

Implementing Global Citizenship Education in Zambian Secondary Schools: Challenges and Opportunities from Civic Education Teachers' Perspectives

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ABSTRACT

Global Citizenship Education (GCED) has emerged as an important educational response to globalization, democratic participation, peacebuilding, and sustainable development. In Zambia, the integration of GCED within the competence-based Civic Education curriculum presents both opportunities and implementation challenges for teachers. This study examined the challenges and opportunities experienced by Civic Education teachers in implementing GCED in selected secondary schools in Lusaka, Zambia. The study was guided by UNESCO's Global Citizenship Education framework and informed by Transformative Learning Theory and Social Constructivist Theory. A convergent parallel mixed-methods design was employed involving 50 Civic Education teachers drawn from five purposively selected public secondary schools. Quantitative data were collected using structured questionnaires, while qualitative data were generated through focus group discussions and documentary analysis. Quantitative data were analysed descriptively, whereas qualitative data were analysed thematically using the constant comparative method. The findings revealed that inadequate teacher training, limited teaching and learning resources, curriculum overload, examination-oriented teaching, weak institutional support, and inadequate digital infrastructure constrain the effective implementation of GCED. Despite these challenges, significant opportunities were identified through learner interest and participation, competence-based curriculum reforms, digital technologies, school-community engagement, and professional partnerships. The study further established that Civic Education provides an important platform for promoting critical thinking, civic responsibility, tolerance, peace, and global awareness among learners. The article concludes that effective implementation of GCED in Zambia requires sustained teacher professional development, improved access to instructional and digital resources, stronger policy support, and greater integration of experiential and learner-centred pedagogies. The study contributes empirical evidence to the growing scholarship on GCED implementation in Sub-Saharan Africa and provides insights for curriculum reform, teacher education, and educational policy.

Keywords: Global Citizenship Education, Civic Education, curriculum implementation, teacher perspectives, secondary schools, Zambia

INTRODUCTION

The global development agenda embodied in the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) has significantly reshaped contemporary educational discourse, particularly in relation to citizenship, sustainability, social justice, and human development. As nations approach the 2030 deadline, increasing attention has shifted toward the future of education in addressing persistent global challenges such as extremism, intolerance, inequality, environmental degradation, and social fragmentation. Within these discussions, Global Citizenship Education (GCED) has emerged as a central educational response aimed at preparing learners to navigate and contribute meaningfully to an increasingly interconnected world (Andreotti, 2011). GCED has consequently become closely associated not only with Education for Sustainable Development (ESD), but also with broader efforts to reorient national education systems toward global responsibility, intercultural understanding, and democratic participation.

Globalization has profoundly transformed how citizenship is understood and practiced. Contemporary notions of citizenship increasingly extend beyond national boundaries toward more cosmopolitan and globally oriented identities (Davies et al., 2018). While globalization has facilitated international cooperation, technological advancement, and global interconnectedness, it has also intensified social inequalities, cultural tensions, exclusion, and political polarization. In response to these complexities, scholars and international organizations such as UNESCO have emphasized the need for education systems to cultivate learners who are critically aware, socially responsible, and capable of engaging constructively with diversity and global challenges. Through GCED, learners are expected to develop knowledge, skills, values, and attitudes that promote peace, tolerance, social justice, and sustainable development (Akkari et al., 2020).

Global Citizenship Education has therefore gained prominence as an important educational framework for responding to the realities of globalization, cultural diversity, democratic participation, and sustainability (Morais et al., 2011). UNESCO conceptualizes GCED as an educational approach that equips learners with the competencies necessary to contribute to peaceful, inclusive, and sustainable societies (Guo, 2014; Wang, 2015). Central to this framework are the cognitive, socio-emotional, and behavioral dimensions of learning, which seek to promote critical understanding of global issues, respect for diversity and human dignity, and active civic engagement. These dimensions align closely with the objectives of Civic Education, particularly within contexts seeking to strengthen democratic citizenship and social cohesion (Zhao, 2012).

In Zambia, recent curriculum reforms have created significant opportunities for integrating GCED principles into secondary school Civic Education. The 2023 Competence-Based Curriculum Framework emphasizes learner-centered pedagogy, critical thinking, problem-solving, civic responsibility, and values-based education. Themes such as human rights, governance, peacebuilding, social justice, environmental sustainability, and responsible citizenship provide an important foundation for embedding GCED within classroom practice. However, despite increasing policy recognition and curriculum alignment, limited empirical research exists on how teachers experience and implement GCED within secondary school contexts. Existing scholarship in Zambia has largely focused on curriculum intentions and policy frameworks, with less attention paid to classroom realities, teacher preparedness, pedagogical practices, and institutional conditions shaping implementation.

The successful implementation of GCED depends significantly on teachers, who serve as the primary mediators between curriculum policy and classroom practice. Teachers' understanding of GCED, their pedagogical approaches, professional preparation, and access to institutional support directly influence how global citizenship learning is interpreted and enacted in schools. Yet, in many developing contexts, including Zambia, teachers often operate within constrained educational environments characterized by curriculum overload, examination-oriented teaching, limited instructional resources, and inadequate professional development opportunities. These realities raise important questions regarding the extent to which GCED ideals can be meaningfully translated into classroom practice.

Against this background, this study examines the challenges and opportunities encountered by Civic Education teachers in implementing Global Citizenship Education in selected secondary schools in Lusaka, Zambia. Specifically, the study explores how teacher preparedness, pedagogical practices, institutional support, and school conditions shape the integration of GCED within Civic Education. By foregrounding teachers' lived experiences and classroom realities, the study contributes contextually grounded evidence to ongoing debates on curriculum reform, teacher agency, and global citizenship education within African education systems (Magasu & Mtonga, 2024). It further contributes to the growing body of scholarship on GCED implementation in Sub-Saharan Africa, where empirical studies examining classroom enactment remain relatively limited.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Global Citizenship Education (GCED) has increasingly emerged as a significant educational framework aimed at preparing learners to participate effectively in an interconnected and rapidly changing world. UNESCO (2025) conceptualizes GCED as an educational approach that promotes knowledge, skills, values, and attitudes necessary for fostering peace, social justice, human rights, environmental sustainability, and active civic participation. Central to GCED is the recognition that contemporary social, political, economic, and

environmental challenges transcend national boundaries and therefore require educational responses that cultivate both local and global responsibility. Although GCED has gained considerable international prominence, its interpretation and implementation remain highly contextual, shaped by differing educational systems, cultural traditions, political ideologies, and institutional capacities.

