. Adults respect their views.
Non participation	Tokenism	Children are asked to say what they think about an issue but have little or no choice about the way they express those views or the scope of the ideas they can express.
	Decoration	Children take part in an event, e.g. by singing, dancing or wearing T-shirts with logos on, but they do not really understand the issues.
	Manipulation	Children do or say what adults suggest they do, but have no real understanding of the issues, or children are asked what they think, adults use some of their ideas but do not tell them what influence they have had on the final decision.

Source: Hart (1992)

The steps on this ladder describe the degree to which children are in control of the process. At one end, Hart places 'manipulation', 'decoration' and 'tokenism'. This is where children are used to carry adults' messages or where they have the appearance of a voice but have been selected to promote a particular view. Here, young people are effectively being used as a source of information, consulted for the purposes of quality control and even to build greater compliance and control among them. At the other end of the continuum, there are more consultative and child-initiated activities, where young people are involved in order to contribute. This goes up to

the eighth level where children initiate the process and invite adults to join them in decision-making.

The importance of coordination in an organisation, more especially in secondary schools cannot be overemphasized. It is in this light that pupils' representatives should be seen as leaders in their capacity knowing fully that they represent the significant percentage of the school community, while making the case of the rationale, the aspect that pupils exercise formal participation representation through prefectorial boards and committees. Informal participation is individual and concerns advanced disruptions in learning and affect everyone, even those not in support of the ideas. As a governing body, according Ezekwem (2009:84), the student government provides the student body activities and a forum to discuss issues and plays a leading role with clubs and organisations within and outside the school system. Its major functions also include representing the entire students' body and ensuring that their voices are heard and reflected in all levels of the institution's decision-making process. It seems the pupils' leadership makes the process of democratic representation and participation in the faculty and the institutional management decision-making burden easier. By implication, the pupils' leadership and other associations on school campus contribute positively to the effective governance of the secondary school system. Ezekwem (2009:86), while undertaking a case study in institutional governance failed to measure the actual involvement and or institutional governance.

The representation of students in university and school committees is one of the main ways in which universities and colleges engage with students, listen to them and involve them in their internal decision making processes. Recent surveys indicate that the representation of students in decision making at institutional level is close to universities, though there is considerable variability between and within institutions as far as the representation at lower organisational levels and across different issue based governance domains.

According to Luescher (2013: 19), the extent of student representation on university and the level of governance did matter. Whether it be in course programs, departments, schools or faculties, university wide and academic policy, and the nature of issues under consideration, for example, student assessment, timetable setting, academic staffing, teacher awards, quality assurance and most importantly the perceived expertise and seniority the students affected by a decision (whether they are undergraduate students or post graduate students), it was important.

Luescher (2013) further adds that provisions for student representation may involve consumeristic commitments to giving students a formal mechanism to voice their preferences amongst others, through surveys, thus providing input and feedback into the academic process. Academic staff commitments to giving democratic and participatory pedagogies involving notions of membership/ partnership and co-production in a learning community, may influence the extent to which students are involved in co-determining aspects of teaching and learning.

The Education Act 2011(Cap 23) directs the minister of Education by statutory instrument establish the learners' representative council for an educational institution. In order to enforce this statutory instrument, the Provincial Educational Officer in (2017 circular № PEOC/101/71/6/7) directs all the District Education Board Secretaries and all Head teachers to form school councils. Contrasting the previous researches that were limited to the students in the universities and colleges leaving out the foundation who are the pupils in secondary schools because leadership training should begin at the basic level. This current study sought to assess the participation of school councils in the management of some selected secondary schools in Kapiri-Mposhi district of central Zambia. Besides, despite the education Act of 2011 that gives a policy directive to the Ministry of Education to come up with school councils in secondary schools, no research has been carried out to find out their establishment and operational. In order to enforce this policy direction, central province issued a circular directing secondary schools to establish school councils again no research has been carried out to find out if central province has implemented the directive from the Provincial Education Chief hence this study.

2.3 Learners' Areas of Participation

Research shows that students' participation is oriented to a variety of *areas* of the school life: for instance, curricular choices, school governance, classroom dynamics and rules (Apple & Beane, 2007; Mitra, 2009; O'Brien, 2006; Raby, 2012), the improvement of school's facilities (Nuñez, 2011), school safety, no violence and anti-bullying programs (Lansdown, 2005a), conflict resolution (Bickmore, 2008), community problems (Annette, 2009; O'Brien, 2006) and school reform (Mitra, 2008). I identify five core domains of student participation in school, in which such a variety can be classified. These are: *binding decision-making, conflict resolution, knowledge construction, resolution of community problems and identity construction.*

Binding decision-making. A key aspect of adolescents' participation in school is the possibility of influencing various processes of decision-making, whose resolutions have a binding character for different school actors. Major possible areas of binding decision-making are: *school governance, curricular and pedagogical decisions, and the definition of community problems.*

Among other things, participation in *school governance* includes making decisions about the academic project of the school, its goals and procedures; effective use of resources and school budget; head teachers' and teachers' appointments; integral evaluation of school performance (Balarin, Brammer, James, & McCormack, 2008) and the establishment of policies and rules that organise the functioning of the school according to a normative construct (Potgieter, Visser, Van der Bank, Mothata, & Squelch, 1997). In regard to *curricular and pedagogical decisions*, students' involvement has to do with having voice in the following debates: What do we learn, and why (Knowledge selection and justification)? How do we learn (Pedagogical and didactical strategies and procedures)? How is learning organised during school time (Curriculum organisation and timetable)? (Apple & Beane, 2007a). Lastly, as O'Brien (2006) points out, when students participate in the analysis and resolution of problems in the school and surrounding communities, these are usually defined from others' perspective (authorities and adults from school or community). Due to the fact that the definition of problems in these communities is not neutral, student participation in binding decision-making also involves taking part in defining what is problematic in such contexts.

2.3.1 Conflict resolution

Teachers, school counsellors or head teachers commonly solve conflicts among students and between other school actors. They play the role of judges, juries or mediators. It means that students are usually excluded from the resolution of their own conflicts and those between adults in the school (e.g. between parents and school authorities).

The idea of conflict resolution is generally seen as a non-violent way for solving conflicts. Based on previous analysis of experiences of conflict resolution (Bickmore, 2004, 2008; Fierro, 2011; Fierro et al., 2010), student participation in this domain can be classified according to three types established by Bickmore (2008): (1) *Peacekeeping*: students take decisions and measures for 'controlling' violence in school, rather than solving the problems causing that violence.

(2) *Peacemaking*: students solve their own conflicts through negotiation and mutually acceptable forms of resolution. (3) *Peace building*: adolescents participate in the construction of long-term policies and actions to overcome violence in school, and the causes of conflict.

2.3.2 Knowledge construction

Most of the time in the school day is dedicated to organise activities aimed at constructing meaningful learning. An important consideration in achieving this goal is students' motivation, which is closely linked to being convinced about knowledge's validity, as well as its relevance in regard to students' present and/or future lives (Ausubel, Novak, & Hanesian, 1968; Illeris, 2003, 2008). Student participation in establishing what is valid and relevant knowledge, and why it is so, demands at least three conditions: (a) to overcome the dichotomy *educator–educand* (Freire, 1970/2002), (b) a school and classroom climate open to controversy and debate (Hess & Avery, 2008; Hess, 2009) and (c) a differentiated pedagogy (Perrenoud, 2008; Sousa & Tomlinson, 2011; Tomlinson, 1999; Tomlinson et al., 2003). These three aspects are interrelated. The first involves the active deconstruction of conservative teacher and student identities, where the former 'possess' the valid knowledge, and the latter (the dispossessed) 'receives' it without questioning. Such redefinition of roles occurs through a deliberative practice which allows active student participation in knowledge construction. Both, deliberation and the deconstruction of the dichotomy *educator-educand*, presuppose a welcoming climate open to controversy and debate (even in the less 'controversial' areas of knowledge). Yet, controversy, debate and deliberation tend to favour outgoing students, or those with a better development of certain communication skills. A differentiated pedagogy, then, appears as the approach that opens opportunities for every student to interact and debate with the teacher, other school authorities and his/her peers, according to his/her readiness to learn, interests, style of learning, his/her experiences and life circumstances (Tomlinson, 2000).

2.3.3 Resolution of community problems

Student participation in school is not only a discursive or linguistic practice (Jager & Maier, 2009; Van Leeuwen, 2008). It is more than a deliberative exercise of decision-making, conflict resolution or knowledge construction; it also involves taking action. A participatory school is a place where young people do things and get involved in the resolution of problems in

the school community and other communities to which they belong (Apple & Beane, 2007a). Once students have participated in the definition of these problems, they can organise and decide a course of action. Adolescents can participate in a wide scope of actions, from improving school grounds (Rickinson & Sanders, 2005) to health campaigns in their neighbourhoods (Apple & Beane, 2007a).

2.3.4 Identity construction

This domain of participation seems particularly relevant for adolescents. It is about students' identity disclosure and construction within the school. Even contesting perspectives on adolescence recognise this stage as highly vibrant in terms of identity definition and disclosure (Crocetti, Jahromi, & Meeus, 2012; Lesko, 2013). Adolescence appears as a period of discovering the power of self-definition. However, adults usually restrict the scope of identity exploration and expression in adolescents. School is not an exception. Teachers, parents and head teachers frequently constrain students' identity by classifying them according to their own categories (e.g. immature, eccentric, superfluous or dangerous), sanctioning adolescents' identity expressions (e.g. body appearance) or imposing *right* identity models (Raby, 2012). Therefore, this domain has to do with students showing who they are, what they like or dislike, what they think and feel, what they want to be and what they are searching for. It is about displaying their identifications and discovering their own subjectivity. This can be done through a myriad of ways, from body appearance, artistic expressions in the school and drama performances (O'Brien, 2006), to formal debates about their identity with adults in the school.

I have briefly explained five core domains of student participation in the school. These are not restricted to a particular space. For instance, while participation in knowledge construction is more likely to occur in classroom, it also takes place in extra-curricular activities outside the school. The five domains of participation, then, are not mutually exclusive. Their separation facilitates a better analytical description, but I acknowledge that in the school's dynamics they are likely to overlap in the same practice. For instance, student participation in a school-based youth court can be oriented to the domain of conflict resolution between schools actors, since most of the cases in these courts relate to disciplinary offenses (Vickers, 2004). However, as adolescents participate playing the role of judges, lawyers or juries, trying to solve a particular

conflict; they also make decisions that might have a binding character. Therefore, the domains of conflict resolution and binding decision-making overlap in the same activity.

2.4 Agencies for student participation in school

Student participation in school can be channelled through a variety of *agencies*: school councils (Whitty & Wisby, 2007), student councils, student assemblies, student clubs, youth courts (O'Brien, 2006), community organisations (Annette, 2006), non-stable and spontaneous student organisations (Mejias, 2012) and individual participation. In my approach, agencies for student participation can be differentiated at least through two dimensions: a) organised/non-organised body and (b) Composition. The first is related to whether student participation occurs through an organised agency and its degree of formality. Adolescents can influence decision-making in the school through the school council, or participate in the resolution of community problems through a student club, but they can also get involved in knowledge construction in classroom by enacting their individual or collective agency with no need of an organised body. The degree of formality refers to whether the agency has a legal or predefined regulation, an institutionalised structure and functioning, and pre-established roles for its members. In this regard, the school council and the student club represent different degrees of formality. School councils usually have a legal or predefined regulation regarding its composition, functioning and participants' roles. Their structure and division of labour are independent of current members, who disregarding their individual characteristics have a pre-established role and position. In contrast, a student club is more likely to have a horizontal and flexible organisation, without a legal or predefined regulation: its composition, functioning and the roles of its members can be constantly redefined depending on the characteristics of current participants.

The second dimension in the concept of *agency* refers to its composition. It includes two relevant aspects: (1) whether the agency comprises individual or collective actors, and (2) to what extent these are homogenous or heterogeneous in terms of typical school categories: students, teachers, head teachers or parents. For example, youth courts for student participation in conflict resolution include individual actors playing different roles; however, all of them are students. In contrast, a meeting of the school assembly for solving conflicts between students and teachers comprises at least two collective actors. A third variation occurs in those agencies such as school

councils, which are constituted by individual participants who frequently play a representational role; they are the voice of a collective actor.

