Power and powerless – Youth Civic Engagement the Promise of Democracy?

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Abstract

In 2009, a Ph.D. study initiated under the umbrella of the UNESCO Chair in Children, Youth and Civic Engagement based in the Child and Family Research Centre, the National University of Ireland, Galway set out to conduct: A participatory contextual study of youth civic engagement from both youth and adult perspectives in Zambia.

The research illuminated the pivotal role played by local schools in both rural and urban communities in providing access to youth civic engagement (YCE) activities. This paper initially examines the role of the school which is seen to privilege or restrict young people's participation in these YCE opportunities. The discussion evolves to explore the complex interplay of factors including adult and youth understandings of civic engagement, gender, location, age and socio-economic which are seen to converge at specific points. At these intersections significant barriers appear to manifest which may prevent the participation of some young people in available YCE not only in the school, but also the out-of-school context.

The paper concludes by considering YCE opportunities as a method of promoting democracy and supporting young people to develop a range of skills and competencies to participate in traditional or non-traditional forms of civic engagement. In the study context, a need is identified to establish culturally competent YCE activities in the out-of- school context targeting young people excluded from existing opportunities as a method to promote equality and democracy.

Introduction

The participatory contextualisation of YCE from both youth and adult perspectives in Zambia has generated data from groups under-represented in existing YCE research. From this data it is surmised that although a coherent policy framework exists to promote child and youth participation in Zambian society, many young people face significant challenges to participation.   YCE offers the promise of facilitating youth participation and promotion of democracy. It appears the existing YCE opportunities privilege the participation of some young people, whilst simultaneously restricting the participation of others. An outcome of the process may be the creation of divisions among youth populations.

The paper commences by providing a research background, the analytical framework and an outline of the study context. Contemporary debates of YCE approaches offering the concept of "active citizenship" and "activist citizenship" are considered (Mason and Bolzan, 2010:128). A revitalised interest in YCE has emerged from a sense of crisis in democracy. On a global scale, young people have been positioned at the centre of policy to promote democracy and avoid civil unrest (Kassimir and Flanagan, 2010:98). These are mainly adult debates, traditionally child and youth voices have been marginalised within these dialogues (Sanders and Munford, 2005: 359). Furthermore, the Northern dominant theoretical standpoint of child and youth development and programmes underpinned by neo-liberalism is seen to deny recognition to Africa's way of providing for its children and young people (Nsamenang, 2008:136).   This indicates that YCE activities at community level may not be able to avoid the influence of complex power dynamics at a national and international level.

Zambia, as a study context provided the opportunity to explore some of the complexities associated with YCE from both youth and adults perspectives.   The types of YCE activities were identified. The settings where YCE activities took place and the forms of participation facilitated by the current activities are outlined. Then by linking YCE to wider societal power dynamics and influences, challenges to promote democracy are illuminated. A picture that emerges from the data suggests YCE has the potential to strengthen civil society and enhance the internal determination of Zambia's future. Finally, a summary of the key points brings a closure to the paper.

Research background

A PhD Study initiated under the umbrella of the UNESCO Chair in Children, Youth and Civic Engagement based in the Child and Family Research Centre, the National University of Ireland, Galway set out to conduct: A participatory contextual study of youth civic engagement from both youth and adult perspectives in Zambia.   The research process was underpinned by cultural competency (Husain, 2006:170) and youth-centred practice (Lansdown, 2010:20) and created spaces where young people and adults could provide their own understandings of YCE and other issues. Then a plenary session brought young people and adults together to share their information through dialogue. At a later stage a collaborative critical review by the participants with the researcher of the draft collated findings was conducted. This was to ensure as a northern researcher during the compilation of the findings the participants' information was not distorted or biased in any way. Simultaneously the researcher mapped existing YCE opportunities in the three rural and three urban communities contained within the study boundaries. In its entirety the research design set out to respond to the following research question:

> In what way does gender impact upon the participation of young Zambian people in civic engagement opportunities, which may be facilitated by their communities?

Analytical framework

The research applied the Critical Theory based neo-Gramsci "Loci of Oppression" (Ledwith, 2001:178) a three-dimensional grid to analyse the generated data. On one axis difference: age, gender, ethnicity and other differences are arranged. Then along a different axis arrange context: cultural, economic, spirituality, historic, environmental and emotional. Finally on a third axis system levels: the individual, family, community, societal, regional and global. The convergence of factors at intersections within the grid identifies points of inequality that impact upon participation in YCE activities, which potentially can be developed as sites of resistance (Ledwith, 2001:178).

An Italian radical theorist, Gramsci (1891-1937) proposed hegemony, a persuasive process is ever present, whereby the rule of one class over another is achieved when the ruled accept the class beliefs, moral, cultural and political of the ruling class. As a result the ruled co-operate in their oppression (Joll, 1983:8). In the Civic sphere, the space between the State and the Private spheres, the "intelligentsia" selected by the dominant social group create conditions to nurture hegemony and support its own expansion. Gramsci utilised various

themes of investigation, such as dialectic relationships (Joll, 1983:19) and historical blocs (Bieler and Morton, 2003:2) to conduct an ideological critique. Doing so enabled the description of the way uncritically accepted and unjust ideologies are embedded in everyday situations (Brookfield, 2005:13-15).