The literature on GCED demonstrates that while global policy frameworks increasingly advocate for citizenship education that is transformative, participatory, and globally oriented, the translation of these ideals into classroom practice remains uneven across contexts. Existing scholarship reveals persistent tensions between policy aspirations and pedagogical realities, particularly in developing countries where educational systems continue to face resource limitations, curriculum overload, examination pressures, and insufficient teacher preparation. This review therefore examines international, regional, and local scholarship on GCED implementation, with particular attention to teacher perspectives, pedagogical practices, and contextual challenges that inform the present study.

International Perspectives on Global Citizenship Education

International scholarship on GCED highlights both the growing recognition of global citizenship within education systems and the practical difficulties associated with its implementation. In the United States, Wasilewski (2019) investigated secondary school teachers' perceptions of Global Citizenship Education through a qualitative transcendental phenomenological study conducted in a single high school. The study explored how teachers understood and incorporated global education into classroom practice through interviews with educators who self-identified as integrating global perspectives in their teaching. While the study identified important themes such as teachers' self-identification as global citizens and the integration of global perspectives into instruction, its reliance on a small sample drawn from a single institution limits the broader applicability of its findings. The absence of comparative institutional perspectives also constrains understanding of how varying school contexts shape GCED implementation. The present study addresses this limitation by examining Civic Education teachers across multiple secondary schools in Lusaka, thereby providing broader contextual and institutional insights into GCED practice.

Similarly, Wang (2021), in a study conducted in China, examined how Confucian values shape teachers' conceptualizations of GCED in senior secondary schools. The study provides valuable insight into the cultural mediation of global citizenship discourse, demonstrating how local philosophical traditions influence teachers' interpretations of global education. However, the study primarily emphasizes curriculum intentions and philosophical orientations rather than actual classroom implementation. Consequently, it leaves unresolved questions regarding how GCED is operationalized pedagogically within everyday teaching practice. The current study responds to this gap by focusing specifically on teachers' lived classroom experiences within the Zambian context.

In South Korea, Chung (2014) examined tensions between critical and competency-based approaches to GCED within centralized curriculum structures. The study argues that rigid curriculum frameworks may limit transformative pedagogical engagement by prioritizing measurable competencies over critical reflection and social transformation. Although the study offers important conceptual insights into curriculum tensions, its limited classroom-level empirical evidence weakens understanding of how such tensions are negotiated by teachers in practice. The present study extends this discussion by empirically examining how Zambian Civic Education teachers navigate curriculum demands, examination pressures, and transformative GCED objectives within real classroom contexts.

European scholarship similarly points to tensions between GCED policy aspirations and classroom realities. Zollinger (2016) explored how international mobility experiences influence pre-service teachers' understandings of global citizenship, particularly in relation to empathy, tolerance, and intercultural awareness. While the study demonstrates the importance of international exposure in shaping global perspectives, its exclusive focus on pre-service teachers limits understanding of how such perspectives are translated into sustained classroom practice. In contrast, the present study focuses on practicing teachers and the pedagogical strategies they employ in implementing GCED within secondary schools.

Likewise, Symeonidis (2015), in a comparative study of Greece and Sweden, identified a persistent disconnect between GCED policy frameworks and classroom implementation. Although the study provides valuable comparative insights, its predominantly qualitative comparative design limits the extent to which findings can be generalized across educational contexts. The current study builds on this scholarship by employing a mixed-methods approach that integrates questionnaires, focus groups, and documentary analysis to generate a more comprehensive understanding of GCED implementation within Zambian secondary schools.

Collectively, international scholarship demonstrates that while GCED has gained considerable policy recognition, significant challenges remain in translating global citizenship ideals into meaningful classroom practice. The literature further suggests that teacher preparedness, curriculum structures, institutional support, and contextual realities significantly shape the effectiveness of GCED implementation.

Regional Perspectives: Global Citizenship Education in Sub-Saharan Africa

Within Sub-Saharan Africa, efforts to contextualize GCED reveal persistent tensions between progressive educational policy aspirations and constrained classroom realities. Although many educational initiatives seek to align GCED with African socio-cultural contexts, implementation challenges related to teacher preparedness, pedagogical translation, institutional support, and curriculum integration remain prevalent. Consequently, GCED often appears more visible within policy documents and externally funded programmes than within everyday classroom practice.

One significant regional initiative is the Transformative Pedagogy for Learning to Live Together in Southern Africa programme, supported by UNESCO and the Asia-Pacific Centre of Education for International Understanding (APCEIU). The programme promotes teacher empowerment, peacebuilding, and regional solidarity through the integration of Southern African Liberation History into GCED frameworks. While conceptually innovative, the initiative lacks substantial classroom-based empirical evaluation demonstrating how teachers operationalize transformative pedagogy within school contexts. The present study responds to this limitation by examining how Civic Education teachers in Zambia interpret and enact GCED within existing curricular structures and institutional conditions.

Mukwacha (2020), in a mixed-methods study involving Zimbabwean teachers participating in the Connecting Classrooms Programme, found that GCED initiatives can broaden teachers' global awareness and pedagogical orientation. However, the study's focus on a single externally funded programme limits its ability to explain how GCED is sustained within broader educational systems and ordinary classroom practice. The study also pays limited attention to structural classroom constraints and pedagogical diversity. The current study extends this scholarship by examining a wider range of pedagogical experiences and institutional realities shaping GCED implementation in Zambian secondary schools.

Enugu (2024), using World Values Survey data, examined patterns of global citizenship values among African youth and found a stronger preference for security and conformity over universalist global values. While the study provides useful macro-level insights into attitudinal trends, its reliance on secondary survey data constrains understanding of how such values are cultivated through educational processes. The current study addresses this limitation by engaging directly with teachers to examine how global citizenship values are actively constructed through classroom pedagogy and interaction.

In South Africa, UNESCO and Lotz-Sisitka (2011) highlighted the importance of peace education and intercultural learning within post-apartheid educational reforms. Although the study emphasizes the importance of teacher development, it does not sufficiently examine how continuing professional development translates into classroom implementation. Consequently, teacher agency and classroom realities remain underexplored. The present study contributes to this area by focusing specifically on teacher preparedness, instructional practice, and institutional support within Civic Education classrooms.

Other regional initiatives similarly reveal implementation limitations. In Nigeria, short-term interventions introducing Sustainable Development Goals-related global learning themes among headteachers reported positive attitudinal shifts but limited evidence of sustained pedagogical transformation. Likewise, UNICEF-

supported teacher training programmes in Uganda improved awareness of gender equality and conflict resolution but did not explicitly assess the development of GCED competencies or long-term instructional outcomes. These studies collectively demonstrate that while awareness-oriented initiatives are increasingly common, sustained classroom implementation and learner transformation remain insufficiently examined.