2.5 Global Trends in Stakeholder Engagement in Education

Analysis that tracked public expenditures from parliaments to individual schools in Africa revealed horrifically high leakage (Reinikka and Svensson, 2001). Sustained improvements in education are impossible to achieve without improving both parental involvement in decisions affecting their children's education and the way key institutions in the sector function. These institutions include the schools and local and national authorities that have influence over funding and school management. Many of the countries that are performing poorly suffer from institutional weaknesses, including low management capacity, nontransparent resource allocation and accounting practices, and substandard human resources policies and practices. Incentive structures fail to reward good performance over bad create and reinforce the most deleterious characteristics of weak institutions. Parents who are both well informed about policies and resource allocations in the education sector and involved in decisions about their children's schooling exert considerable influence and contribute solutions. Involved communities are able to articulate local school needs, hold officials accountable, and mobilize local resources to fill gaps when the government response is inadequate

In what may be the most extensive reform in Latin America, Nicaragua delegated management and budget to autonomous local school councils, who hire and fire school staff, set salaries, and establishes and handles school fees. The intent of the reform was to devolve control to communities and to generate local fee revenue to finance bonuses for well-performing teachers. This feature of the program led to support from teachers, whose union opposed the reform. Broad parental participation raised additional revenue for schools from school fees and ensured community control of the schools. The arrangement proved popular with communities. Between the inception of the reform (in 1993 for secondary schools and 1995 for primary schools) and 2000, more than half of all primary schools and 80 percent of secondary schools became autonomous, all at the initiative of communities. Teachers expressed mixed views on the new structure, but they have also paid more attention to student performance and become more responsive to school councils (Fuller and Rivarola 1998; King and Ozler 2000; Gershberg 2004).

The Ofsted Report (2018) indicates a successful implementation of student councils in the Burnage Academy for Boys giving outstanding results in overall effectiveness of leadership and management and teaching. It is reported from this school that:

Leaders ensure that pupils have a strong voice in the running of their school. For example, all pupils are expected to contribute to the work of the school council. Small groups undertake activities in response to priorities recommended and voted on by pupils. One aspect of this is in pupils' different projects raising significant sums of money for charities. Similarly, some of the clubs offered by the school are run by pupils as a service to others

Several benefits of involving school councils in school management have been reported in literature (Ofsted Report, 2018; Taylor & Johnson, 2002). Among these benefits to pupils are improved emotional Health and Wellbeing; better educational outcomes; development of life skills such as problem solving, negotiation and decision-making; and increased respect for those that are different to them. Other benefits include enhanced confidence, self-esteem and motivation; development of knowledge, understanding and skills that can lead to increased learning outcomes; Familiarity with group, leadership and democratic processes; Better personal, social and organisational skills; Increased responsibility, involvement and commitment to the school and the community.

The Department of Education (2014) reports the following benefits for the school when pupils' participation through councils is implemented:

Happier Children & Young People; Better communication/relationships between staff and children and a more cohesive school community; School policies are more likely to be successful where they are clearly understood and accepted by all partners within the school community; Improvements in engagement, learning and teaching; Improvements in pupil behaviour and school ethos; and Improvements to the school environment.

Many studies have been conducted worldwide, and some have clearly shown that involving students or learners into the affairs of the school is imperative. For instance, Obondo (2000:94)

asserts that if the university governance is shared, subsequently, students' feelings are more positive towards college goals and objectives. Obondo (2000:94) further states that the learners should be involved in the transformation of universities. Students Associations represent a significant unexploited resource in schools that can be used to confront the current crises. Student representatives have also been noted to have the capacity to diffuse potential conflicts. They can do this through regular meetings with their members and the institution administration, designing a mechanism or regular communication thereby restraining their colleagues from conflicts.

Probably the largest collection of studies on the topic is found in a Council of Europe project on Education for Democratic Citizenship (EEDC) Bureau (2000:17). The project was designed to examine the practices of universities in Europe and the United States of America (USA), about the promotion of the Democratic values and practices. In this framework, studies were conducted in fifteen (15) colleges and universities in the United States of America. Interviews with students and other stakeholders such as academicians were used to measure the extent of student participation in university governance. Students also are reported on their satisfaction with institutional practices. According to the findings of this study, which was carried out in the United States of America, the involvement of students in the governance of their universities was weak because its focus was on students in the universities not pupils as the case with study. Whitty and Wisby (2007) suggest that existing literature from organisations, schools and local authorities; it was possible to identify a number of arguments for school councils. These were categorised as children's rights, active citizenship, school improvement and personalisation.

Proponents of the children's rights driver argue for the need to consult young people on matters that affect them, and to consider their views, as a matter of principle. Of the four drivers, this one in particular can be related to new social studies of childhood which argue "that children should be recognised as competent agents, who are participants in, and producers of, rather than passive.

Another argument for pupil voice is its value in providing a context for effective citizenship education (Harber 2004), particularly for pupils' learning about the principles and processes of democracy. In this, it links to New Labour's notion of 'active citizenship' or 'stakeholder democracy' and, associated with this, the aim behind the Crick Report (Crick 1998) of generating greater participation in democratic institutions. As this suggests, and viewed more

pragmatically, pupil voice can have positive bonuses in terms of pupils' development of skills with much broader application. Those 'transferable' or 'life skills' typically developed through student councils include: communication, inter-personal skills, compromise, responsibility, organisational skills and political skills. There may be additional personal outcomes of greater self-esteem and confidence. These are said to be particularly apparent for school councillors and others taking a public role. They are also apparent for those with special needs, who seem to gain a stronger sense of self-belief and engagement in learning (Shier 2001, Davies et al 2006)

In school improvement terms, the emphasis is on the range of different ways in which pupils can be consulted about their school and their learning in order that teachers will respond, attainment increase and standards rise. Here, then, the focus is particularly on what can be gained by giving pupils a say on teaching and learning issues. As part of this, there is a keen interest in the potential contribution of pupil voice to improving behaviour and emotional well-being, which has, in turn, been found to impact positively on pupils' receptiveness to learning.

A number of researchers have suggested that the opportunity to share indecision-making can have a positive impact on pupil behaviour in all areas of school life. Fielding (2001), for example, argues that staff and pupils if democratically agreed to in the first place, better keep rules. It could be that, in helping to draw up codes of conduct and similar frameworks, pupils simply develop a better understanding of the position of school staff. However, improved behaviour could also accrue from pupils gaining a sense of ownership, being trusted and having their views respected.

School councils may also contribute to school improvement by encouraging consultation with pupils on teaching and learning provision. Such consultation could be for a number of reasons: better to understand pupils' response and attitude towards particular aspects of teaching and learning; to support individual learners who find learning difficult; or to develop and experiment with new approaches (James and Pollard, 2006).

Some research has gone further and attempted to provide evidence to back anecdotal claims that participation improves *attainment*. In a study of his own school using value-added measures, Trafford found an association between pupil voice and improved attainment (Trafford 1997, 2003). Hannam (2001, 2002) compared similar comprehensive schools that did and did not have

provision for pupil voice and claimed there was a noticeable difference in the same direction. Studies of new community schools in Scotland (Sammons et al, 2002) and of Healthy Schools (Blenkinsop et al 2004) and extended schools (Cummings et al, 2006) in England have all tried to explore this link in a more systematic manner. Evidence from these studies certainly suggests that pupils in healthy and extended schools – and in particular those committed to developing social, emotional and behavioural skills – have a more positive experience and attitude to school.

Studies have also shown that it should not be taken for granted that any improvements in attainment that emanate from school councils work will benefit all groups equally. It is clear from studies of ‘productive pedagogies’ in Australia (Hayes et al, 2006, Lingard, 2006) that developing pedagogies that impact upon achievement in a sustainable manner is particularly difficult in schools in challenging circumstances. We need to be aware that, although pupil engagement, representation and self-regulation are necessary features of effective learning, they are not in themselves sufficient.

2.6 Relatedness and knowledge gap

The literature reviewed is quite related in that it all concentrated on the school management and planning in ensuring that learning and teaching takes place in a favourable environment. They all are concerned on how the school environment is the building block of development in the community and the country at large.

However, none of the studies where learner council participation was done. This gap led to the researcher to find out how learners can contribute towards harmony in the school premises. The study was about to appreciate what the learners’ council would help in school planning and management.

2.7 Conclusion

This chapter looked at review of literature concerning the topic under study. The literature has been presented by looking at the local and global trends in school councils’ participation in school management. The literature review captured the meaning and concept of student participation in school management and its influence on pupils’ academic performance. The

review was based on the thematic sections as in the objectives. Pupil involvement in decision making in the school and is very important for positive improvement, as Fletcher (2004) asserts that meaningful student involvement in decision making evolve from growing awareness among students and educators, that young people can and should play a critical role in the success of school improvement.



CHAPTER THREE

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

3.0 Overview

The previous chapter provided a review of literature based on the establishment of student councils and their role in institutional management. This chapter is about the study methodology as it presents the research design, the target population of the study, sample and sampling procedures, and the process of data collection and data analysis.

3.1 Research Paradigm

The researcher has used constructivism as a research paradigm where reality is locally constructed, hypothesis is induced from the field research and methods tend to be qualitative.

3.2 Research Design

A research design can be thought of as the structure of research. According to Kasonde (2010:31) a research design is the glue that holds the elements in a research project together. In depth, the research design is the scheme, outline or plan that is used to generate answers to research problems. Vanderstoep and Jonstone (2009:91) define research design as the blue print or recap for the study. The two scholars meant that the research design determines the methods used by the researcher to obtain participants, collect data, analyse the data and interpret the results.

Qualitative approach was preferred in this study because it was done in a natural setting. The study used a case study design. This is because the researcher was interested in an in-depth study with the school environment. The researchers' aim was to assess the participation of the school councils in the management of selected schools of Kapiri-Mposhi District of Central Province, Zambia. This study was conducted in form of a case study in three selected secondary schools. The Day Secondary School in the rural area, one boarding secondary school and another day secondary school in the Kapiri-Mposhi urban area.

3.3 Target Population

A population is a group of individuals, objects or items from which samples are taken for measurements. Not only that, other scholars have referred population to an entire group of persons or elements that have at least one thing in common (Coleman, 2011; Nayak & Singh, 2015). According to Greene (2007:16) target population is the total environment of interest to the one carrying out research. In this study, the researcher targeted the secondary schools in Kapiri Mposhi district. Kapiri Mposhi has 15 secondary schools and all of these were a target schools

3.4 Sampling Techniques and Sample Size

Sampling refers to that part of the research plan that includes how cases are to be selected for the study. Kasonde (2010:37) defines sampling technique as the process of selecting number of individuals or objects from a population such that the selected group contains elements representative of the characteristics found in the entire group. In other words, the way in which the researcher selects participants for study determines how to generalize the results.

3.4.1 Sampling Technique

The sample was selected through purposive and simple random methods. In purposive sampling the researcher selected people or sites that best helped to understand the phenomenon (Creswell, 2012). The inclusion of the participants was based on the capacity of the participant to inform the researcher (Kothari, 2004). Simple random sampling is a sampling technique where every item in the population has an even chance and likelihood of being selected in the sample. Here the selection of items completely depends on chance or by probability and therefore this sampling technique is also sometimes known as a method of chances (Creswell, 2012). School administrators, teachers and parents were selected using purposive sampling method while learners were selected using the simple random method after applying purposive sampling method

3.4.2 Sample size

This study used random sampling to select only three secondary schools within the district. Thereafter, the researcher used simple random sampling to select fifteen (15) pupils. The three

(3) school administrators, nine (9) teachers and six (6) parents from the three schools were selected purposively. The total number of the sampled population was sixty (60) from the three selected secondary school. These sampled pupils were from the school prefects because they were already leaders within the school as they were chosen by the school administration. School administrators were sampled for the purpose of the study in that they were the ones in charge of the school administration. The teachers who were purposively sampled were those that were either guidance/ counselling department or prefects' coordinators within their school. Parents who were sampled were leaders (chairpersons or vice chairpersons) of the Parents and teachers' committee/association (PTC/PTA). Table 3.1 below illustrates the composition of sample size.

Table 3.1: Composition of Sample Size

Category	Number
School administrators (1 from each school)	3
teachers (3 from each school)	9
Parents representative (2 from each school)	6
Learners (pupils) (15 from each school)	45
Total	63

Source: Field Data (2020)

3.5 Data Collection Instruments and Procedure

Data collection instruments refer to the tools the researcher uses to gather the information to answer research questions. According to Greene (2007:17) data collection is the gathering of specific information aimed at providing or refuting some facts. In data collection, a researcher should have a clear idea on how data can be collected and what instruments to be used when collecting such information.

3.5.1 Data Collection Instruments

The semi structured interviews acted as a good source of comparable and reliable data. The interview questions were prepared in advance such that the interviewer was able to internalize all that the interview entails. As a result, interviews were conducted with much competence. Due to

the nature of the semi-structured interviews, the respondent therefore was offered the freedom to give their insights and views in the most convenient ways. For this reason, the data that was collected was in-depth and qualitative.

The focus group discussion questions helped the researcher to generate the maximum amount of discussion and opinions within a given period. The focus group discussions questions therefore were reasonable and simple this prevented the participants from getting confused or worn out by a long discussion.