Gramsci's popularity waned by the 1970's, liberal feminists' critiques of radical modernist theories, including Marx and Gramsci led to the summation both were Eurocentric, patriarchal and contributed to the subordination of women (Lister, 2000:4). Some considered Gramsci as inappropriate in the mid-twentieth century (Ledwith, 2001:171). A counter argument evolved, that globalisation, the crumbling of social class constructs and cultural plurality has freed Gramsci from the social class analysis. The concept of hegemony and sites of struggle can include, gender equality, civil rights, cultural dominance, environmental sustainability and others and is suited to analysis of contemporary societies (Engelstad, 2009:227).

The interactions between global and local level are seen to create tensions when international agreements are implemented locally as efforts are made to become streamlined and comply with homogenised operating systems to meet globally set standards (Engelstad, 2009:2010). A neo-gramscian perspective argues globalisation has facilitated the expansion of the neo-liberal ideology through ideas, material capabilities and institutional support, to promote a collective image of a particular world order (Bieler and Morton, 2003:3). CSO working with local communities need to be conscious of global developments and to identify opportunities to influence global policy or to form resistance (Ledwith, 2001:173).

Zambia the Study Context

Zambia provides the local context, a brief overview comprising of demographics, historical developments, civil society, international policy and national policy is presented to set the scene for the discussion regarding YCE.

Demographics

Zambia is a land locked country in Central Africa, comprising of nine provinces. Based on the most recent census in 2000, the official national population was 9,885,591 (CSO, 2000:28). The Central Statistic Office estimated by 2006, based on rates of population growth, this

figure would increase to 11.7 million people. The population would be divided between rural and urban areas in a breakdown of 65 per cent and 35 per cent respectively. The total estimated 2006 population would comprise of 57% who would be below nineteen years of age (National Child Policy, 2006:4). The life expectancy of a child born between 2005 and 2010 is 42 years of age (UNDP, 2009).

Historical developments

In 1964, Zambia gained independence from British colonial power and a republic was formed. In 1972, a One Party State was established and remained until 1991. It was then replaced by a multi-party representative political system which remains in-situ. Zambia, with significant natural resources is potentially one of the richest countries on the African continent. The combination of social transformations, global forces, political and economic corruption and significant poverty levels has led to an evident rural and urban division, where young people and women occupy a marginalised position within society.

Zambia has been included as a Heavily Indebted Poor Country for debt relief and under the G8 initiative debts owed to the International Monetary Fund and the World Bank may be cancelled (FNDP, 2006:10). Through these international arrangements Zambia is committed to external monitoring. A neo-gramscian perspective offers a cautionary note, global governance structures may attempt to introduce neo-liberal restructuring of policy to reduce the social basis of popular participation within the world order. As a result constitutional devices remove or insulate new economic institutions from popular scrutiny and accountability of democracy (Bieler and Morton, 2003:2).

In 1999, the African Union was founded and Zambia is a member state. The AU endeavours to develop cross national co-operation to develop responses to global, economic, social and political influences. The overall aim is to gain a more positive positioning of Africa within the global system. It could be construed Africa's desire to repositioned itself in the global system is an acceptance of the world order projected by neo-liberalism. In February 2009, Zambia signed a Memorandum of Understanding with the African Peer Review Mechanism (APRM). A system whereby countries voluntarily assent to be partners in a review process of each others government processes with an overall aim of strengthening good practices and discouraging the bad practices of governance. Through this process it is intended that entrenchment of the principles of accountability and transparency, which constitute the

bedrock of good governance would occur (JCTR, 2009:4). As an external system, provision is made for opportunities where civil society organisations can contribute to the process.

Legacies of British colonialism include English as the official language, while a range of indigenous languages are in daily use and the persistence of a dual legal system, comprising of statutory and customary laws. In contemporary Zambian society, citizens may access either system to pursue their rights, but the majority of Zambians are governed by customary law. This is seen to complicate the observation of statutory law, especially regarding the position of girls and women (Nsemiwe, 2006:8). There is an ongoing process of identifying intersections between international and constitutional laws with customary law to promote a harmonisation between the systems to promote good governance and the well-being of children and young people (Himonga, 2008:73).

Civil society
Zambian civil society has played a central role in bringing about social transformations. The formation of a One Party State, some considered all embracing, while others believe dis-empowered citizens by nurturing a dependency upon the State (Fiedler-Conradi, 2003:16). The subsequently introduced multi-party system lacked transparency, and corruption in the private and state sector escalated. The available resources in the civil sphere diminished and civic society organisations (CSO) became weakened and so did attempts to seek accountability from the government (Fiedler-Conradi, 2003:10).