Overall, regional scholarship suggests that GCED implementation within Sub-Saharan Africa continues to face systemic challenges related to teacher training, curriculum alignment, institutional support, and contextual adaptation. The literature further indicates a need for empirically grounded studies examining how teachers interpret and implement GCED within everyday classroom contexts.

Local Perspectives: Global Citizenship Education in Zambia

In Zambia, GCED is increasingly incorporated within secondary school Civic Education, particularly through recent curriculum reforms such as the 2023 Zambia Education Curriculum Framework. These reforms emphasize competence-based learning, critical thinking, civic responsibility, human rights, and values-based education, thereby creating opportunities for integrating GCED principles into classroom instruction. However, despite growing policy recognition, empirical evidence on actual implementation remains relatively limited.

Muleya et al. (2024), in a mixed-methods study on teaching and learning through GCED and transformative education in selected secondary schools in Lusaka Province, identified teachers as key agents in fostering globally aware learners through knowledge, skills, and values development. Although the study demonstrates the importance of teacher agency in promoting GCED, it largely assumes that pedagogical engagement automatically translates into learner transformation. Limited attention is given to whether learners actually develop sustained global citizenship competencies after completing secondary education. Consequently, the relationship between teaching practices and post-school global citizenship outcomes remains insufficiently established.

Similarly, Mulubale (2024), in a descriptive study of teachers' proficiencies in GCED in Zambia, found that many teachers reported inadequate understanding and preparation for teaching GCED effectively. While the study identifies important barriers such as insufficient training and lack of standardized implementation guidelines, it does not sufficiently examine how these limitations affect learner preparedness for global citizenship beyond the classroom. As a result, the link between teacher competence and learner outcomes remains largely inferential.

Mulala (2023), in a qualitative study examining the contribution of Civic Education to transformative education in secondary schools in Kabwe District, found that Civic Education promotes critical thinking, moral development, and social responsibility among learners. However, the study does not explicitly frame these findings within GCED discourse nor assess whether such competencies translate into broader global citizenship readiness after graduation. This leaves unresolved questions regarding the long-term impact of Civic Education on learners' ability to participate meaningfully within global contexts.

Finally, Muleya (2023), in an evaluation report on the Promotion of Global Citizenship Education and Transformative Education for Sustainability in Zambia, documented positive teacher perceptions following a short-term GCED training workshop involving Civic Education, Religious Education, and History teachers. Although participants reported improved awareness and engagement, the study does not assess whether the training resulted in sustained classroom implementation or enhanced learner outcomes. This reflects a broader trend within Zambian GCED scholarship, where teacher engagement and training are frequently examined without corresponding analysis of classroom enactment and learner preparedness.

The reviewed literature therefore demonstrates that although GCED is increasingly recognized within Zambian educational policy and curriculum reform, significant gaps remain regarding its classroom implementation, teacher preparedness, pedagogical practices, and learner outcomes. Existing studies have largely focused on policy intentions, teacher perceptions, or short-term interventions, with limited attention to the everyday realities shaping GCED implementation in secondary schools. The present study addresses these gaps by examining

Civic Education teachers' lived experiences, pedagogical practices, institutional challenges, and opportunities associated with implementing GCED within selected secondary schools in Lusaka, Zambia.

Theoretical and Conceptual Framework

This study is anchored in Transformative Learning Theory, Social Constructivist Theory, and UNESCO's Global Citizenship Education (GCED) framework. Together, these frameworks provide a multidimensional perspective for understanding how Civic Education teachers interpret, mediate, and implement GCED within secondary school contexts. The integration of these theoretical perspectives allows the study to examine not only the intended outcomes of GCED, but also the pedagogical processes, institutional conditions, and transformative dimensions that shape its implementation in practice.

Transformative Learning Theory, advanced by Mezirow (1991), provides a critical lens for understanding how teachers and learners develop new perspectives through reflection, dialogue, and experience. The theory posits that learning becomes transformative when individuals critically examine previously held assumptions and adopt new ways of understanding themselves and the world around them. Within the context of GCED, Transformative Learning Theory is particularly relevant because global citizenship requires learners to engage critically with issues such as inequality, human rights, cultural diversity, sustainability, and social justice. The theory therefore helps explain how Civic Education teachers move beyond traditional transmission-oriented pedagogies toward more reflective, participatory, and globally responsive forms of teaching. Through critical reflection and engagement with global realities, teachers and learners are able to develop the values, attitudes, and competencies associated with responsible global citizenship (Inguaggiato et al., 2025).

Complementing this perspective is Social Constructivist Theory, associated primarily with Vygotsky (1978), which emphasizes that knowledge is socially constructed through interaction, collaboration, and dialogue. The theory suggests that learning does not occur in isolation but emerges through social engagement within specific cultural and institutional contexts. In relation to GCED, Social Constructivist Theory explains how learners develop understanding of global issues such as peace, democracy, human rights, and environmental sustainability through classroom interaction, peer collaboration, and engagement with real-world experiences. The theory further highlights the importance of teacher facilitation, scaffolding, collaborative learning environments, and learner-centred pedagogy in developing meaningful citizenship competencies. Within Civic Education classrooms, this perspective underscores the importance of dialogue, debate, inquiry-based learning, and cooperative activities in enabling learners to construct shared understandings of global citizenship.

In addition to these theoretical perspectives, UNESCO's Global Citizenship Education framework (2015) provides the conceptual foundation for the study by defining the core dimensions and expected outcomes of GCED. UNESCO conceptualizes GCED through three interrelated domains: the cognitive, socio-emotional, and behavioral dimensions of learning. The cognitive domain focuses on learners' acquisition of knowledge and critical understanding of global issues and interconnectedness. The socio-emotional domain emphasizes the development of values, attitudes, empathy, respect for diversity, and a sense of shared humanity. The behavioral domain focuses on active participation, responsible action, and civic engagement at both local and global levels. This framework is particularly important for interpreting how GCED is integrated into Civic Education and how teachers facilitate the development of globally responsible learners.