3.5.2 Data Collection Procedure

According to Kasonde (2010:45), data collection is the gathering of information to answer research questions aimed at providing or refuting some facts. Data collection procedure is the way of collecting information from the respondents. In this study, the researcher got introductory letters from the Kwame Nkrumah University and took it to District Education Board Secretary to seek permission to go to schools. At sample sites the researcher presented introductory letters to the school authorities to seek permission. Later the semi-structured interviews were administered to the head teachers, deputy head teachers, teachers and parent representatives while focus group discussion questions were used to pupil respondents.

3.6 Data Analysis

Data analysis is the scientific way of interpreting the collected data using various statistical instruments. To make analysis of data easy the researcher made sure that the semi structured interview questions reflected the main objectives of the study which was to assess the participation of school councils in school management, so was the focus group discussion questions to the pupils in the school council. In this research recursive, abstraction analysis of data was used. Kasonde (2010) describes recursive abstraction as the data analysis without coding where data sets are summarised: those summarized data are further summarized and so on so that the result is a more compact summary.

In the study. Datasets were collected and sorted out according to the similar responses, those responses were further analysed to come up with a more compact data

3.7 Validity and Reliability

The research has indicated that validity implies the extent to which the research instrument measures what it intended to measure. Reliability refers to the degree to which the scale produces consistent results when repeated measurements are made (Coleman, 2011).

According to Scotland (2012:31), the evidence of validity and reliability in research are the pre-requisite to assure the integrity and quality of a measuring instrument. Going by this assertion, the purpose of establishing reliability and validity in research is essentially to ensure that data are sound and replicable and the results are accurate. To achieve this, the instruments used were first verified and approved by the scholars in the faculty of educational research at Kwame Nkrumah University before being used in the data collection process.

3.8 Pilot Testing

Kothari (2004) explains that before a researcher can carry out the data collection, it is important that he/she pretest the data collection instruments to ensure that the instruments will help collect the required information. In general, the pilot study, by producing additional data, provides valuable insights, mitigates uncertainty about research outcomes, and increases the chances of success in research (ibid). It can identify potential practical problems and provide advance warning of any mistake or shortcoming in the research (De Vaus, 2006).

Before using the interview guide and the questionnaire, a pilot investigation was carried out by the researcher in order to assess the adequacy of the research instruments. This helped the researcher to make adjustments on the questions which were asked to ensure that the respondents understood them to give the required response according to the questions asked. The researcher selects randomly a total of 17 respondents based on 10% of McManus (2004)) of the sample size which consisted of 14 pupils and 2 school administrators and 1 parent in the study area.

3.9 Ethical Considerations

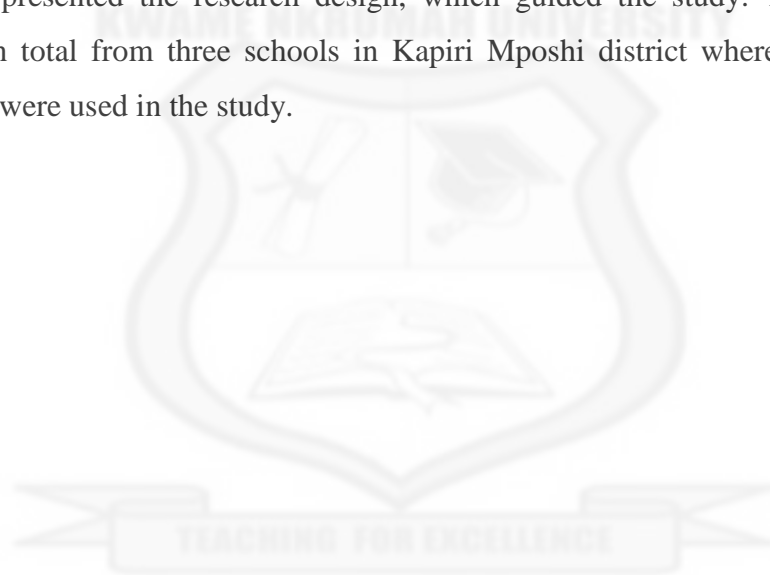
Vanderstoep and Johnstone (20070:12) note that the key aspects of the quality of research are the ethical relationships and its practices. Therefore, conducting research in an ethical sound manner

enhances the quality and trusty worthiness of the research. Therefore, it is the responsibility of the researcher to inform the participants of their rights.

Referring to the ethical requirements, the researcher wrote a letter for permission to conduct research in three secondary schools of Kapiri-Mposhi District of Central Province, Zambia. Not only that their searcher reminded participants about their rights to privacy and confidentiality of the information that they provided and their names remained anonymous because this was what they opted for.

3.10 Conclusion

This chapter presented the research design, which guided the study. The study sampled 57 participants in total from three schools in Kapiri Mposhi district where interviews and focus group studies were used in the study.



CHAPTER FOUR

PRESENTATION OF FINDINGS

4.0 Introduction

Creswell (2012) gives details on data presentation that it refers to the organization of data into tables, graphs or charts, so that logical and statistical conclusions can be derived from the collected measurements. The study sought to evaluate the participation of learners' councils in management of three secondary schools in Kapiri-Mposhi district.

4.1 Format of data presentation

The findings being presented below are according to the objectives which were set for the study. The objectives are: To find out the existence of pupils' school councils in selected secondary schools in Kapiri Mposhi District; to assess the extent of participation of pupils' councils in school management in selected secondary schools in Kapiri Mposhi District and; to establish strategies that to encourage participation of learners' (pupils') councils in the school management in selected secondary schools in Kapiri Mposhi District. These objectives were addressed by exploring the nature of the learners' (pupils') council's involvement in the school management of the selected secondary schools.

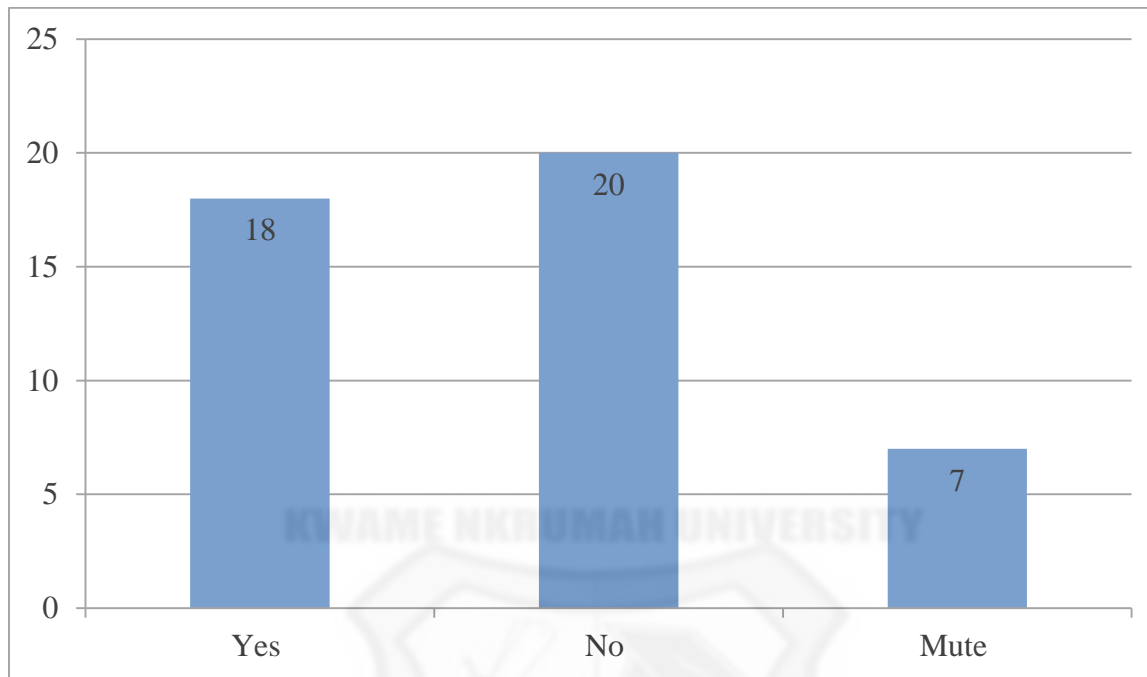
4.2 Establishment of learners' councils in three (3) selected secondary schools in Kapiri Mposhi district.

To have a deeper revelation of the first objective there were many questions that the researcher asked and the subheadings below illustrates the findings

4.2.1 Understanding what learners' council was by the respondents

The school administrators, teachers and parents understood what learners' council meant while, there were different views from the learner respondents and their responses were summerised in chart 4.1 below.

Chart 4.1: Pupils understanding of the learners' council



Source: Researcher (2020)

One of the learners told the researcher that:

I have never heard of anything like a learners' council ever since she reported to the school. I have been at this school for five years now and I have never heard of such a thing.

Another responded informed the researcher that:

Sir, I have heard of such a thing like the learners' council but I don't understand what it consists of. I am a prefect but such a thing has never been explained to me by anyone.

Another learner respondent informed the researcher that:

I am aware understand what a learners' council is but that I don't see it at our school meaning it is non-existence. At my former school it was there but still it was not active.

4.2.2 Presence of learners' councils in school

The researcher asked the school administrators and teachers, the parents and learners to state whether there were learners/councils in their respective schools or not. All the school administrators, teachers and parents confirmed that there were school councils in their respective schools.

However, the responses from the learners were different as some said that there were there while others said that there were not there still others were mute. Table 4.1 below illustrates the responses from the learners.

Table 4.1 Responses on presence of learners' councils in schools

Response	Number
Yes	10
No	13
Mute	09
Not sure	13
Total	45

Researcher (2020)

From table 4.1 above, it is clearly indicating that the learners had mixed responses towards the presence of the learners' councils in their respective schools.

One of the learners informed the researcher that:

I'm not sure whether we have a learners' council or not in the sense that at one point I heard one teacher talking about while we were in class learning but from there I have not heard anything.

Another responded informed the researcher that:

The learners' council is there though I am not part of it, I just now that it exists within our school premises and I don't know who is involved in it.

4.2.3 Composition of the learners' councils

The researcher asked all the respondents on what composed of the learners' councils in their respective schools.

4.2.3.1 School administration and teachers' perspective of how the learners' council should be composed of.

The school administration and the teachers informed the researcher that the learners' council was supposed to compose of the learners through representatives among the learners. The representatives were supposed to be chosen from all the classrooms and grades.

One school administrator said that:

At our school, every classroom had a member of the learners' (pupils') council. We have three (3) classes per grade from grade 8 to grade 12 and this means that every grade has three (3). This means that we have fifteen (15) member representatives in the learners' council in the school. We asked learners to choose among themselves those that would represent them in the learners' council through the help of their class teachers, prefects' coordinator and the guidance and counselling teachers.

Another respondent (teacher) informed the researcher that:

I coordinate learners and when it comes to coming up with learners' representatives in the learners' council, I look for those who are able to speak without shame whenever we have a meeting and are able to represent the rest of their fellow students.

4.2.3.2 Parents' perspective of the formulation of the learners' council.

When the parents were asked on how the learners' council was formulated

Their responses were recorded and summarised in Table 4.2 below.

Table 4.2: formulation of learners' council as perceived by the parents

Response	Number
Formulated by the school administrators	1
Formulated by the learners themselves	1
Formulated by both learners and school administrators	3
Not sure	1
Total	6

Source: Researcher (2020)

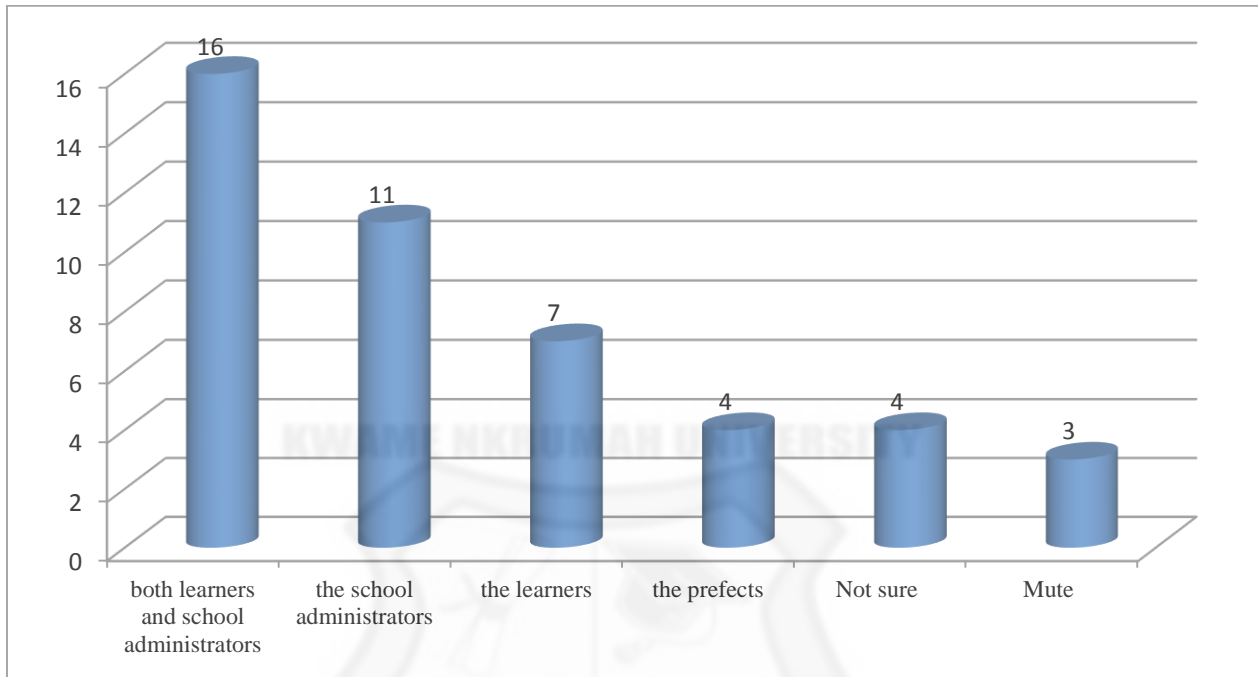
One of the parents informed the researcher that:

I'm not sure as to who formulates the learners' council; whether it's the school administrators, learners or both. But the truth is that I know that there is a council because I have been told that there are times when the school administrators has called the learners in their meetings.