By 1996, donor countries reassessed contribution policies and re-directed significant funding to not-for-profit organisations. A revitalisation of CSO occurred, particularly in Lusaka (Fiedler-Conradi, 2003:20) and the Copperbelt (Scott, 2002:405), where urban areas with strong labour movements, mobilised themselves to avail of the resources at the time. Many CSO became involved in providing social services at community level to respond to local needs and were non-political. Some CSO began to assert themselves and successfully influenced policy formation. In 2000, a national network named the Civil Society for Poverty Reduction (CSPR) was established (Mwinga, 2002:1). The current membership of the CSPR comprises of community-based organisations (CBO), civil society organisations (CSO), faith-based organisations (FBO) and non-governmental organisations (NGO). Through their shared expertise, knowledge and analytical capacities this network made significant

contributions to the government's National Poverty Reduction Strategic Plan (Fiedler-Conradi, 2003:25).

International policy

Zambia has ratified various African Union Charters including the Rights and Welfare of the Child (1990) and the Youth Charter (2006). Furthermore Zambia has ratified seven United Nations International Conventions. These are: 1)The Status of Refugees (1954); 2) The Economic, Social and Cultural Rights (1966); 3) The Civil and Political Rights (1966); 4) The Elimination of All Forms of Racial Discrimination (1965); 5) The International Convention on the Suppression and Punishment of the Crime of Apartheid (1976); 6) The Convention on the Elimination of all forms of Discrimination against Women (1979) and 7) The Convention on the Rights of the Child (1989) (Vision 2030).

The Zambian government's main development framework "Vision 2030" (2006:1) incorporates a range of development sectors "to become a prosperous middle income country by 2030". Cross cutting issues include governance, HIV and Aids, environment, gender and development, and food and nutrition. The document gives a commitment to domesticate international conventions into National policy.

National policy

The implementation of "Vision 2030" will be progressed through medium-term five year plans. The Fifth National Development Plan (FNDP 2006-2010:242) details measures under a variety of development sectors, including decentralisation and states:

> The most fundamental rationale for decentralisation in Zambia lies in its opportunity to bring the government closer to the people by providing citizens with greater control over the decision-making process and allowing their direct participation in public service delivery.

The current, Sixth National Development Plan (SNDP) (2011-2015:23) under the Child, Youth and Sport Development Sector states the following goal:

> To achieve increased empowerment and participation of children and youth in all areas affecting their well-being and livelihood and enhance observation and protection of their rights in order to build a sound human resource base

In 1994, the first National Child Policy (NCP) underpinned by the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child (1989) was published and has since been revised and republished in 2006. The current NCP (2006:1) acknowledges many Zambian children, (defined as persons below eighteen years of age) endure poverty, hunger, inadequate accommodation, exposure to abuse, illiteracy, lack of basics, for example, clean water and sanitation, and they are vulnerable to HIV/AIDS and other infectious diseases.

The NCP (2006) outlines the special attention and recognition children deserve at all levels of society and views child participation as a right and an imperative. The policy outlines non-discriminatory approaches and the promotion of gender equality. A definition of participation is lacking, but the policy (NCP, 2006:22) does state:

> ….participation of children in programme design, implementation, monitoring and evaluation. The policy recognizes the participation of children in national development as a fundamental right….

In 2009, the Committee on the Rights of the Child (2009:5) issued General comment no. 12: The right of children to be heard. The comment outlines Article 12 of the Convention on the Rights of the Child (1989) through domestication into national policy has been interpreted as "participation". A term widely used to describe processes, information-sharing, dialogue between children and adults in which children can learn how their views and those of adults are taken into account and inform the outcomes. Child participation is viewed as a tool to stimulate the comprehensive development of the personality and evolving capacities of the child. It is important to create and promote opportunities to enable child rights to be heard. When creating these opportunities adults working for and with young people need an understanding of the environmental, socio-economic and cultural context of the child's life (CRC, 2009:30).

The NCP (2006) sets out a collaborative framework to implement the policy and identifies government Ministries, stakeholders, for example parents and other duty bearers, civic society organisations, community, orphans, vulnerable and other children and the private sector to establish the proposed measures. This policy provides the rhetoric as a backdrop to youth and adult perspectives of YCE in the study context. It may be useful to spend some time considering the wider debates of YCE prior to focus on the voices of the research participants.

YCE contemporary debates

In 1989, the UN Convention of the Rights of the Child (1989) as a legally binding international agreement recognises a child's capacity increases with age to exercise their own rights (Breen, 2006:8). This Convention was established against a backdrop of dramatic social change in the Northern hemisphere. Many of the socialist societies had collapsed and a perceived crisis of democracy evolved (Murphy, 2001:354). An interest in YCE emerged and on a global scale, children and young people have been positioned at the centre of policy (Kassimir and Flanagan, 2010:98). Historical lessons teach us cycles of rebellion and civic unrest tend to coincide with periods when populations comprise of unusually large proportions of young people, referred to as "youth bulges". As a strategic manoeuvre, by policy facilitating young people to participate in a process of democracy and to fit into existing systems, conflict or rebellion may be prevented (Kassimir and Flanagan, 2010:98).