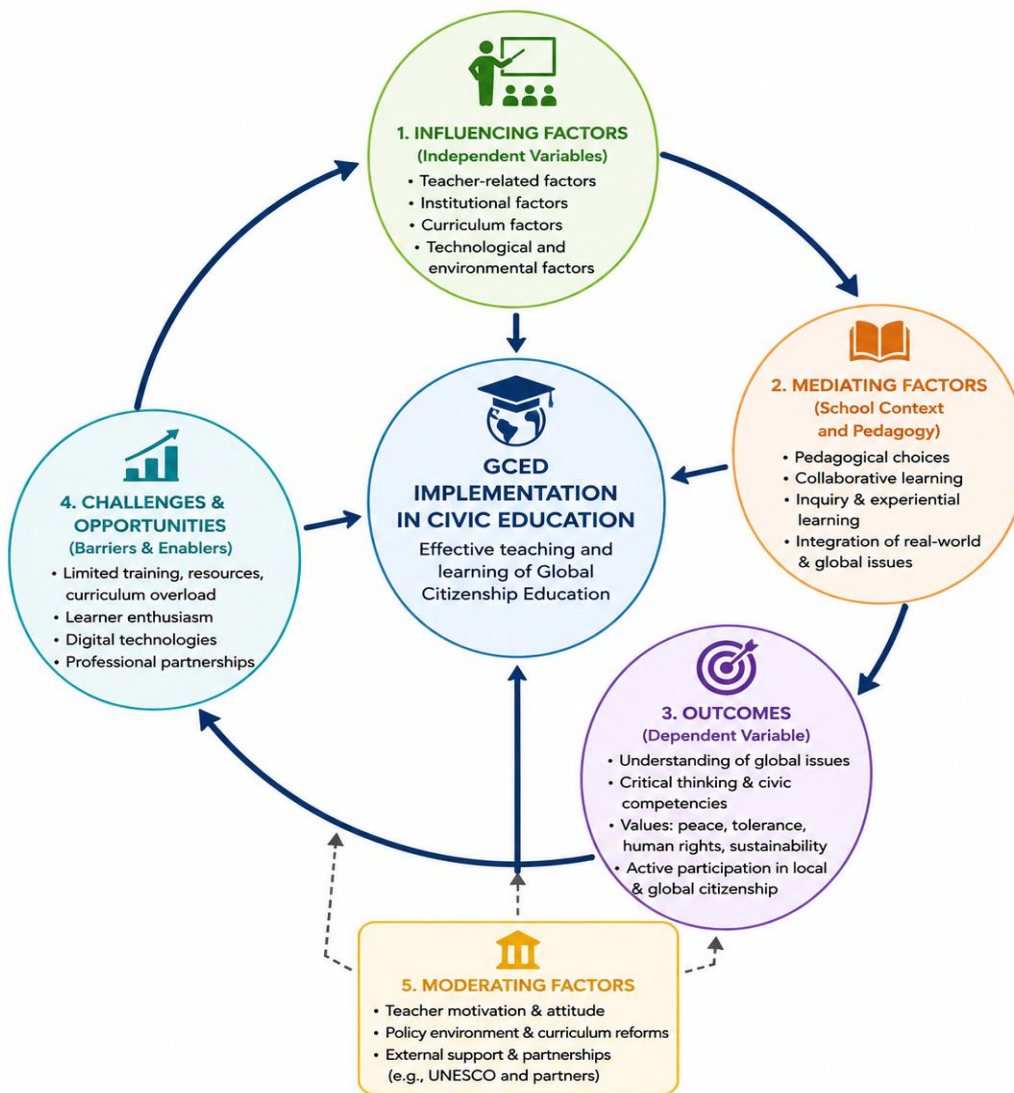


Figure 1: Conceptual Framework of GCED Implementation in Civic Education

Taken together, these frameworks provide a comprehensive analytical lens for examining the implementation of GCED within secondary schools. Transformative Learning Theory explains how teachers and learners develop new perspectives and transformative consciousness through critical reflection. Social Constructivist Theory illuminates how such learning is socially mediated and co-constructed through classroom interaction and collaborative pedagogical processes. UNESCO's GCED framework, meanwhile, provides the normative and conceptual benchmarks against which GCED implementation can be understood and evaluated. As Pittman (2017) observes, transformative global citizenship learning requires both critical reflection and collaborative engagement if learners are to develop the competencies necessary for meaningful participation in an interconnected world.

Conceptually, the study views the implementation of Global Citizenship Education within Civic Education as a dynamic and interdependent process shaped by multiple interacting factors rather than as a linear curricular activity. At the centre of the framework is the integration of GCED into teaching and learning processes, where learners are expected to acquire global knowledge, civic competencies, critical thinking abilities, and values that strengthen their awareness of global interconnectedness (Davies et al., 2018).

This implementation process is influenced by several interrelated factors. First are teacher-related variables, including teachers' professional training, pedagogical competence, confidence, conceptual understanding of GCED, and familiarity with learner-centred instructional approaches. Second are institutional factors, such as school leadership support, availability of teaching and learning resources, institutional culture, and access to professional development opportunities. Third are curriculum-related factors, including the extent to which

syllabus content, assessment structures, and curriculum objectives align with GCED competencies and transformative learning goals. Finally, technological and environmental factors, such as access to information and communication technologies (ICTs), digital literacy resources, internet connectivity, and partnerships with external organizations, also shape the effectiveness of GCED implementation (UNESCO, 2025).

These factors influence GCED implementation through mediating pedagogical processes, particularly learner-centred teaching approaches, inquiry-based learning, collaborative activities, classroom dialogue, experiential learning, and the integration of real-world global issues into instruction. The framework assumes that meaningful GCED implementation occurs when teachers actively engage learners in reflective, participatory, and contextually relevant learning experiences rather than relying solely on traditional content transmission methods.

The outcomes of effective GCED implementation are reflected in learners' development of critical thinking skills, civic competencies, global awareness, and values such as tolerance, peace, empathy, respect for diversity, human rights, and environmental responsibility. Effective implementation is also expected to promote active participation in civic and community activities, thereby strengthening learners' capacity to function as informed and responsible global citizens.

The framework further recognizes the influence of moderating factors that may either strengthen or constrain GCED implementation. These include teacher motivation and attitudes, national education policies, curriculum reforms, examination systems, and support from international organizations and educational partners (Yoko, 2016). Such factors shape the broader policy and institutional environment within which teachers operate and therefore influence the extent to which transformative and participatory forms of GCED can be realized in practice.

Overall, the conceptual framework suggests that effective implementation of Global Citizenship Education depends on the interaction between teacher preparedness, institutional support, curriculum alignment, pedagogical practice, and enabling policy environments. It therefore positions GCED implementation as a complex educational process requiring both systemic support and teacher agency if transformative global citizenship learning is to be meaningfully achieved within secondary school Civic Education classrooms.