4.2.3.3 Learners' perspective of the formulation of the learners' council

When learners were asked to state on what they knew about the formulation for the learners' council, they gave different responses and the researcher summarised their responses. Chart 4.2 below illustrates the responses.

Chart 4.2: formulation of learners' council as perceived by the leaners



Source: Researcher (2020)

One of the learners said that:

We have been asked by the prefect coordinator to come up with the representatives in the learners' council those who will help us by speaking to management and administrators of what we feel should be done at our school to enhance learning and teaching in a favourable environment.

Another learner said that:

The teachers were the ones formulating the learners' councils in that they were only announcing the names of those that were chosen to be involved in school planning and management.

4.3 The extent of participation of pupils' councils in school planning and management

The respondents were asked to indicate how the learners were engaged in participation in the school planning and management. The extent of participation data was recorded and summarize according to the categories of the respondents.

4.3.1 The learners' council participate in the school planning and administration as perceived by the school administrators and teachers

Below are the summarised responses that the researcher recorded concerning the participation of the learners' councils in school planning and management.

4.3.1.1 School administrators' perspective

The school administrators informed the researcher that the learners were able to participate in the school planning and management of the school. All of them informed the researcher that the learners belonging to the council represented their other learners well as concerning school management and planning.

One of the teachers informed that research that:

The learners do take part in our day to day decision making of how the institution ought to be managed.

One school administrator said that:

As an administrator, I have been there always to encourage and include the learners to participate in the affairs of the school. I have had meetings with learners in trying appreciating their challenges and then letting them suggest the best ways to have the said challenges solved. This has worked well and that most of t learners appreciate it and are made free to criticize management and staff on the perceived wrongs within the school.

4.3.1.2 Parents' perspective

The parents had different views on the participation of the learners in the school planning and management within the school. Their responses were summarised and recorded. Table 4.3 below illustrates their responses.

Table 4.3 Responses on the participation of learners in school planning and management

Response	Number
Yes they participate	2
No they don't participate	1
Not sure of whether participate or not	3
Total	6

Source: Researcher (2020)

One of the parents said that:

I'm not sure as to whether the learners participate or not as I only visit the school when there is an annual general meeting (AGM).

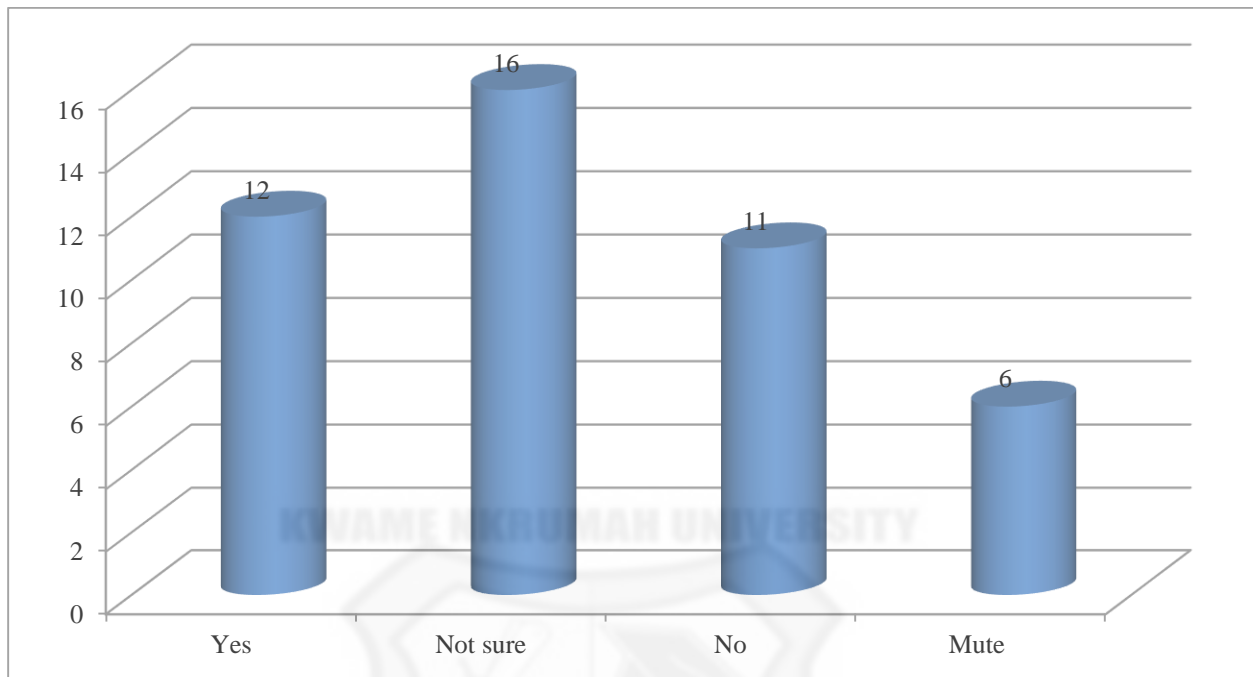
Another parents said that:

They participate in that I normally get this information from the head teacher that he had a meeting with the learners before we can have a meeting with the parents and members of staff at school.

4.3.1.3 Learners perspective

The learners were asked to indicate whether they participated in school planning and management. Their responses were recorded and summarised in chart 4.3 below.

Chart 4.3: Response on participation of learners



Source: Researcher (2020)

One of the learner respondents informed the researcher that:

I'm not sure whether we participate in the management and planning of the school because we are never clearly told what we are supposed to do and when. All we see is that the head teacher can just come call one or two of those he knows would tell him what he wants to hear and not what the problems we are exactly. Sometimes we just told to share our school problems with our class teachers and even when we do so nothing seems to be changing.

4.3.2 Effectiveness of learners' council contributions to the management of the school

All the respondents were asked to explain on the effectiveness of the learners' councils in their respective schools. The responses were categorised in three groups; the school administrators and teachers; parents and; learners.

4.3.2.1 School administrators' perspective

The school administrators and teachers gave different responses pertaining to the effectiveness of the learners' councils in their schools. Their responses were summarised and recorded in table 4.4 below.

Table 4.4: effectiveness of the learners' council in schools

Response	Number
Very effective	2
Effective	3
Moderate	2
Ineffective	3
Very ineffective	2
Total	12

Source: Researcher (2020)

One school administrator informed the researcher that:

The learners' council in my school was ineffective as the learners were always shy to participate in the school management and planning despite encouraging them to do so. So many times i have told the learners to come up with a council that will be a true representation to all the learners but this has never produced any reasonable results.

One school teacher said that:

The learners' council was very effective at my school in that it has a fair representation in the school planning and management. The learners' council is ever present at every decision making meeting within the school. My head teacher and entire management and members of staff was support the learners' council by ensuring that the learners are never left out and that they are up-to-date with school happenings as much as they also play a pivotal role.

Another teacher said that:

The learners' council was sometimes active and sometimes we forgot about it. I don't know where the problem is but I think, we as teachers do little to help the learners appreciate the participation of the learners in school planning and management.

4.3.2.2 Parents' perspective

The six parents gave different responses towards the effectiveness of the learners' council in the schools they belonged to. Their responses were summarised and recorded as indicated in table 4.5 below.

Table 4.5: Responses as perceived by parents

Response	Number
Effective	1
Moderate	1
Ineffective	2
Very ineffective	2
Total	6

Source: Researcher (2020)

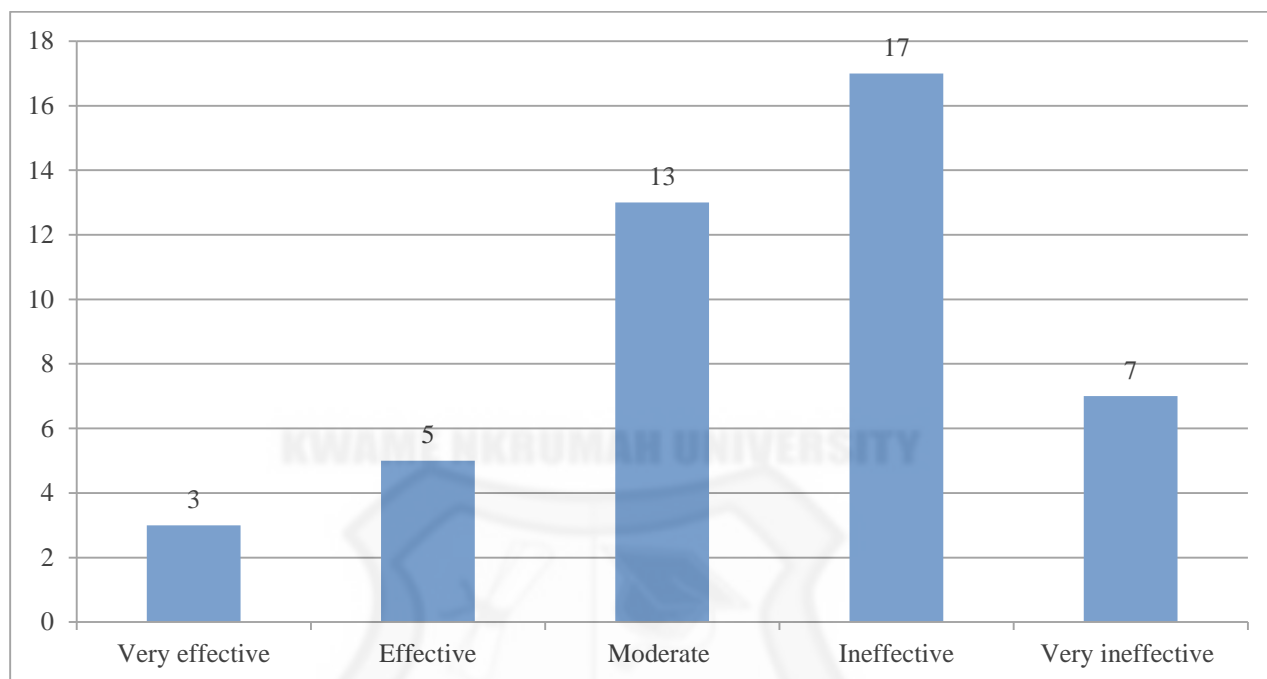
One parent said that:

There is nothing that can be said about learners' council. There is nothing and there is complete ignorance about it. Teachers seem not to know about and even us parents, nothing, including the learners as well.

4.3.2.3 Learners perspective

When asked about how effective the learners' council were in their respective schools, the learners gave different responses and were recorded. Chart 4.4 below illustrates their summarised responses.

Chart 4.4: Effectiveness of the learners' council as perceived by the learners



Source: Researcher (2020)

One of the school administrators said that:

As a member of the learners' council, pupils express the viewpoint of pupils they represent and communicate the activities of the council to their stakeholders who are the fellow pupils. Pupils, according to findings, act as communication agents between the school administration and their fellow pupils. As ambassadors of the school management pupil councillors' clear uncertainty and false rumours that may lead to riotous behaviour by pupils.

4.3.3 Level/stage of participation

The respondents were categorised into three groups; the school administrators and teachers; the parents and; learners. This was in order to have their responses summarized according to the groups. There were different responses according to the groups and they were summarised as indicated below.

The researcher wanted to find out to what extent do pupils go in the decision making process of the institution. The participants highlighted the disciplinary part, procurement, preventive maintenance, catering, sports, P.U, academic programs but limited in terms of test and examinations preparations.

4.3.3.1 School administrators’ and teachers’ perspective as to when learners’ council is involved in school planning and management.

The respondents were told to state in activities that the learners were involved starting with the most common to the least. The responses in table 4.6 below illustrates the responses and the score was out of six (6).