In Europe, the European Commission White Paper: A new impetus for European youth (2001:10) provided a framework to create the conditions to enable young people to play a full part in the life of democratic societies. Participation and information were highlighted as key elements of this document to encourage "active citizenship". The inclusion of young people was proposed to abate the perceived developing "citizenship deficit". Some governments introduced YCE programmes as a compulsory subject at junior cycle through the State education system. These programmes educate young people to volunteer and engage in communitarian activities, and learn citizenship skills considered relevant for adulthood "active citizenship" (Mason and Bolzan, 2010:128). The dominant neo-liberal ideology promotes an "active citizen" is an individual who participates in society through economic engagement; they are a consumer, individualistic and have a choice to vote in a representative political system (Powell, 2008:51).

The adult critiques of YCE underpinned by neo-liberalism suggest individuals may acquire social skills and competencies by participating in these activities. However these programmes offer limited opportunities to acquire political competencies or consider wider structural constraints. As a result, inequalities are accepted and left unchallenged and the status quo remains intact (Bynner, 2001:53). An alternative is YCE promoting "activist citizenship" where young people as social actors may contribute to social transformation of their community (Mason and Bolzan, 2010:128) in the here and now (Sanders and Munford, 2005:359). This type of YCE encourages critical thinking, reflection, deliberation and

consideration of wider societal inequalities and self-determination (Evans and Prilleltensky, 2005:409). Activist citizenship is associated with informal politics and single issue causes which have led to the formation of collective resistance to defend the social and cultural rights of the individual and minorities (Powell, 2008:54).

Youth perspectives are often not heard or youth experiences taken into account during the formulation of policy (Sanders and Munford, 2008:359). There appears to be a shift towards the acknowledgement of young people's voice, but their status as participants remains unfulfilled (Fitzgerald, 2010: 299). Adult definitions of YCE are often too narrow to categorise or analyse youth understandings of YCE. As a result valuable insights into their perspectives and possibilities to include young people in democratic process may be lost (Smith, 2005:162). It is recognised there is dearth of youth understandings of civic engagement (Smith, 2005:162). Furthermore social class, ethnicity (Sherrod, 2010:5) and cultural context (Ungar, 2005:291) are not comprehensively considered within available YCE literature. Policy-makers are eager to acquire YCE research from beyond the USA and Europe to inform their endeavours to promote democracy (Sherrod, 2010:2)

The YCE debates thus far are based upon Northern hemisphere experiences. Some argue the exportation of Euro-American child and youth programmes into the African continent are part of a deliberate global hegemonic process (Nsamenang, 2008:136). These northern programmes deny equity to and recognition of Africa's way of providing for its youth. It also deprives the continent of its niche in global childhood development theory. As a result the environment is created to facilitate the further expansion of the neo-liberal agenda into Africa.

An alternative view, proposes these programmes are provided in good faith, but may lead to unintentional negative outcomes. Short-term benefits may occur, but in the long-term the existing competencies of the individual young person can become eroded and the cultural systems undermined (Serpell and Jere-Folotiya 2008:93). It is when these systems, where sources of resilience or strength are embedded, become compromised, that the biggest threat to child and young people's well being may manifest (Masten, 2001:236).

In the northern hemisphere participation is central to our understanding of democracy (Fitzgerald, 2010:297). Social and political engagement contribute to democracy, these may

be accompanied by moral engagement (Berger, 2009:343). A moral code or reasoning that informs attention and activity, to do the right thing. In democracies, morally informed actions, performed with good intentions do not necessarily result in positive outcomes. These same democracies require a moral core that is willing to challenge unintentional outcomes which infringe on the civil rights of others (Berger, 2009:343).

To accept northern programmes might be threatening child and youth well being instead of the desired goal to improve outcomes. A space is opened up for critical dialogue between the north and south, but essentially should include the voice of young people. The challenge presented is to enable children's voices to be heard and at the same time avoid destabilising the cultural systems that sustain young people in a particular context (Mason and Bolzan, 2010:131).

YCE from both youth and adult perspective in Zambia.
The research process created spaces to enable young people and adults to provide their own understandings of YCE and then to share that information. Adults associated YCE with "collective political action". Adults, mainly in rural areas felt young people should get politically active and demand their rights from the government. Young people were unfamiliar with the term YCE, but to do something "civic" meant:

> you engage in not just for yourself, but for the good of others and future generations

From the outset a contradiction between adult and youth understandings of YCE was identified. The significance of this mis-match as a potential to bring about social change is explored as the discussion unfolds. Based upon the youth understanding of YCE, the participant identified youth activities were arranged into a table under five headings as shown in Table one: Types of Civic engagement

Youth identified activities were mainly social in nature, except for gender assigned economic activities. Young people made no distinctions between the public and private spheres, whereas adults felt political engagement opportunities were reserved for tertiary level education and collective political action occurs in the public sphere. It is apparent from Table one: Types of Civic engagement, many of the existing opportunities are available through the education system.