METHODOLOGY

This study adopted a convergent parallel mixed-methods design within a pragmatic research paradigm to examine Civic Education teachers' perspectives on the implementation of Global Citizenship Education (GCED) in selected secondary schools in Lusaka, Zambia. The design combined descriptive and explanatory approaches to capture both the prevalence of teachers' perceptions and the contextual factors shaping GCED implementation (Creswell, 2014; Zohrabi, 2013). While the descriptive dimension enabled the identification of existing practices and perceptions, the explanatory dimension facilitated deeper analysis of the institutional, pedagogical, and structural factors influencing implementation (Parahoo, 1997; Sharma, 2019).

The study was conducted in Lusaka District, Zambia's capital city, which was selected due to its educational diversity, concentration of public secondary schools, and exposure to diverse social, political, and global influences relevant to GCED. The target population comprised 772 qualified Civic Education teachers in public secondary schools, according to the DEBS Lusaka Planning Department (2025). A sample of 50 teachers was drawn from five purposively selected public secondary schools. Participants included head teachers, heads of department, guidance teachers, and classroom teachers to ensure varied institutional and pedagogical perspectives. Purposive and convenience sampling techniques were employed, while the Taro Yamane (1967) formula informed sample size estimation.

Quantitative data were collected through structured Google Forms questionnaires containing Likert-scale items on teachers' perceptions, pedagogical practices, preparedness, and challenges associated with GCED implementation. Qualitative data were generated through five school-based focus group discussions involving two teachers per school, alongside documentary analysis of Civic Education syllabus documents, lesson plans, school reports, and policy materials related to GCED.

Data collection was conducted after obtaining institutional approval and informed consent from participants. Ethical principles of confidentiality, anonymity, and voluntary participation were observed throughout the study. Methodological triangulation involving questionnaires, focus groups, and documentary analysis enhanced the credibility and trustworthiness of the findings (Mathison, 1988; Morgan, 2007).

Quantitative data were analysed descriptively using frequencies, percentages, and visual trends generated through Google Sheets. Qualitative data were analysed thematically using the constant comparative method to identify recurring themes and patterns in teachers' experiences and perceptions regarding GCED implementation. Findings from both data strands were integrated during interpretation to establish convergence, complementarity, and divergence across the data sources.

Findings of the Study

This section presents the findings on the challenges and opportunities associated with the implementation of GCED in selected secondary schools in Lusaka Province. The presentation integrates quantitative questionnaire data and qualitative findings from focus group discussions and documentary analysis.

Challenges in Implementing Global Citizenship Education

The findings reveal that Civic Education teachers experience several interconnected challenges affecting the effective implementation of GCED. These include inadequate resources, limited instructional time, insufficient professional preparation, restricted experiential learning opportunities, and sensitive pedagogical concerns.

Inadequate Resources and Infrastructure

Quantitative findings indicate uncertainty regarding the availability of adequate GCED teaching resources. As shown in Figure 2, 21 respondents (42%) neither agreed nor disagreed that sufficient resources were available for teaching GCED effectively, while 12 respondents (24%) disagreed or strongly disagreed.

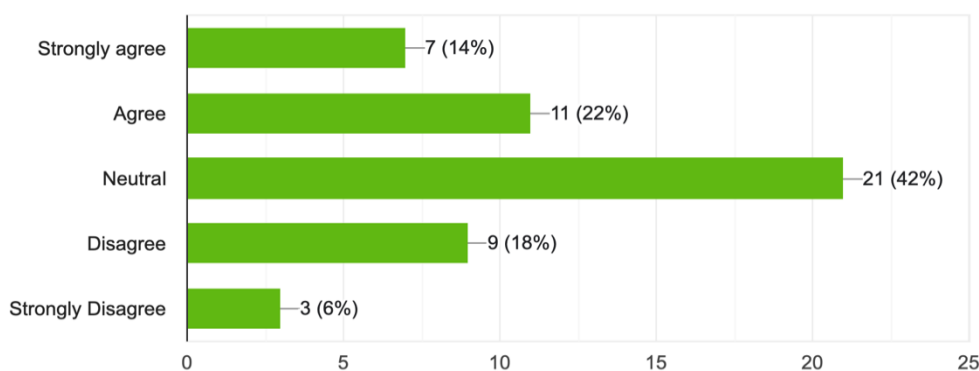


Figure 2: Sufficient GCED Resources

Qualitative findings showed that teachers associated these challenges with poor internet connectivity, inadequate digital infrastructure, and limited access to research facilities. Teacher 3a explained:

No internet for learners and no phones, computer laboratory is restricted to pupils taking computer studies only not other pupil to research.

Similarly, Teacher 3b stated:

Since we are living in a digital era, where we need also learners to actively use digital technology to share information... it is difficult for them, due to the prohibition of phones, tablets and other electrical devices.

These findings indicate that limited digital access restricts learners' engagement with global information and contemporary global issues.

Time Constraints and Curriculum Structure

Findings on curriculum support for GCED implementation revealed mixed responses. Figure 3 shows that 36% of respondents agreed or strongly agreed that the curriculum adequately supports GCED integration, while another 36% disagreed or strongly disagreed. Fourteen respondents (28%) remained neutral.

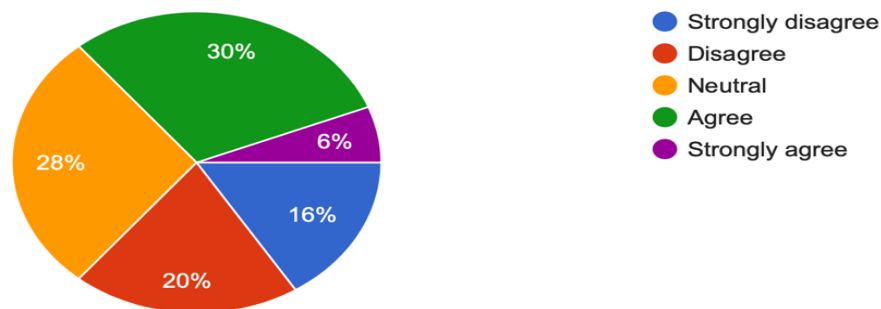


Figure 3: Curriculum GCED Support

Teachers linked these challenges to curriculum congestion and examination pressure. Teacher 4a observed: “No enough time, especially to teach global issues the last grade 12 topic.”

Similarly, Teacher 5a stated:

Time constraints with the last topic global issues in grade 12 and learner’s shift focus to the final examinations.

These findings show that GCED content is often affected by limited teaching time and examination-oriented instruction.