Table 4.6: Level of participation according to school administrators and teachers

Response	Number
At every management meeting	5
During the PTA meetings	4
Whenever the learners’ council is called upon	3
At every management and planning meeting	2

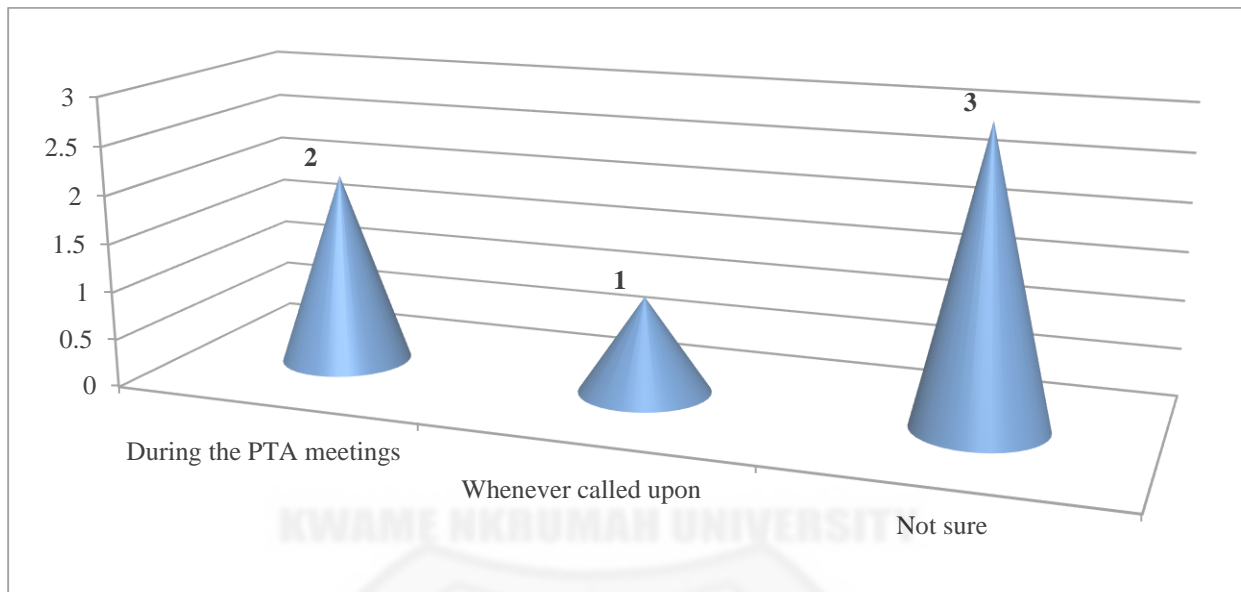
Source: Researcher (2020)

The teacher respondents revealed that the learners’ council was involved in the day today running of the school. However, at times the top management just made decisions and later informed some members of the council citing lack of funds to call every member of the school council especially in times of emergencies. The respondent further pointed out that meetings for the learners’ council were called when need arose, especially at the beginning of the term when the school required putting in place a lot of programs and projects.

4.3.3.2 Parents’ perspective

The parents were asked to state at which stage the learners participated in school planning and management. Their responses were summarised and recorded in chart 4.5 below.

Chart 4.5: When the learners' council participate in school planning and management

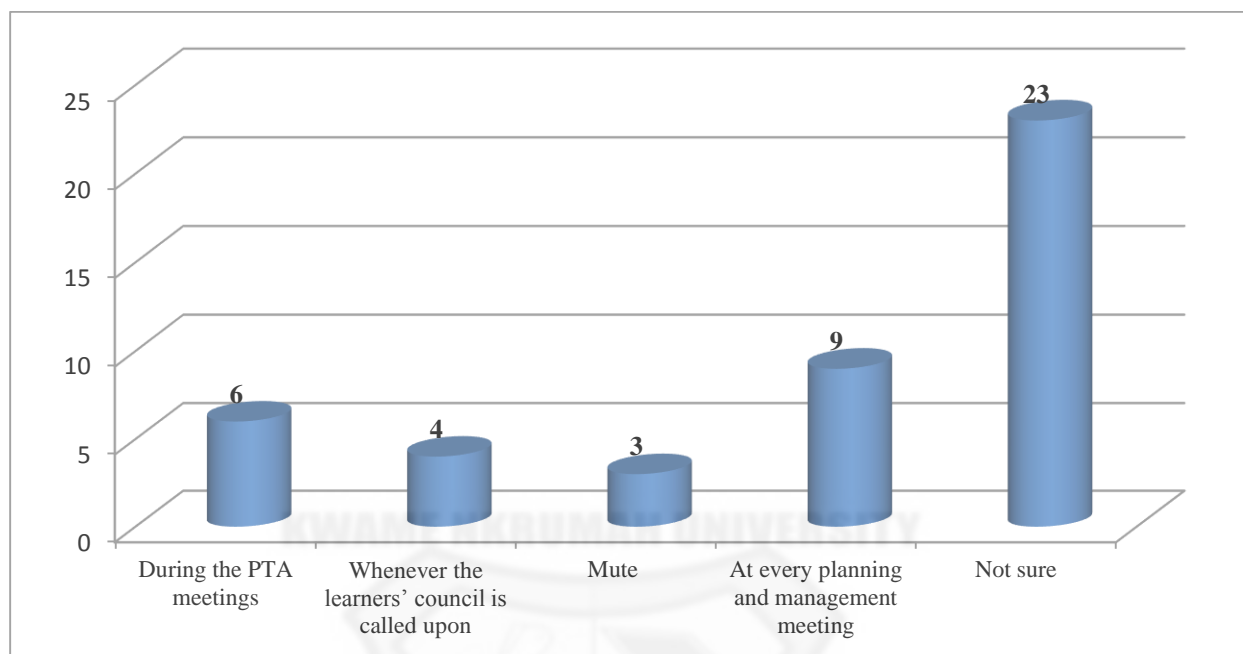


Source: Researcher (2020)

4.3.3.3 Learners perspective

The learners were asked by the researcher at which stage they participated in school planning and management. There were different answers that they gave and the researcher summarized and recorded them as indicated in chart 4.6 below.

4.6: Stage at which the learners participate in planning and management



Source: Researcher (2020)

4.4 Strategies to encourage participation of learners' (pupils') councils in the school planning and management

The researcher wanted to know the strategies that the school administrators, teachers and were putting across to encourage participation of learners to participate in school planning and management. The researcher was informed that there many strategies that were being put across and they are summarized in table 4.7 below.

Table 4.7: Strategies being used to encourage learners’ participation in school planning and management

Strategy	Number
Forming of learners’ councils in the school	5
Encouraging the learners to air out their grievances freely and openly	4
Having discussions with the learners regularly	4
Encouraging the teachers to allow the learners to participate in decision making	3
Encouraging the learners to build a strong relationship with teachers and management.	3

Source: Researcher (2020)

One of the school administrators stated that:

The idea of the learners’ council is made up of the learners who are given the opportunity to work together with school administrators to improve the school environment and also to make schools a better place where pupils can be educated in a holistic way feeling safe and loved.

4.4.1 Benefits of learners’ council engagement in school planning and management

According to respondents, there were a lot of benefits and summarised in table 4.8 below. The benefits were recorded according to the number of respondents who mentioned it.

Table 4.8: Benefits derived from having a learners’ council within the school

Benefit	Number
The learners can share their grievances freely	60
There is mutual understanding between administrators/teachers and learners	56
Planning and management is done together as one.	45
Communication is enhanced between learners and administrators/teachers	39
Development is appreciated by both parties (learners and staff)	34
The administrators and learners’ council can work to improve the standards of the school.	25

Source: Researcher (2020)

One of the school administrators said that:

Learners' council on one hand should encourage active participation from school community in the teaching and learning process through communication, avail the learners' council minutes, holding of meetings and focus groups with parents and the community members with expertise in a certain area to council meetings to speak on relevant issues.

One teacher further added that:

It is the responsibility of learners' council members to bring the issues affecting them forward on behalf of their members and to communicate any discussions /actions back to the group they represent.

4.4.2 Recommendations by respondents

The respondents made the following recommendations as shown in table 4.9 below

Table 4.9: Recommendations from respondents

Recommendation	Number
More should be done to ensure that learners appreciate the meaning and the mandate given to the learners' council.	45
Administrators should help come up with learners' council	56
There should be outlined guidelines for all the teachers and learners to follow when coming up with learners' council.	34
More teachers should be trained in conflict management in schools	25
The government should help the struggling schools by providing materials that will support formation of learners' councils.	51
Learners should be encouraged to channel their grievances to relevant learners' council.	39
Parents should encourage the learners to participate in school planning And management.	28

The respondents recommended that the Ministry of General Education should increase funding and adjust the school fees in order to meet the demands of the school and the learners' council inclusive.

4.5 Conclusion

This chapter presented the study findings using objectives as guides. The findings were presented in tables, charts and narratives. The next chapter discusses the findings in this chapter.



CHAPTER FIVE

DISCUSSION OF THE FINDINGS

5.0 Introduction

The study sought to investigate the establishment of school councils in the selected secondary schools understudy. In order to address this objective, the head teachers, the deputy head teachers, the Heads of Departments, pupils and parents' respondents indicated that the school councils existed in their schools. This is in line with the Zambia Education Act of 2011 Article 23; Cap 29; of the laws of Zambia, that states "the minister may by statutory instrument, establish learners' representative council in the name of the school council for an educational institution.

5.1 Existence of school councils in the selected secondary schools of Kapiri-Mposhi District

The study revealed that the school councils were formed in line with United Nations Convention on the Rights of Children (UNCRC) in addition to the local ministerial directives. Article 12 of the UNCRC states that "children and young people should have a say in discussions that affect their lives". This global legislation has been accompanied by other local policies that are line with it. The table below indicates the number of policies and pieces of legislation relating to young people participation in society especially the school.

Table 05.1 Policies and legislation that school councils align to the school

Policy/Legislation	How school council align
Article 12 of the United Nations Convention on the rights of the child	States that when adults are making decisions that affect children. Children have the right to say what they think and have their views taken into account
Ministry Of General Education Standards and Evaluations	Highlights the importance of consultations with pupils stating that Boards of governors must listen to the opinions of pupils when making or revising school policies.
Revised curriculum 2013	Young people should be provided with opportunities to investigate democracy and participate in school and society.
The constitution of Zambia (The Education Act of 2013)	The Minister may by statutory instrument establish learners' representative school council for an education institution.
School Governance and Accountability Mechanism in Zambian Schools	Schools should constitute school councils that provide an opportunity for pupils to engage in constructive and structured partnership with teacher parents and school managers in the operation of their schools.

Source: the policy documents. MoGE: 2016

As illustrated in the table above, the policies have prompted the schools under study to constitute the school councils in their respective schools.

As there has been calls for school councils to be made a statutory requirement for schools. The literature highlights a number of key benefits and potential outcomes for schools and pupils that have a school council. Overall they are thought to help and improve many aspects of school life and one author suggests there is almost no part of life which school councils do not have the potential to improve.

A school council provides a meaningful way in which pupils can voice out their opinions, have their views taken into account in decisions which impact, and affect them.

The school council is designed to support and encourage the meaningful development of democracy in the school environment. The study further revealed the structure of the school councils that included the chairperson, the secretary, the treasurer and the two trustees. The rest are the committee members whose mandate ends after two years. Apart from that the findings of the study confirm that within the school council there are sub-committees for pupils, teachers and for parents. The purpose of these individual committees is to meet separately to discuss submissions to the school council and to give feedback to the majority groups they represent.

The findings on the other hand showed that the presence of the pupils in the school council helps them share ideas, interests and concerns with teachers and parents. Apart from that the representatives assigned to each class passes on requests, ideas and complaints from pupils to the school council. It is an important useful way for schools to provide leadership and development opportunities for their pupils. These findings concur with the new *Zambian Curriculum Framework of (2013:21)* states “one of the key areas for making up the learning for life and work, theme is active participation”. This means for learners to be good future leaders, they have to be trained while at school during their tender age. The curriculum requires that young people are provided with opportunities to participate in school and society. School council are an excellent way in which to increase participation, teaching young people about democracy, local and global citizenship and accountability.

The findings also revealed that the head teacher, the deputy head teachers and Heads of Departments (H.O.D) are the source of information for the school council. They are the best link to finding out about the education policies, its regulations, ministry directives, circulars, laws, school important plans and other new initiatives at the school and the entire Ministry of General Education. Furthermore, the school management acts as the source of information, it's able to provide the school council with the information required to be effective. They are prepared to answer questions and volunteer information on any matter being discussed by their councils. The study also indicated that the better informed is, the better it will be able to provide the head teacher with good advice and contribute to the effective operations of the school.

The findings of the study on the other hand indicated that parents play the first and most important role in their children's education and are key partners in building a quality education system. Apart from that they help their fellow parents to establish home environments that

support their children as pupils. For example, helping them with homework, asking them about with the day's events, showing an interest in their extra-curricular activities, expressing care and giving guidance. Apart from that parents' act as a link between the community and the school to enhance development.