Table one: Types of Civic engagement

Civic	Economic	Social	Political	Cultural
School: A member of: Children's council or student council Prefect or monitor Children' Rights Club Debate Club	**Male activities:** Street vending Farming and labouring. Crushing stone	**Community:** Peer groups Caring for others National Independence Day celebrations	**School** Youth pressure groups	**School:** Culture club Drama club Poetry club Dancing singing Arts club
Community: Member of youth activities, clubs, scouts/girl guides, red cross, Youth Alive	**Female activities in public**: Markets, maids, farming and prostitution	**Sport/school activities:** Football, netball, volleyball, basketball, baseball, athletics, rugby, tennis and swimming	**Mainly Adults:**	**Community:** Initiation ceremonies Language Traditional values
National Youth Association Children's press bureau Sport for Action	**Female activities in the home**: Household chores, caring for siblings.	**Home-based games:** Hide and seek, snakes and ladders, Icienga, Nsolo, Chase or It,game, football, chess, draughts, sigi, padda padda and riding bicycles	Advocacy by churches	**Spirituality/ faith:** Churches of different faiths Youth choirs. Salvation Army
	Rural development programmes	**School:** Anti-AIDs club, Road and transport agency – road safety. Science club, self-evaluation club		Evangelism, outreach Scripture Unions, YWCA

In-school YCE activities

Schools cater for students up to Grade 12 (approximately 18 years of age). They play a pivotal role in both rural and urban communities in providing access to many of the available social YCE activities. In Zambia, there is free education until the end of Grade 7 (approximately 12 years of age) so equality of access to school-based YCE activities may be anticipated to this age. It is by challenging assumptions that power disparities and inequalities are often revealed.

The participants' perception that rural schools were under-resourced compared to urban schools, may suggest fewer resources are available to provide in-school YCE activities. The prevalence of poverty and HIV related issues were viewed to negatively impact upon the family structure and weaken supports available to children. Some families did not send all their children to school. The data illuminated how as a young girl, especially in a rural area,

you are less likely to be sent to school than a boy, as explained by Anna (young woman: study site two):

> some say us girls get pregnant early and we have to stay a long time in our village. So they say it is better for us not be educated, but to get married

Young people contribute to the family income. It is believed 34.4 per cent of children from households with the lowest disposable income attend school without participating in the labour force, as compared to 80.5 per cent of children from the richest households (Fox, 2008: 59). For those girls who did attend school, some explained the curriculum restricted their career options. Some subjects provided only to boys were required to access particular tertiary courses. At Grade 7, compulsory examinations (taken approximately at age 12), prevented some young people progressing in the system. The government has introduced positive gender discrimination by reducing the examination cut-off point for girls. The acquisition of a pass grade did not guarantee progression in the system. At Grade 8, the payment of school fees were out of reach of some families. Charitable school sponsorship offered a pathway to continue in the education system, but participants related it was necessary to have family or a network contact to access this type of support.

A picture begins to emerge that the school system up to Grade 12 restricts the participation of mainly rural young people from families with limited resources, especially girls to avail of education and YCE activities accessed via the school system. It appears urban males from families with resources are privileged within the system. If these young men progress to tertiary level, they have the opportunity to access political engagement opportunities and acquire educational credentials highly valued in Zambian society. As a result they may be in a position to secure key employment and societal positions. Gramsci (Joll, 1983:19) would refer to these young men as the "intelligentsia" who nurture hegemony in civil society and maintain the dominant social group's position within society. It is important to acknowledge the "intelligentsia" may choose to participate in social transformations.

Out-of-school YCE activities

Out-of-school YCE activities are of particular significance to young people who never attend school, most likely to be young women, orphans, street kids, young people with disabilities, or those excluded from the education system at Grade 7. The excluded are most likely to be young people from families with limited resources to support their participation in society

on a par with their peers. A significant range of out-of-school YCE activities were identified, but again disparities based on location, gender and socio-economic background emerged from the data. Participants perceived successive governments had neglected responsibilities to young people. The government membership and decision-making structures at local, regional and national level comprise mainly of men (OMCT, 2007:5) It is hardly surprising that existing out-of-school opportunities may contribute to the hegemonic process of creating conditions to support the perpetuation of the dominant social group.

A further factor, age, emerged as a restriction of participation in out-of-school activities, as an individual had to be fifteen years of age to access the majority of these YCE opportunities. A dearth of services targeting 12, 13 and 14 year olds was evident. As a result some young people found themselves in a vulnerable position at a time of significant transition, for example, seeking employment for boys and girls, or the possibility of marriage for girls facilitated by customary law. The participants' acknowledgment of the position of some families constantly struggling to make ends meet was seen to limit the time they had to spend with their children. As a result, for one to three years, these young people have few sources of support to draw upon, which may increase their vulnerability and push them to the margins of Zambian society. Some of these young people are faced with a day-to-day struggle for survival as a priority. Their right to participate contained within policy, if they ever were aware of the right, must sound quite hollow (Kelly, 2008:23).