Limited Experiential Learning Opportunities

Teachers also reported limited opportunities for field-based and experiential learning. Teacher 2a explained:

There are long procedures to conduct field trips in schools... no school trips funds, preventing learners from seeing what is being learned in real life.

The same participant further stated: “Learners can’t even visit the dump site very near to school 1.”

Participants linked these limitations to financial constraints and restrictions associated with school funding arrangements.

Teacher Training and Professional Preparedness

Findings regarding teacher preparedness are presented in Figure 4. Twenty-eight respondents (56%) agreed or strongly agreed that teachers were adequately prepared to teach GCED, while 24% were neutral and 18% strongly disagreed.

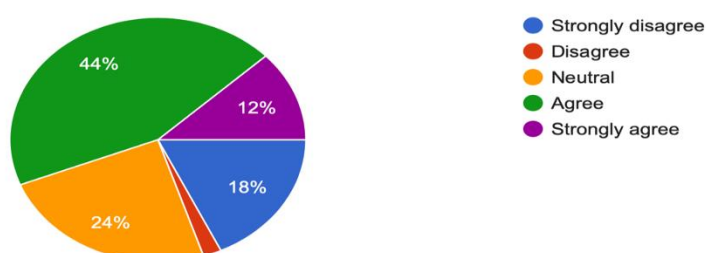


Figure 4: Limitation of Teacher Training

Qualitative findings indicated concerns regarding limited professional development opportunities. Teacher 2a cited: “Lack of teacher training.” Teacher 1b further stated:

Civic education in Zambia is too narrow, limited to Zambian contexts... sometimes teachers even look more disorganized... due to poor training and lack of adequate materials.

These findings indicate variations in teacher preparedness and confidence in handling global issues.

Pedagogical and Emotional Challenges

Some teachers reported challenges associated with teaching sensitive global issues. Teacher 5b explained:

When you are teaching HIV and AIDS topic... you would see some of the learners being uncomfortable... they may think you are just... exposing their status.

The findings suggest that certain GCED topics require careful pedagogical handling and emotional sensitivity.

Opportunities in Implementing Global Citizenship Education

Despite the identified challenges, teachers reported several opportunities that support the implementation of GCED, including learner interest, partnerships, technology, and professional development initiatives.

Strong Learner Interest and Engagement

Figure 5 shows that 37 respondents (74%) agreed or strongly agreed that learners demonstrate interest in global issues and GCED-related content.

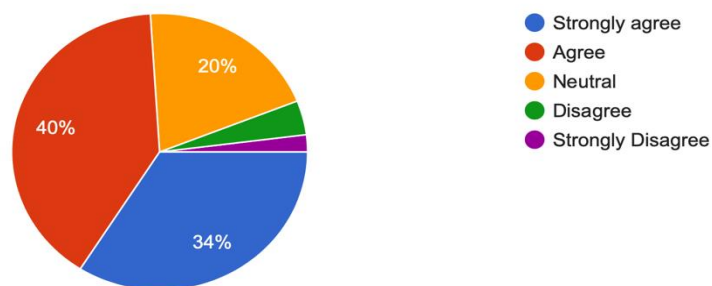


Figure 5: Students' Interest in GCED

The findings indicate that learner enthusiasm provides a supportive environment for GCED implementation.

Partnerships and Collaboration

Teachers identified partnerships with non-governmental organizations, media institutions, and international organizations as important opportunities for supporting GCED implementation. As presented in Figure 6, 58% of respondents agreed that partnerships contribute positively to GCED teaching and learning.

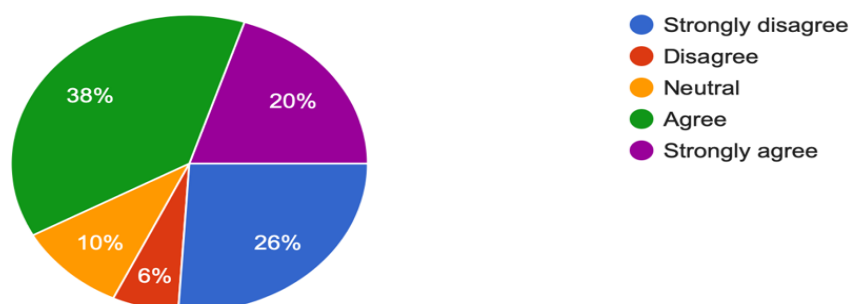


Figure 6: Partnership to Enhance GCED Teaching

Transformative Potential of GCED

Findings presented in Figure 7 show that respondents strongly associated GCED with peacebuilding, tolerance, civic participation, and responsible citizenship. Forty-six percent strongly agreed, while 38% agreed that GCED promotes peace, tolerance, and civic engagement.

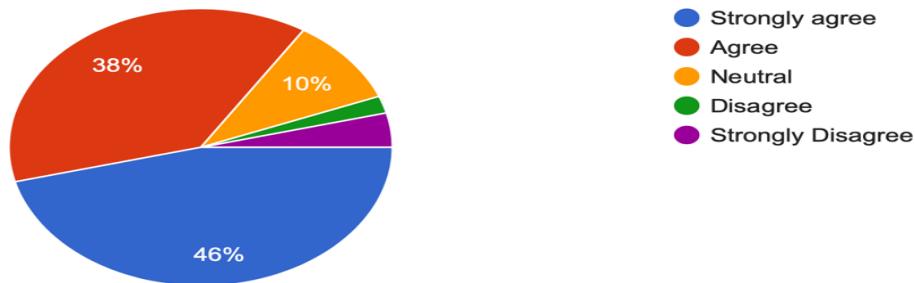


Figure 7: GCED Opportunities such as Peace, Tolerance and Civic Engagement

These findings demonstrate teachers' recognition of GCED as an important tool for social cohesion and democratic participation.

Technology and Digital Learning Opportunities

Teachers also identified technology as an important opportunity for enhancing GCED implementation. Figure 8 indicates that 76% of respondents agreed or strongly agreed that technology and social media facilitate GCED learning.