5.2 Participation of learners' Councils in School Management

The objective to assess the participation of the school councils in school management revealed that the participation was formal and embraced all the school council members and respected their views.

5.2.1 Channel of Communication

The study revealed that to a greater extent, school councils played a significant role in improving communication in the schools as they saved important information between the learners and school management. According to three head teachers and their deputy head teachers interviewed, the lack of communication creates suspicion which would trigger pupils' unrest and informants of riots. These statements were also shared by Heads of Departments and pupils' representatives. Thus, there was a consensus that the pupils' councils were useful conduits of information which reduce the information gap. The pupil participants argued that they still had the opportunity to voice out on issues affecting their welfare in classes, dormitories and the dining as the case of boarding schools. In this way the school council played a significant role in advocating for pupils' welfare through dialogue. Correspondingly literature shows school council participation in school management provides a platform for consultation and is a source of information and can be a valuable resource for effective school management (Kumwenda, 2010: pg 31). The school administrators highlighted the purpose of the learners' councils as the means to facilitate communication and cooperation among the school administration, parents, teachers and pupils in the school, community with the goal of enhancing the quality of school programs and increasing the level of pupil achievement. While the head teacher is responsible for the direct management of the school, learners' councils assist school administration in the development and implementation of school based policies, practices and activities which help improve the teaching and learning environment of the school.

Furthermore, this provided them with an avenue for in channelling grievances, which made it possible for effective conflict resolution.

5.2.2 Management Role is more alert to the needs of Pupils

According to the research findings, the underlying factor for sensitivity and alertness on the part of head teachers emanated from the realisation that pupil councils served as an important platform for sharing a range of challenges encountered in secondary schools. They acted as “the eyes of the school administration” because pupils provided feedback to head teachers on affairs that affect them for instance teacher absenteeism, the conduct of prefects and quality of food served in the dinning among others. The feedback from school council meetings influenced head teachers on how they made some school decisions. Since council forums were a key source of communication, the respondents and especially the school head teachers, pointed out that there was an improvement in the flow of communication. The constant flow of information through council meetings also led to more cordial relationships between the learners and the school administration, thereby reducing the chances of pupils’ riots. This is in line with Diamin’s (2016:38) findings that head teachers who actively interact with pupils are better at structuring pupils’ experience.

5.3 Improving Levels of Discipline in School

The findings illustrated that one of the major roles associated with school councils was the maintenance of discipline by enhancing good behaviour and also promoting a sense of ownership among pupils. Similarly, some of the literature reviewed indicated that pupil councils are vital in building positive school climates by encouraging pupils’ positive behaviour (Tailor and Johnson, 2002), necessitating a strong sense of ownership and maintaining discipline. The pupils in school B were involved in the making of school rules and as such represented the interests of their fellow pupils in the process. Pupils’ representatives initiated a campaign against vandalism of school property and graffiti.

The evidence of pupils and teachers involved in this study demonstrated that participation of school councils in school management promotes key skills, personal and social skills and some awareness and understanding of democratic practices. Although the study did not look in details

how schools aims for their school councils linked with their wider school and curricular aims, schools were not explicit about the contributions a school council could make to delivering personal, social and citizenship education, to the development of a particular learning outcomes for pupils or any focused way in realisation of school's mission statement and development of ethos.

At a mission school the study revealed that the school council didn't operate without the councils' terms of reference are stipulated in the Education and Training Reform Act of 2006. In the essence the major role of the school council is to help the school to set the long term strategic plan and maintaining oversight not necessary the day today running of the school that is the job of the school management. The work of the strategic plan according to the findings is to tell people what the school wants to achieve in future and the best practices to get there.

Apart from that the findings further revealed that the council is engaged by the school to develop, review and monitor the pupils' engagement policy. The school engagement police according to the findings is the mechanism that is put in place by the school council on how best pupils can behave, curbing bullying, the school dress code and commitment to all school activities. The engagement policy is not only applied to pupils when they are within the school campus but also outside the school environment. This is in line with Taylor and Johnson (2002:84) who assert that the role of the school council is to promote the interest of the pupils' community and facilitate their involvement in school affairs, in cooperation with the school management, teachers, parents and board.

Not only that the findings highlighted the importance of the school council at the mission school that include providing a forum for pupils to meet and share their opinions, make suggestions for change to the school management and promote pupils led initiatives. At the school under study, each class had a representative and there was an executive committee that runs the school council in association with the teacher mentor. The executive committee of pupils met once weeks while the whole school council met every last Friday of each month. This strategy was only for the mission school under study. Other schools studied had different arrangements.

Experiences from the schools studied further afield showed that a school council that is supported and nurtured helps to improve many aspects of school life. It is important and useful

way for schools to provide leadership and development opportunities for their pupils. Within the 2013 Zambian Curriculum, one of the key areas making up the learning for life and work, theme active participation. The duo career pathway curriculum requires that young people are provided with opportunities to participate in school and society. School councils are an excellent way in which to increase participation, teaching young people about democratic tenets, local and global citizenship and accountability. Other studies further revealed that pupils were engaged in all activities affecting them.

How do parent councillors, teachers and pupils share power in schools? The policy documents on the school councils are constituted stress a partnership among parents, teachers and pupils. The study aimed at assessing the school council participation in the school management. When asked about their contribution to discussion in council meetings on the various council businesses, parent councillors rated themselves significantly lower than the teacher councillors. The parent councillors pointed that in certain instances certain decisions are dictated to them and sometimes be informed during the council meeting of certain decisions made outside the school council. This trend by school administrators is against Tailor and Johnson (2002:19) who suggest that a good partnership between teachers and parents is an important factor contributing to the success of school councils. It seems that the readiness of parents and teachers to participate in the school management, mutual acceptance between teachers and parents are important aspects of a good partnership between teachers and parents.

It is logical to presuppose that a parent councillor is satisfied with the performance of the school and their role in the council; they are more likely to put in extra effort in making the council a success. Hence this study proposes those parents 'councillors' satisfaction will be positively associated with the success of the council.

It was also emerged in the findings that some of the school administrators avoid calling school council meetings citing lack of funds as this has impacted negatively on the operations of the school councils. The Head teachers' commitment to the council may be another factor positively related to the success of the school council. If the head teacher is committed to making the council a success, they may take action to influence and motivate teachers, pupils and parents to participate in school management and to create an environment conducive to a good partnership among pupils, teachers, and parents.

It is conceivable that parents may become more confident and take a more active part if the school administration (Head teachers and Deputy Head teachers) are encouraging. Likewise, parents might demonstrate a greater degree of commitment if the teaching staffs readily accept them. Since parents are still not confident about their role in the school council matters, it is preferable that initiative should first come from the professional staff.

The study conducted revealed four factors which were responsible for the successful school council participation. The key factors appear to be four groups of individuals namely the school administration, teachers, pupils and parents who take part in the school council operations.

The school administration must be committed to the school council, teachers, pupils and parents must be ready to part and must be willing to accept each other.

The study cited areas like discipline, budgeting, preventive maintenance, academic programs, strategic planning, procurement and review of finance statements as some of the major functions of the school council. All the above stated areas have a bearing in the provision of quality of education.

It was revealed that the participation of pupils in school management was very low due to lack of exposure by pupils. The findings further revealed that the pupils could just be quiet in the meetings of the council; as a result, the decisions were just made on their behalf by the school management and the parents.

This was in contrast to the Ministry of General Education Circular (2016:10) that states, “The school council provides an opportunity for pupils to engage in constructive and structured partners with teachers, parents, and school management in the operations of their school. The study on the other hand sought to explore the views of pupils on the extent they thought they ought to be involved in the school management through the school council. It was established that although an overwhelming majority of the pupils’ leaders were in agreement that they should be fully involved in the management of the schools; others held the perception that they should be involved to some extent given that they still lack relevant and adequate expertise to make meaningful decisions.

The pupils' respondents further cited being side-lined by the administrators when it comes to key committees like finance and the entire process of procurement. This point of view resonated with one respondent pupil who held the general feeling that pupils lack expertise for participating in the school management. The findings of the study further revealed that the pupils on the school council were always involved in making decisions regarding services like running the tuck-shops, internet café and making decisions related to peer counselling and services offered by pupils respectively.

The results of the study further confirm that although school management tried to embrace the idea of shared decision making by sharing responsibilities and having joint efforts in decision making by all major stakeholders including pupils through the council, this was not being fully achieved as reflected by the findings of this study. The school management still dominated many areas with quiet a minimal pupils' participation. This trend was common in all the schools studied.

The findings of the study concur with (Ibijola: 2010:18), whose study revealed a moderate level of students' participation in school management, a corresponding moderate level of organisational effectiveness, implying that pupils' participation in school management is on the average with an average level on organisational effectiveness. This is an indication that in spite of the numeric strength of pupils in the school council as important stakeholders in the school committees, their level of participation is just moderate.

Other findings also indicated that effectiveness of school council participation in school management hampered by the lack of finances by schools as one of the hindering factor to regular school council meetings. This challenge had necessitated the ineffectiveness of the operations of the school councils in the in the management of the schools. The respondents for this reason suggested the council to engage in income generating activities for their sustenance.

The other finding indicated the irregular meetings as this had resulted into the ineffective of the school council participation in the school management. The study further revealed that the meeting for the school council were not regular. This had made the school council ineffective. The effectiveness of the school council comes in when regular meetings are held.

It also emerged in the study that school councils did not have operational guidelines and the constitution to follow when carrying out its mandate as most members are kept in the dark. According to (Obondo 2000:84), the constitution of an organisation contains the fundamental principles, which govern its operation. The scholar further suggests that the bylaws establish the specific rules of guidance by which the group function.

When an organisation as the school council lacks a constitution, the operations becomes difficult and inconsistent. As the constitution play a key role at different times in the organisation. The constitution helps members to develop clear agreements about the purpose of the organisation and how it will work. Apart from that, the constitution protects the interest of the general membership as well as establishing a system of checks and balances of an organisation. For the school council to operate without guidelines or bylaws was a great hindrance to effectiveness. The study revealed that the school councils were established in the selected schools in Kapiri Mposhi district. The study further revealed that the school councils did take part in the management of the school, except that most pupils lacked skills and expertise to contribute effectively to the decision-making processes at the higher level during the council meetings. The study further revealed that school pupils meant well in running of the secondary schools because of their numerical strengths. In the school council, pupils have an upper hand in the affairs that do affect them. As a result, most of the problems leading to pupils' unrest could be resolved. This implies that institutional governance could be shared with frequent involvement of pupils in the management of schools.

The findings revealed that learners' councils provide a formal structure through which all partners can come together to discuss their challenges with the primary goal of enhancing the quality of teaching and learning resulting in improved learners' achievements. Apart from that it was revealed that in the discussion that school councils and council members represent their educational interests of all pupils collectively. Council members represent the views of their respect groups in that parent representatives speak for the parents of school pupils, teacher representatives speak for the teachers and pupil representatives speak for the pupils of the school and the school administration speak for the entire school and the Ministry of General Education. In conclusion, participation of school councils in school management is there with a challenge that needs to be addressed by the relevant education stakeholders.

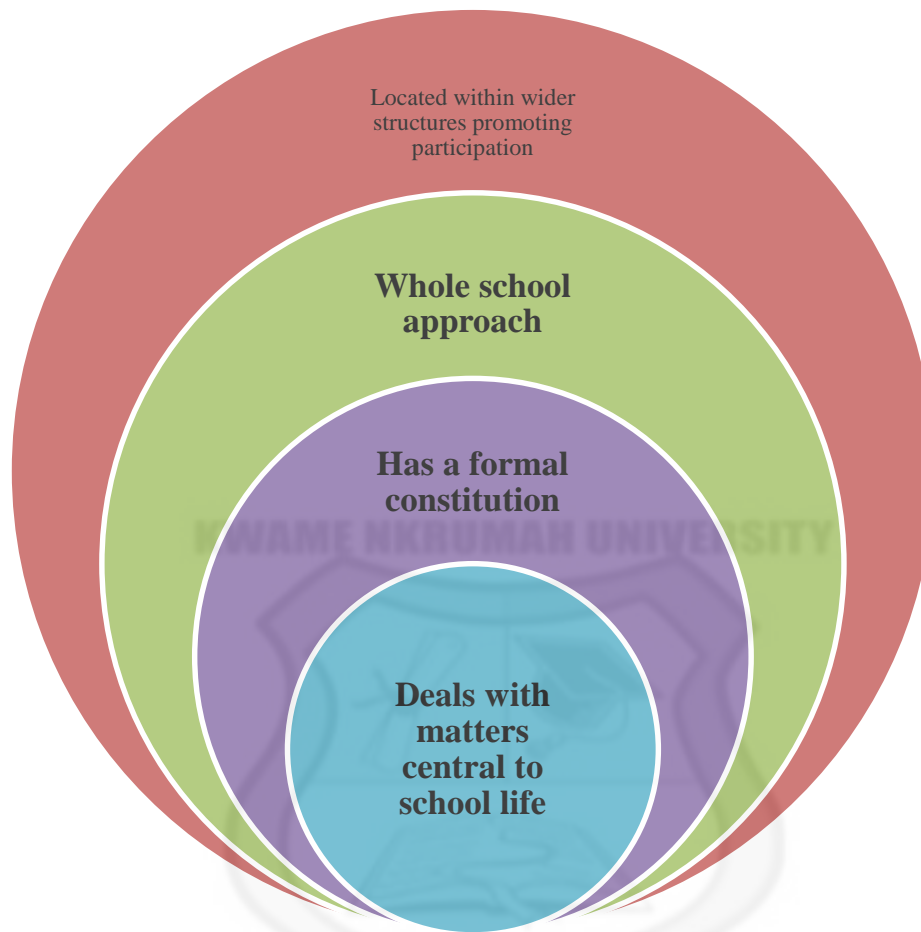
The findings also revealed that, the school administrators encourage active participation of learners' council members in enhancing the teaching and learning environment of the school to increase the pupils' achievement. Apart from that the school administrators communicates to the learners' council the information pertaining to the school policies and practices; provides learners' council with access to school information relevant to the functioning of the school.