The age accessible YCE activities offered mainly agricultural and enterprise programmes. Other YCE opportunities included HIV interventions, religious-based and holistic programmes, but further research would be required to ascertain the approaches, numbers of young people involved and gender breakdown. It is not unreasonable to suggest the agriculture and enterprise programmes may reinforce social divisions based on cultural expectation of success. From an adult perspective success was relative to area. In rural areas it meant to grow crops. In compounds, where families with limited resources usually reside, to possess business acumen was a success. For residential areas, success was equated with the acquisition of educational credentials.

From a youth perspective, to be successful was to become self reliant, as the individual you were then recognised by their community as an adult.   Young people probably find adult offered programmes appealing as they offer a way to make a living and the opportunity to

acquire adulthood. It is seen to encourage young people to accept the role society allocates to them and by doing so they participate in their own oppression and the status quo is maintained (Joll, 1983: 8).

YCE and participation

The in-school and out-of-school YCE activities did facilitate young people to be coming involved in different forms of participation. Consultative decision- making, where adults sought youth views (Lansdown, 2010:20) and collaborative decision-making, where adults and young people made decisions in partnership (Lansdown, 2010:20) were the most popular forms of decision-making. Youth-led decision making opportunities, where young people are afforded space to identify their own needs, issues and advocate for themselves (Lansdown, 2010:20) were limited, Will (adult male: study site four) a representative of a youth organisation explained:

> ….. it has been an issue whereby elderly people are the only people who can decide things and do things for us, and everything like that, so it is not an easy task to make kids realise that they need to be part and parcel of this, whatever programmes they are doing, they need to make decisions, they tend to just sit and wait, it is a process you need to work with them, you have to create an environment with them that they realise you are not there to be bossy on the programme

At a micro-level, in the family home, depending upon the family, a father sometimes consulted or sought his son's views during decision-making. Young women related they were completely excluded from decision-making in the home. For some individuals this generated negative feelings about themselves. From a youth perspective the tradition of elders making decisions based on the collective well-being was not consistent. Some decisions were seen to place individual young people into vulnerable positions, for example, excessive work or involvement in prostitution, as explained by Jeff (young male: study site five):

> Girls do something else like going out into night clubs, going with big men, then they are given money…..some girls end up pregnant.

Participation if understood as a site of struggle over recognition, historically has unfolded in three phases: 1) universalism 2) difference and 3) dialogue (Fitzgerald, 2010:299). In the

study context, the right to education is denied to some young women. Secondly, difference, the gender allocation of household chores and caring for siblings to young women restricts their participation in the public sphere. The differential treatment of boys and girls in the private sphere prepares young people to occupy socially acceptable gender identities in adulthood (Alan, 2009:294). In the study context, it appears young men from an early age compared to young women are afforded more space in the public sphere. Although at first glance this may appear insignificant, it is through practice and varying experiences in family and community life that participation skills are acquired (Thesis, 2010:346).

Finally, dialogue, by listening to those involved in struggle they become recognised in the social and political spheres (Fitzgerald, 2010:299). In the study context, as a collective society the cultural norm encourages deference of young people to elders. The youth perspective related few opportunities existed to provide their points of view.   In the school context, young people through the Child Rights Club were learning they had a right to a voice and should be listened to by others. In reality some young people, when they tried to assert themselves their efforts were met with adult opposition and often chastisement. Mulenga (young male: study site five) explained:

> Family affairs we are almost afraid to move a decision or saying a decision to parents, when I speak I will be beaten, I will make someone anger (angry)

Participants were aware of Victim Support Units within the police service, but felt they had few avenues to express their views and opinions. At the time of the research none of the participants made any references to the existence of the National Youth Parliament, which was established in 2002.

YCE and the wider context

Adults expressed concerns of the effects of globalisation and new technologies as a threat to Zambian culture. Western influences were perceived to have a negative effect on the way young people participate in their society.   Culture is important in the development of children and young people (Tudge, 2008:5).   In its entirety culture is difficult to comprehend and for analytical purposes has been divided into patterns or pieces. Maintenance of a culture and retention of its force requires social actors as individuals and/or groups to interpret the culture and socially interact (Engelstad, 2009:214). The centrality of the mass media in broadcasting of culture as a hegemonic process should not be under estimated. It

can direct and select information for public consumption and may shape perceptions and evoke core values (Engelstad, 2009:224). The existing cultural norm of deference and limited opportunities to deliberate might lead some young people and adults to passively accept the information offered over the airwaves (Buckingham cited by Mannion, 2010:332).