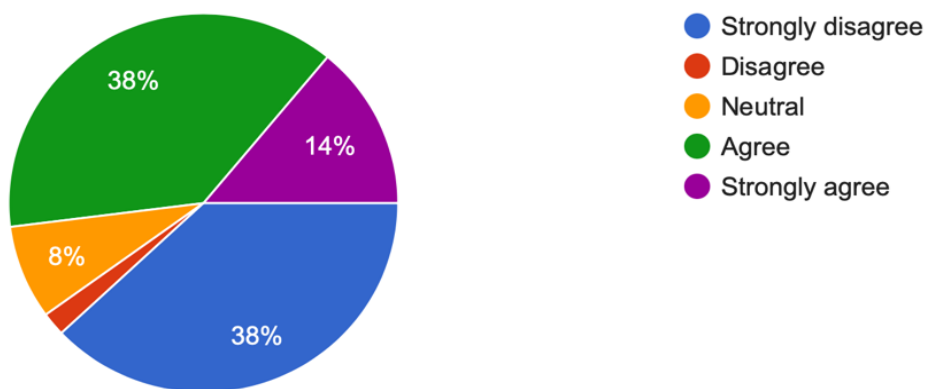


Figure 8: GCED Engagement through Technology

Qualitative findings emphasized the importance of digital tools for research and interactive learning. Teacher 4a stated:

There is a need for computer libraries... and allowing teachers to use phones to show learners academic pictures. Form Ones need technology to research.

Teacher 3a also noted:

No internet for learners and no phones... computer laboratory is restricted to pupils taking computer studies only.

These findings show both the perceived value of technology and the infrastructural limitations affecting its use.

Professional Development and Policy Support

Teachers highlighted workshops, training programmes, and institutional support as opportunities for strengthening GCED implementation. Teacher 1b stated: “Workshops should be made available and accommodate the majority of civic educators.”

Similarly, Teacher 2b explained:

Accessibility to teaching materials, laptops, in-service teacher training, and workshops is needed.

The findings indicate that teachers view professional development as essential for improving GCED delivery.

Reflections and Recommendations from Teachers

Teachers reflected on the institutional, technological, and policy support required to strengthen GCED implementation in secondary schools.

Support and Resources for Effective GCED Implementation

Figure 9 shows that teachers considered digital tools and social media important for effective GCED implementation. Twenty respondents (40%) agreed, while 23 respondents (46%) strongly agreed that digital devices facilitate GCED engagement.

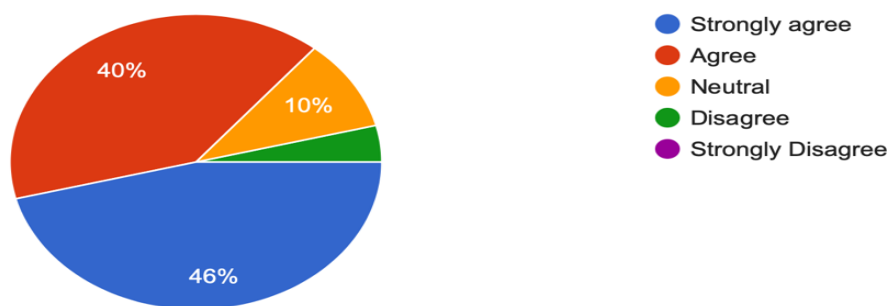


Figure 9: Mainstreaming of GCED into Zambia’s Educational Policy

Teachers recommended improved digital access, partnerships, and experiential learning opportunities. Teacher 4a stated:

School 4 should introduce digital libraries... access to tablets and desktops in the computer laboratory during breaks would be valuable.

Teacher 3b explained:

If we have partners or stakeholders that can support clubs, and funding for learner activities and field trips, it will motivate learners.

Teacher 4b further noted:

Learners should experience GCED beyond the classroom, visiting institutions such as the UN. We also need books, magazines, and digital tools... alongside in-service teacher training.

Policy and School-Level Measures

Participants recommended curriculum integration, controlled use of mobile phones for educational purposes, and increased policy support for GCED. Teacher 5a suggested: “Allowing phones for academic purposes.”

Teacher 2a reflected:

I only knew citizenship but not global citizenship until this interview.... Global citizenship education promotes open-mindedness about global challenges such as pandemics, climate change, and self-sufficiency. If we raise learners with these values and skills, we will have competent adults capable of handling global issues.

The same participant added: “Learners would grow to become responsible, peace-oriented global citizens.”

Teacher 1b emphasized curriculum integration:

GCED could be a standalone topic, or incorporated into other civic education topics, enabling learners to ‘perceive the world in their palm.’

Teacher 2b similarly observed:

Integration of GCED in every topic helps learners understand its relevance from the outset... promoting tolerance and forgiveness, which can help prevent conflicts.

Teacher 4b further stated:

The values and skills we instill in learners determine the adults they will become. Emphasizing empathy, respect, and tolerance can foster peace.

Overall, the findings show that teachers recognize the relevance of GCED and identify both institutional challenges and emerging opportunities influencing its implementation in secondary schools.

DISCUSSION OF FINDINGS

The findings demonstrate that the implementation of Global Citizenship Education (GCED) in selected secondary schools in Lusaka is shaped by a complex interaction between structural constraints, teacher preparedness, curriculum realities, and emerging pedagogical opportunities. While teachers generally acknowledged the importance of GCED in promoting peace, tolerance, civic participation, and global awareness, the study revealed significant institutional and instructional barriers that continue to limit its transformative potential.

One of the major findings relates to inadequate teacher preparation and uneven professional development opportunities. Although some teachers expressed confidence in delivering GCED-related content, qualitative findings revealed important inconsistencies in conceptual understanding and pedagogical readiness. These findings support earlier studies by Mulubale (2024) and Muleya et al. (2024), which found that many teachers in Zambia have limited formal preparation in GCED despite curriculum reforms emphasizing global competencies. Similarly, UNESCO (2015) argues that teachers are central to transformative GCED because they facilitate critical reflection, intercultural dialogue, and participatory learning. Without sustained professional development, teachers often rely on traditional content-transmission approaches rather than transformative and action-oriented pedagogies.

The findings are further illuminated by Transformative Learning Theory (Mezirow, 1991), which emphasizes that meaningful learning occurs when individuals critically reflect on existing assumptions and adopt new perspectives. In the context of this study, the limited exposure of teachers to formal GCED training constrains opportunities for transformative pedagogical practice. Many teachers appear to remain positioned within examination-oriented and teacher-centred instructional traditions, making it difficult to facilitate the reflective and dialogic learning processes central to GCED. The findings therefore suggest that transformative learning cannot occur effectively without corresponding transformation in teacher preparation and professional identity.