The findings further revealed that involvement of school councils in the management of the school had brought sanity at the institution by minimizing and mitigating the riotous behaviour by learners.

5.4 Strategies to Encourage Participation of School Councils in School Management

The findings indicated that the school councils were the only platforms where the school management collaborated well with pupils and members of the community. Not only that, pupils' behaviour was regulated as pupils were fully involved in matters affecting their wellbeing at school. One major strategy to encourage the participation of school councils in school management was through networking. It emerged from the study that school council members should be collaborating with other members of the council from different schools so that they could share ideas and compare notes. This cannot only bring about exposure but also learning new ideas and strategies on how to carry out certain plans, projects and programs for the institution. Apart from that there must be effective school council that have an ability to participate effectively. The following figure illustrates some of the key structural attributes of an effective school council: these are considered further in the subsequent paragraphs

Figure 5.1 key structural attributes of an effective school council



Source: Researcher (2020)

A key factor in ensuring that a school council is effective is that pupils must have influence in matters that are central to their daily life in school. Examples could include the school council having a say on teaching methods, school policies, item planning and the recruitment of staff. The literature warns against school councils simply taking charge of areas such as running events and fundraising as this only overshadow the purpose of the school council. This is the wider structure promoting participation.

In addition to, according to the figure above the school council should take a whole school approach (not simply class or year based) and be located within wider structure and practices within schools that promote pupil participation. For example, one finding revealed that it is within the context of democratic schools that councils can most effectively make a contribution

and states that the core values of such schools include cooperation, mutual respect, justice and commitment to diversity and equity.

In order to do this, schools should review and evaluate opportunities available for pupils to make their voice heard and regularly review their core values and ethos to ensure they are supportive of participation. It is important for school leaders to be clear that they are willing to involve pupils in discussion, listen to their views and act on those views where appropriate. Having a formal constitution is the recipe for providing a framework for how the council should be run is also important. The findings also further indicated that an effective constitution would help the school council to operate in a professional manner and foster an inclusive approach.

Many claims have been made in the literature about the potential positive contributions of school councils to pupils learning, particularly about the practices of citizenship and to institutional change. It is clear from this research that many of the practical issues with the establishing and maintaining school council identified in school councils over the last decade. Therefore, to succeed and flourish in their operations and achieving their own goals, school councils must be embedded in school wide relationships, structures and actions which are disposed towards consultations, respect for the views of pupils and teachers, participation in the school as a community, respect for reason, democracy and the possibility of change. It is not enough for the council itself to be the only maker of such attitudes and behaviours. The school council needs to be one of the albeit one of the most potentially fair and equal opportunities for the exercise of pupils rights and responsibilities within the experience of social and academic learning. The school council and the school community as a whole need periodically to review the council's aims and outcomes by gaining in self-evaluation.

The study further disclose that schools need to be more explicitly self-conscious about how councils' fits with wider decision making approaches in the school as with learning goals for the pupils in various groups and as individuals. The school council is different from other practices that recognise and support pupils in that it offers pupils a collective voice, or voices and a sense of agency in contributing to an effective and enjoyable experience of school. Through its process, not just in meetings but also in a class wide discussions. In addition, according to Taylor and Johnson (2002:86) "the school council can offer the possibility through the democratic means of influencing and facilitating change in a way which is positively affecting the school

involvement.” This can produce a sense of pupil empowerment and ownership, which may in turn generate other powerful attitudinal outcomes. Having a school council may however, also raise expectations beyond what is realistic within the framework of the school and this may need explanations as part of the realism attached to the democratic processes.

Schools must also endeavour to include all pupils in their provision for pupils’ voice, not just those actually on the school council who are most comfortable expressing their views in a school context. These will not only that feedback from the pupils speaks for the whole school; it is also a key to meeting Ofsted recommendations in relation to effective citizenship provision. Means by which schools could achieve such participation include making full use of councillor elections to involve pupils, having a system of class and year group meetings fetching into the whole school council, providing different opportunities for pupils to raise items for consideration and having a two-way communication between the school council and the rest of the school. More innovative approaches to emerge from the research include use of an email facility for submitting comments and suggestions and open and self-selective membership of the school council. Approaches which combine representative and participatory and participatory forms of democracy seem to be particularly effective.

The study also suggests supporting the pupils with special needs to participate in school councils. This strategy would benefit the school greatly as this would design a provision for pupils’ voice that can accommodate a wide spectrum of the abilities and disabilities where pupils require very high levels of direction, schools should also recognise that the pupils with special needs should voice out.

Not only that the study further revealed that training and support for pupils is essential if they are to contribute effectively to decision making. Pupils involved in school councils will need support in terms of juggling their new responsibilities and managing their new role. They can also benefit from specific skills training, particularly in relation to managing meetings. Council members may need help in managing the expectations of their peers and benefit from guidance that helps them and their peers understand the purposes of pupil voice, what proposals will and will not be feasible and the time it can take to achieve change.

The importance of other issues that schools will need to address depends partly on the main driver behind their provision for pupil voice. For example, where the central interest is in children rights and parents' rights in relation to decision about schooling. All schools should of course demonstrate the link to the curriculum key. Apart from that other findings advocated for school councils to be involved in development planning. Schools using pupil's voice as a vehicle for school improvement should also consider whole school survey and involving pupils in lesson observation and in the staff appointment process through the school council.

The other strategy according to the finding was to ensure that parents and pupils through their school councils influenced the discussions affecting them. Also the school management to seek the views of the school council before they made decisions on certain matters. Furthermore, school administration was also required to inform their school councils on how the recommendations have taken into account when decisions related to their recommendations were made. This is in line with Ezekiel (2009:84) who postulates, "Including school councils in the development or revision of policies and guidelines or the implementation of education initiatives affirms their roles as key partners in the education system".

The absence of this collaborative strategy necessitates the creation of conflicts of interests, which is very detrimental to the operationalisation of the school councils. The study also indicated the need for government to increase funding to schools as one way of making the school councils operate effective. One respondent attributed inconsistency in the meetings of the school council to lack of finances. Especially this time in Zambia where the Ministry of General Education has reduced school fees to 200 and 150 ZMK per term. This was said to have hampered the operations of the school councils. Furthermore, schools needed to engage in income generating activities for their sustainability in terms of operations.

The findings of the study suggested that in order for the school councils to stay focused on their mandate and while playing a significant role, it was important that they acted within the scope of their duties that are outlined in the Ministry of General Education regulations and policies. These regulations and policies should be part of every council member's package and should be revealed carefully during the orientation of all new council members.

The findings further revealed that it was important for all members to clearly understand the regulations and policies so that they know where the boundaries lie in terms of what it is and what is not within the scope of their duties. This emerged because of some members of the school councils who did not know the areas of operations of the council, especially the pupils.

The crucial role played by the school council in the school management cannot be overstated. For them to operate effectively, it is important that school councils take time periodically to discuss and evaluate what it has been doing. According to the findings, all for often school councils find that there is so much to do that there is little time left to reflect or assess their direction and practices.

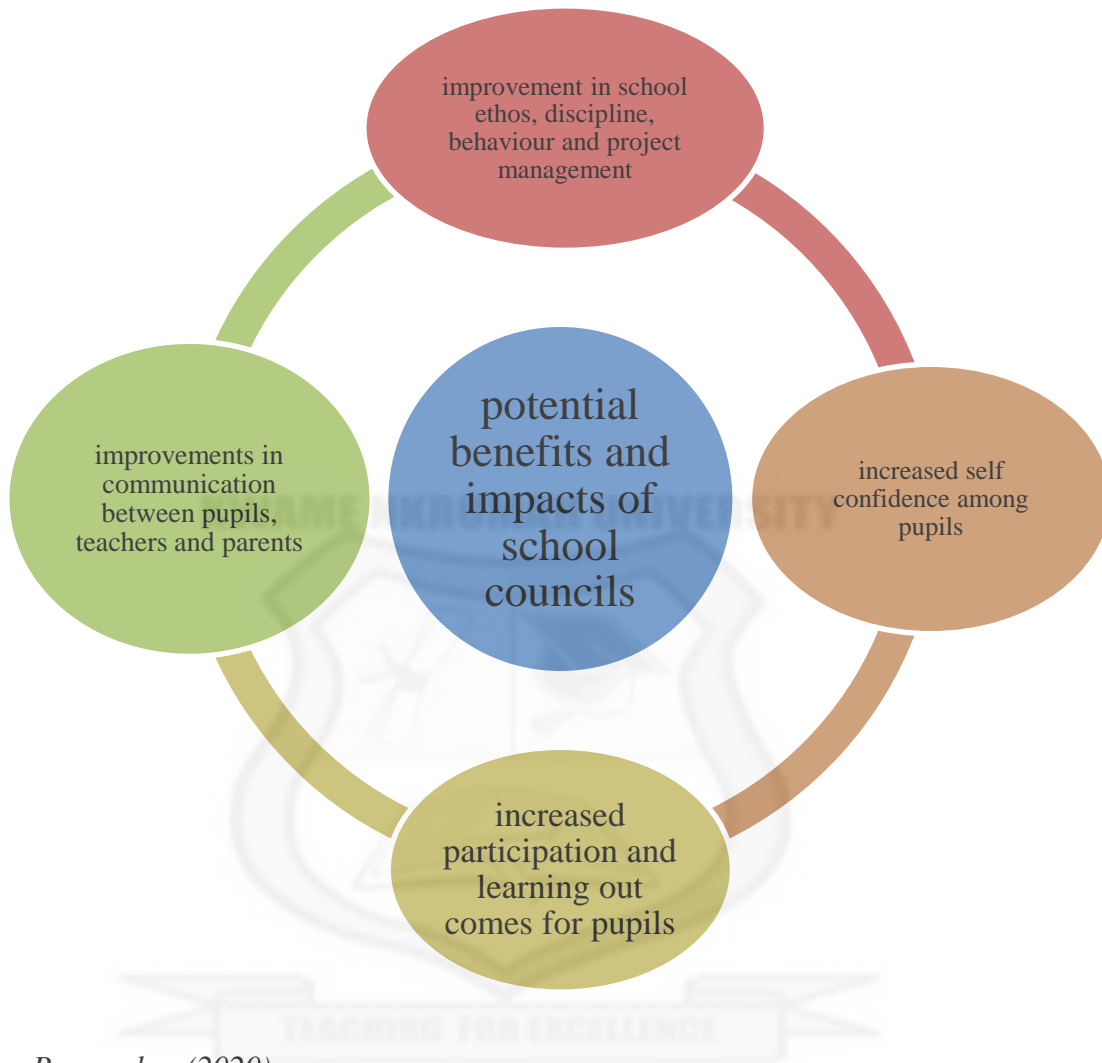
The evaluation of the school council is important; this can be one way of assessing its effectiveness in the school management. This is in line with Luescher (2013:84) posit, it is good governance for the school council to regularly review how it operates. The right time to do this according to Luescher is at the end of the calendar year or immediately before a new election.

The study also revealed the lack of finances as one of the major factors hindering the operations of school councils. To overcome this challenge, the study revealed adequate funding to the schools so that most important activities of the institutions are carried out by the school councils to avoid managerial dictations on penitent issues. Further study suggested the school council to engage in the school income generating activities as one way of strengthening the capacity of the council to participate fully in the school management.

5.5 Benefits of having a learners' school council

The study revealed quite a good number of benefits of having school councils in schools as illustrated in the figure below.

Figure 5.2 Key benefits and effects of having an efficient school council



Source: Researcher (2020)

These benefits from the school councils are discussed below.