It is not unreasonable to suggest the mass media is not the only avenue that might be enabling top-down seepage of neo-liberal ideology into Zambian society. Post-colonial theorists propose during colonialism, the education system was a tool of domination that undermined pre-colonial forms of education (Esteva and Prakash, 2003:277). The education system immerses young people into the dominant ideology (Brookfield, 2005:75). Since 1991, the re-introduction of multi-party representative politics and the free-market suggests the embedding of the neo-liberal agenda into the education system may be occurring. The most compelling support of this statement from the research is the youth understanding of YCE to do something "good" which is open to interpretation.

Adults make the majority of decisions and what "good" actually means is probably decided by them rather than young people themselves. It may fit into the collective philosophy where elders prioritise the collective need over the individual need. Alternatively, the term "good" equally fits in with the neo-liberal approach of encouraging young people to engage in communitarian activities. The education system is under the control of the State, which is committed to international external monitoring and may be exposed to neo-liberal influences, which transfer through the education system, such as child and youth development programmes (Serpell and Jere-Folotiya, 2008:93).

English as the official language may also be a form of social power (Brookfield 2005:267) at play. Young people recognised English as a pre-requisite to acquiring a "good job", but of course this also meant acquiring educational credentials. As previously outlined it appears the education system privileges the participation of urban males from families with resources. As the "intelligentsia" they may support the status quo, but as young people with high educational credentials, they may leave the country to seek employment elsewhere. Either way the environment for neo-liberal expansion is probably enhanced. By young people staying the "intelligentsia" might be willing to support a system that enables them to accumulate wealth. If they leave, the nation's capacity and skills base may diminish and opens up opportunities for external interests to take advantage of the resources within the

country.   Language can also be used to exert social power in other ways. Words associated with liberation, such as participation and empowerment are being hijacked by liberalism (Brookfield, 2005:71). A confusion of ideologies through language means it is all too easy for those interested in equality and justice issues to be mis-guided into supporting the neo-liberal agenda at a global and local level (Ledwith, 2001:178).

It is important to consider policy documents through a critical lens, for example, the FNDP (2006: 242) rationale for decentralisation is to bring the government closer to citizens so they may have greater control over decision-making processes. Initially this may appear a positive step toward democracy. The final part of the sentence emphasises the State as the power holder which is allowing citizens direct participation in public service delivery. A scenario might evolve where the citizenry become service providers of services that the government should be providing, rather than participating in wider democratic processes.

Since the 1990's, CSO have increased in numbers due mainly to the availability of resources from external sources (Mwinga, 2001:18). It would appear that CSO are influenced by the North through funding, aid or policy (Clarke, 2003:14). In Zambia's case, it appears NGO, Human Rights and elite CSO groups are being funded as a way of ensuring the Zambian government remains on track to form a liberal democratic political system (Mwinga, 2001: 19). The concentration of urban CSO means the wider based membership of CSO to include rural citizens may become one-sided. CSO commentators have highlighted that decentralisation has the potential to quicken rural economic development. The government's sensitisation of stakeholders has begun, but the lack of detail and action may put the whole process in jeopardy (Caritas, 2008:6). In 2007, the Zambian government considered the Non-governmental Organisational Bill, on the premise of enhancing accountability and transparency of NGO's. Some CSO felt the Bill if enacted may restrict the activities of CSO to the detriment of Zambian citizens (FIDH, 2007:1).

The SNDP (2011:23) the goal for child and youth development sets out to increase the empowerment and participation of children and youth and again at first glance suggests improvements in democratic processes may occur. It is the last eight words of the goal "in order to build a sound human resource base" that is open to interpretation. The overall vision for Zambia to become a middle prosperous country by 2030 requires attention to economic development. Economic expansion does not guarantee an equal distribution of

resources or prevents exploitation. The Employment of Children and Young Persons Act (Amendment 2005), a young person is defined as an individual less than fifteen years of age and is protected from employment exploitation. There is evidence that young people are open to exploitation in both formal and informal employment (OMCT, 2007:10). At this point it may be prudent to remember that many Zambians are unaware of statutory law (Nsemiwe, 2006:8).

The HIV pandemic is having a devastating effect on Zambian society (Kelly, 2008:20). Family structures are becoming weakened due HIV related adult deaths. In the past orphans would have been absorbed into the extended family networks, but due to the same illness these networks are disintegrating (Kelly, 2008:23). This suggests that increasing numbers of young people will be orphaned and exposed to exploitation.   As social cohesion weakens fissures open up and provide opportunities for different ideologies to embed themselves in social interactions. Over time historically different social patterns are dismantled and replaced by those of the different ideology (Bieler and Morton, 2003:3).

YCE and the strengthening of civic society

The summation thus far, is the complexities and interplays between the system levels, the private and public sphere and youth and adults illuminate intersections of factors that privilege the participation of some young people in YCE activities, whilst simultaneously restricting the participation of others. Furthermore, YCE may be contributing to the creation of divisions among youth populations. Such divisions may curtail mobilisation of collective action by young people in the present, but also as they become adults in the future.