The study also revealed that limited teaching and learning resources, inadequate digital infrastructure, and restrictive school technology policies negatively affect GCED implementation. Teachers consistently cited poor internet access, limited digital devices, and insufficient instructional materials as major barriers. These findings

align with broader regional scholarship indicating that curriculum aspirations in Sub-Saharan Africa frequently exceed classroom realities due to resource limitations and institutional constraints. Mukwacha (2020), for example, observed that while GCED initiatives in Zimbabwe promoted global awareness, practical implementation remained constrained by infrastructural limitations and inconsistent institutional support. Similarly, UNESCO and Lotz-Sisitka (2011) note that policy commitments to transformative education often fail to translate into classroom practice when schools lack adequate pedagogical resources and professional support structures.

From the perspective of the conceptual framework underpinning this study, these findings demonstrate the influence of institutional and technological factors on GCED implementation. The framework proposed that effective implementation depends on the interaction between teacher-related variables, institutional conditions, curriculum alignment, and technological environments. The findings confirm this relationship by showing that even where teachers recognize the value of GCED, inadequate infrastructure and institutional support weaken classroom enactment. The inability of learners to access digital technologies or participate fully in research and collaborative learning activities restricts exposure to global knowledge systems and limits opportunities for active citizenship learning.

Curriculum structure and examination pressures also emerged as major constraints. Teachers explained that global issues are often placed at the end of the Grade 12 syllabus, making them vulnerable to omission because of time limitations and examination preparation. This finding reflects observations made by Chung (2014), who argues that centralized and examination-driven curriculum systems often constrain transformative forms of GCED by prioritizing content coverage over critical engagement and learner participation. Similarly, Symeonidis (2015) identified a persistent disconnect between GCED policy aspirations and classroom practice, particularly where teachers operate within rigid curriculum structures.

These findings can further be interpreted through Social Constructivist Theory (Vygotsky, 1978), which emphasizes that learning is socially constructed through interaction, dialogue, and collaborative engagement. GCED, by its nature, requires participatory pedagogies that allow learners to debate global issues, engage in inquiry-based learning, and connect classroom knowledge to real-world experiences. However, the findings show that examination-oriented teaching practices, limited instructional time, and restricted experiential learning opportunities undermine the collaborative and inquiry-driven learning environments required for meaningful global citizenship education. In this context, learning remains largely transmissive rather than socially co-constructed.

The findings relating to limited experiential learning opportunities also reinforce the conceptual framework's emphasis on mediating pedagogical processes. Teachers reported difficulties organizing field trips and community-based learning because of financial and administrative constraints. Yet experiential learning is central to transformative GCED because it allows learners to engage directly with social realities and apply civic knowledge in authentic contexts. The absence of such opportunities reduces GCED to abstract classroom instruction rather than lived civic engagement.

Despite these challenges, the findings identified important opportunities for strengthening GCED implementation. Learner enthusiasm and receptiveness to global issues emerged strongly across the study. Teachers consistently observed that learners were interested in discussions concerning peace, climate change, democracy, human rights, and global interdependence. These findings support international scholarship suggesting that young people are increasingly aware of global challenges and responsive to citizenship-oriented learning. Zollinger (2016), for instance, found that exposure to global perspectives enhances empathy, curiosity, and intercultural awareness among learners and educators.

The findings also demonstrate significant alignment between Zambia's competence-based curriculum and UNESCO's GCED framework. UNESCO conceptualizes GCED across cognitive, socio-emotional, and behavioural domains, emphasizing critical thinking, empathy, responsibility, and civic action. Similarly, Zambia's competence-based curriculum promotes critical thinking, problem-solving, participation, and responsible citizenship. The study therefore reveals important policy coherence between national curriculum reforms and international GCED aspirations. However, the findings equally demonstrate that curriculum

alignment alone is insufficient without institutional support, teacher capacity, and enabling pedagogical conditions.

Another important opportunity identified in the study relates to digital technologies, partnerships, and community engagement initiatives. Teachers viewed social media, digital platforms, workshops, and partnerships with NGOs and external organizations as important mechanisms for enhancing GCED implementation. These findings resonate with recent scholarship emphasizing that GCED can be strengthened through collaborative networks and digitally mediated learning spaces. The conceptual framework guiding this study identified technological and environmental influences as critical factors shaping GCED implementation, and the findings strongly confirm this relationship.

Overall, the findings reveal a significant gap between the policy aspirations of GCED and the realities of classroom implementation. While Civic Education teachers generally recognize the importance of GCED and employ some participatory approaches, implementation remains constrained by limited training, examination pressures, insufficient resources, and institutional barriers. The study therefore points to the emergence of what may be termed examination-mediated global citizenship education, where transformative global competencies are filtered through the demands of examination-oriented schooling systems.

The findings reinforce broader scholarship arguing that the success of GCED depends on context-sensitive implementation approaches that integrate teacher development, institutional support, curriculum flexibility, and learner-centred pedagogies. They further demonstrate the usefulness of the integrated theoretical and conceptual framework in explaining not only the nature of GCED implementation in Zambia, but also the structural and pedagogical conditions that shape its possibilities and limitations.

CONCLUSION

This study examined the challenges and opportunities associated with the implementation of Global Citizenship Education (GCED) in selected secondary schools in Lusaka, Zambia, from the perspectives of Civic Education teachers. The findings demonstrate that while teachers generally recognize the relevance of GCED in promoting peace, tolerance, civic participation, human rights, and global awareness, its implementation remains constrained by multiple institutional, pedagogical, and structural factors.

The study revealed that inadequate professional training, limited teaching and learning resources, weak digital infrastructure, restrictive technology policies, curriculum overload, and examination-oriented teaching practices continue to hinder the effective integration of GCED into classroom practice. These challenges reduce opportunities for transformative, participatory, and experiential learning, which are central to the goals of GCED. The findings further show that although Zambia's competence-based curriculum provides an important policy foundation for GCED integration, practical implementation remains uneven across schools.

Despite these limitations, the study identified significant opportunities for strengthening GCED implementation. Learner interest in global issues, curriculum reforms emphasizing competencies, the growing relevance of digital technologies, and collaboration with external stakeholders provide strong foundations for advancing GCED in secondary schools. Teachers also demonstrated awareness of the transformative potential of GCED in cultivating responsible, tolerant, and globally aware citizens.

The study therefore concludes that the successful implementation of GCED in Zambia depends on strengthening teacher professional development, improving access to digital and instructional resources, enhancing experiential learning opportunities, and aligning curriculum implementation with supportive institutional and policy environments. Greater investment in teacher preparedness and school-level support systems is essential if Civic Education is to effectively promote transformative global citizenship competencies among learners.

Overall, the study contributes to emerging scholarship on Global Citizenship Education in Sub-Saharan Africa by providing empirical evidence on how teachers experience, interpret, and implement GCED within the realities of secondary school contexts in Zambia.

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