5.5.1 Increased self-Confidence among pupils

The evidence points to improvements in self-confidence for pupils who take part in school councils. This thought to be result of getting recognition for good work, seeing suggestions being carried out, having their opinions respected, acting as advocates and having a greater sense of provide or ownership. Collaborative working was also thought to play in increasing self-esteem as indicated by the respondents.

5.5.2 Increased participation and learning outcomes for pupils

School councils were found to be increasing participation in school life leading to a great sense of responsibility and ownership. They can facilitate pupil involvement in decisions about implementation of policies and practices. Supporting what is often referred to as the “pupils” voice. A representative school council therefore has the potential to involve pupils and parents in important decision and leads to greater participation in school life.

Evidence suggests that pupil councillors often demonstrated improved learning outcomes, particularly around communication skills, experience of meetings, leadership, political grounding and taking increased responsibility. In terms of grounding democratic processes, pupils learn how to ask others views, be a representative argue a point of view and take different things into account in decision making.

5.5.3 Improvements in Communication between Pupils, Teachers and Parents

Linked to increased participation in school life, the researcher found that school councils can improve school communication among administrators, teachers. In some cases, a school council can be viewed as a vehicle for facilitating this communication and to contribute to the smooth running of the school.

5.5.4 Improvement in school ethos, discipline, behaviour and project management

The findings revealed many advantages of having school councils in relation to school ethos that include promotion of good positive learning environment and caring school atmosphere that is supportive and inclusive to learners and teachers.

5.5 Recommendations from respondents

The findings suggest that school councils can play a role in improving behavior in schools. As the school council enables pupils’ observer lesson and feedback to teachers on various aspects of teaching and learning. Apart from that the school council identifies the income generating activities and carrying them out effectively. The findings revealed that in some cases, there is a

weak interpretation or understanding of the purpose of the school council. In some schools studied pupils are not clear about what they want to achieve in the school council.

Participants from the study indicated that the learners' councils were one of the platforms where the school management collaborated well with pupils and members of the community. Respondents further indicated that pupils' behaviour was regulated as pupils were fully involved in matters affecting their wellbeing at school. The school administrators added on to state that council's discussions and actions are focused on improving the quality of school programs and increasing the level of learner's achievements. Learners that do not focus on improving the school teaching environment should not be brought to the school council table thus should not be added to the agenda. It is the responsibility of the chairperson, in collaboration with the head teacher to determine if a proposed agenda item is suitable issue for the school council to address. The learners' council is not a forum to address individual teacher, parent, pupil or personal issues. School administrators also further submitted that learners' council are accountable to their school board and the school community. They are responsible for doing what is in the best interest of the school and all of the learners collectively. Learners' councils are also responsible following the bylaws of the board. Learners' councils according to the findings from school administration promote transparency as council actions and decisions are communicated to school community through their meeting minutes. The minutes are posted to a bulletin board in the school and to the school's website with hard copies made available upon request. Community members may choose to attend school council meetings, as they are open to the public and may choose, where appropriate speak on an issue of importance to them. Individuals and groups wishing to speak on an issue must submit a request to the chairperson and head teacher in advance. To encourage active participation by community members it is important that the date and time place of the council meeting and agenda items be communicated to the school community, the head teacher posited.

One major strategy to encourage the participation of learners' councils in school planning and management was through networking. It emerged from the study that school council members should be collaborating with other members of the council from different schools so that they could share ideas and compare notes. This cannot only bring about exposure but also learning new ideas and strategies on how to carry out certain plans, projects and programs for the

institution. The other strategy according to the finding was to ensure that parents and pupils through their school councils influenced the discussions affecting them.

As part of this review, councils may consider their standing orders, their subcommittees and the effectiveness of their meetings. It is important that school councils and individual councillors evaluate their operations. The investigations also revealed that for the school councils to effectively participate in the school management there is need for capacity building for the councillors. Training of the school councillors can be either collectively or individually. The aim of the training is to equip the councillors especially pupils with skills and expertise so that they are able to contribute confidently and effectively in the higher level council meetings. This is so because the preliminary findings showed that some pupil councillors lack skills and expertise to contribute effectively in the meetings. As supported by Milar (2003:91) who postulates “an effective and pro-active school council is a key factor in a successful school.” To concur with Milar, the most successful school councils have a wide range of skills and expertise.

5.6 Conclusion

This chapter discussed the findings presented in the previous chapter using the study objectives. This discussion leads to the conclusion and recommendations in the next chapter.

CHAPTER SIX

CONCLUSION, RECOMMENDATIONS AND SUGGESTION FOR FUTURE STUDIES

6.0 Introduction

The previous chapter discussed the research findings presented in chapter four. This chapter now presents the conclusion, recommendations and suggestions for future studies.

6.1 Conclusion of the study

Form the findings of the study, the researcher concludes that the learner's school councils existed in the schools that were understudy. However, the school council had challenges surrounding their operations that include lack of clarity around the purpose of the councils. The researcher study found out there was lack of pupil engagement in the school council whereby the school administration plays the significant role in its running, but other staff remained marginalised in the school councils. It was evidently revealed that the procedures used to run school councils, which are based on representative democratic practice, require high levels of literacy, which has the potential to discriminate against younger or less literate children. Apart from that, lack of organisation, the timing of meetings, the provision of feedback to the peers, teachers and other staff and excessive bureaucracy. In addition, the tension about roles and responsibilities in school with a perfect system were also found to be potential challenging issues. Putting straight, there were no sound student councils on the ground in the research areas and this meant that there was likelihood that there were few or no students' councils in the district and province at large this culminates into national level where the researcher perceives that the situation may not be of any difference with the area which was under study. This made the researcher to conclude that school councils only existed on paper and never on the ground.

6.2 Recommendations made by the researcher

From the above conclusion, the researcher would like to make the following recommendation in line with the study in relation to student councils in schools.

The Government should train managers and administrators councillors and guidance teachers in handling conflicts within schools. The sad teachers should be equipped in understanding how student participation would ease their work to curbing and avoiding conflicts between the administrators and students. This means that the government needs to set aside more funds aimed at training teachers on how to engage other stakeholders in day to day management of the schools. The curriculum for teachers should as well include stakeholder management and engagement.

During management of schools the managers and administrators (including councillor) should always endeavour to engage everyone within the school community and the surrounding areas. Interactions will help prevent or cure the conflicts that might arise. The government of the republic of Zambia should come up with deliberate policies which allow teachers, learners, community members and the neighbours to come together, not only in Annual General Meetings (AGMs) but as often as possible in order to share ways and means of finding solutions that different stakeholders have and find developmental programmes for the benefit of the learners.

The government should work with teachers' professional associations such as Basic Teacher Union of Zambia (BETUZ), Professional Teacher Union of Zambia (PROTUZ), Secondary Teachers' Union of Zambia (SESTUZ) and other relevant agencies to disseminate and sensitise information on good governance and practice in relation to school student councils so that learners can participate generally towards development in terms of learning. This will eventually mean that all schools in Zambia will have Learner councils, perhaps by exercising the powers already passed under the 2011 Education Act.

The government, the Ministry of General Education and other Education Agencies through the Guidance and Counselling, Standards and Evaluations frameworks should encourage sorts of school councils and such other means of promoting pupil voice that have been demonstrated as effective in meeting specific aims that are set by schools and the relevant ministries pertaining to dialogue and everyone engagement.

That each school needs to demonstrate consistently its core values of cooperation with pupils, mutual respect and a commitment to inclusion, diversity and equity as these will win respect and

favour in terms of management of the schools as learning and teaching will take place in a standardised way for the benefit of the learners and administration.

The administrators and managers of the schools should ensure that the environment within the school is ideal for learners' councils to easily be formed and participate in governance of the institutions for the sake of working together. Management should make it possible for formation of councils within the premises. Suffocation of such good cause will hinder participation and hence promote conflicts between learner and teachers.

Allocating of resources by the school administrators and managers in school budget for activities supported by the learners' council will help to raise a council's status within a school in that they have a portion of the meagre resources within school. The schools should endeavour to create clear links between their school councils and their wider governance structures in relation to School leadership should encourage and facilitate the development of school councils as a valuable component of their overall provision for pupils' voice. They should try to involve their school councils in all aspects of school life: i.e. not only environmental/facilities means but also teaching and learning issues, including behaviour policies.

In view of the significant relationship established between school governance and school council participation in the management of schools, the extent of pupils' participation could be increased by providing capacity building to the school councillors especially to the pupils who are the major stakeholders. This could be through networking activities in order to increase the learning experiences of the members. School management is encouraged to ensure that pupils' contributions at meetings are made to count in decision-making process even in issues of finance and school fees disbursement.

6.3 Suggestions for future studies

The researcher suggests that there should be more future studies of the same magnitude in different districts and provinces in Zambia to ascertain the presence of student councils so that the recommendations can be made to the government and other relevant authorities that are championing collective action for the purpose of democracy and development which will be appreciated by at least every stakeholder. There should be more studies on how best the student

councils can be of value to the management in resolving disputes that might arise between school management and the students. More studies should be done to access the causes of student riots and demonstrations in schools as these could be the result of disengagement between the school management and student participation.

6.4 Conclusion

This chapter is the last chapter in the study that presented the conclusion, recommendations and suggestions for future studies of the study. The study has shown that school councils are in existence in Kapiri Mposhi district of central province. Although they are beleaguered with many challenges, the councils are in existence and need empowerment to make them more participatory.



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APPENDICES

Appendix I: Questionnaires for school Administrators and Teachers

Davies Mwewa is my name, a master's degree student at Kwame Nkrumah University, carrying out a study entitled: *Evaluating the participation of learners' councils in management of three secondary schools in Kpiri-Mposhi district*. You have been purposively selected as a respondent to answer this questionnaire. Your responses to the questions will be purely for academic reason and will be treated with discretion. Your collaboration will be highly treasured.

Circle/ Mark X the number against the appropriate response or fill in the blank space provided

Position: (1) Head Teacher/Deputy Head Teacher (2) Teacher (Prefect Coordinator/Counselor)

Section A: Existence of learners' councils in schools

- 1 Do you understand what a learners' council mean? (1) YES (2) NO
- 2 Explain your answer above.....
.....
- 3 Is there a learners' council in your school? (1) YES (2) NO
- 4 If your answer was 'YES' above, what is the composition of the learners' council?.....
.....
- 5 If your answer was 'NO' why is there no learners' council at your school?
- 6 What do you think are the roles of learners' council play in the school? List the main roles below.
 - a)
 - b)
 - c)
 - d)

Section B: Extent of participation of learners' councils in school planning and management

- 7 Does the learners' council participate in your school administration? (1) YES (2) NO
- 8 How effective is the learners' council contributions to the management of the school?
- 9 If your answer is 'YES' for above question, at what stage do you involve the learners' council participate in school management?

- a) At every management meeting
- b) During the PTA meetings
- c) On daily planning and management of the school
- d) Whenever the learners' council is called upon
- e) Not sure

Section C: strategies to be used to encourage participation of learners' councils in school planning and management

10 Would you recommend that every school should have learners' council? Explain your answer

.....
.....

11 What are the benefits of having learners' school council participation in the school management?

.....

12 Make recommendations to Ministry General of Education can do to improve the school council participation in the management of this secondary school and other secondary schools at large?.....

.....
.....

The end, thank you

Appendix II: Interview Guide for Parents

Position: (a) PTA chairperson. (b) PTA vice chairperson

- 1 For how long have you been serving in board/PTA of this school?.....
- 2 Does the school which you serve have the learners' council? (1) YES (2) NO
- 3 If the answer to question in above is 'YES', what is the role of the learners' school council which you serve?
- 4 Do learners' council participate in the school management? If so, at what stage and how much do they do so? Explain your answer

.....
.....

- 5 How do you rate the relationship learners' council have to management?

(a) Very good (b) Good (c) Moderate (d) Poor (e) Very poor

- 6 Do the pupils play a role in the school management? Explain your answer.....

.....
.....

- 7 Do you think it is important to involve pupils in the school management? Explain your answer.....

.....
.....

- 8 What would wish to be done on learners' formulation in school so that participation is achieved?.....

.....
.....

Thank you

Appendix III Interview Guide for Pupils

Do you understand what learners' council mean? (1) YES (2) NO (3) MUTE

What do you understand about learners' council?

.....

.....

Does your school have a learners' council? (1) YES (2) NO (3) MUTE

Do you participate in school planning and management? (1) YES (2) NO (3) MUTE

How often do you participate in school planning and management?.....

.....

.....

What role do you play when you participate in school planning and management?.....

.....

.....

What do you think are the benefits of having a learners' council participating in school planning and management?.....

.....

.....

If you have a learners' council how active is it?

.....

.....

If you participate in school planning and management does the honour your contribution?.....

.....
.....

What challenges do you face as learners' council in the school planning and management?.....

.....
.....

What do you think the Ministry of General Education and the school administration can do to improve the operations of the learners' councils?.....

.....
.....

KWAME NKRUMAH UNIVERSITY