The policy rhetoric of child and youth empowerment, participation and gender equality appears for the large part unfulfilled. Based upon the participation information the reality appears the engagement of young people in mainly social YCE activities and the existing forms of participation deny youth ideas, opinions and desires from entering the public sphere, where they may gain recognition. By virtue of being young people they are holders of knowledge that adults do not possess (Sanders and Munford, 2008: 359). The absence of youth perspective means adults really do not know what young people think or even if they want to participate or the way participation should occur. It is through dialogue young people can bring their expertise to the table, be recognised and inform policy (Malone and Hartung, 2010:26).

The adult understanding of YCE as a "collective political action" offers hope for the future. More precisely it is the contradiction or point of praxis within the adult understanding which may be turned into an opportunity for action (Joll, 1983:19). On the one hand, adults desired young people to get politically active and demand their rights from the government. On the other hand, adults grasp power and nurture deference in children and young people from an early age. Moral engagement may accompany social and political actions (Berger, 2009:343), if adults believe young people should through collective political action pursue their rights and hold the government accountable, it suggests adults should have a moral code to be part of that pursuit.

The first step of such a quest may be the most difficult to take, but it may offer the potential to strengthen the internal determination of Zambia into the future. YCE engagement activities that encourage critical thinking, deliberation and self-determination, may facilitate the organic development of youth, as a "thinker". He or she follows a particular moral code, as a constructor, organiser and activist. He or she seeks to introduce and sustain alternative hegemony and new modes of thought (Malone and Hartung, 2010:26). Through inter-generational dialogue, re-conceptualisation of power and new methods of working may evolve. This might enable young people and adults to engage jointly in democratic processes in civic society (Percy-Smith and Thomas, 2010:360).

YCE practice in the short-term

This final section proposes a range of measures that may contribute to a process of rebalancing existing inequalities through YCE activities and is presented utilising five sub-headings: a) locally identified need and policy; b) short-term responses; c) family support; d) capacity-building, cultural adaptability and sustainability; and e) practice approach.

a) Locally identified need and policy

A positive starting point for the consideration of YCE activities and the future is the identification of common goals between the NCP and all the research participants; the provision of additional services, facilities and programmes would improve the daily lives of young people. A collective goal suggests it may be possible to mobilise existing government, community and individual resources quite quickly to respond to this unanimously agreed

need. It is important to acknowledge that not all potential stakeholders in such a process would be working from the same perspective.

b) Short-term responses

The apparent privilege and restriction of participation in existing YCE activities and the overarching factors of poverty and the HIV pandemic means a blanket approach response to the locally identified need for more services is inappropriate. The obvious fissures in existing provision require the targeting out-of-school, 12 -14 years olds, especially young women in rural areas. This may have an immediate positive impact upon the lives of young people experiencing marginalisation in these areas.

c) Family support

In a society where the life expectancy for today's generation is 42 years of age (UNDP,2009) both adults and young people recognise the pressure families are under to make ends meet. The HIV pandemic and related deaths may contribute to the existing stress experienced by families. Future YCE activities, by incorporating family support elements, such as celebrations of activities, psychological supports or family planning may alleviate some of the family stress and enable families to support their children..

d) Capacity-building, cultural adaptability and sustainability

Participants perceived community initiated YCE activities were usually short lived. It is feasible to suggest capacity building within a community may be enhanced using a number of measures. These may include training, the incorporation of local expertise of participatory processes, and the adoption of child rights and protection practices.

To accept that northern programmes may result in unintentional negative outcomes impacting upon the well-being of children and young people morally requires action. Through training and education a critical review of northern programmes can occur prior to usage. Only programmes that can be culturally adapted should be utilised. Any programme, northern or locally devised, requires on-going evaluation. Furthermore, on-going support for adults working with and for young people may enhance sustainability of programmes.

e) Practice approach

The youth understanding of YCE to do something "good" in a context where adults are the decision-makers probably indicates adults actually decide what "good" means. The participation in mainly social engagement opportunities suggests the adult desire for young people to become collectively politically active is perhaps unrealistic. The adult desire for young people to become political may suggest a willingness to facilitate a shift from YCE activities educating young people to fit into existing adult systems and perpetuation of the status quo toward transformational YCE activities.

YCE transformational activities involve adult-youth dialogues and encourage young people to become a "thinker". He or she may follow a particular moral code, as a constructor, organiser, and activist. As a process he or she seeks to introduce and sustain alternative hegemony and new modes of thought (Malone and Hartung, 2010:26). Young people as social actors and through social interaction with adults may contribute to the determination of social and political change in Zambian society.

Conclusion

To conclude, the participatory contextualisation of YCE activities in Zambia was initiated to contribute to the UNESCO Chair in Children, Youth and Civic Engagement Programme of Work (2010-2013). The overall aim was to respond to the research question focusing upon how gender may impact upon participation in available YCE opportunities. As a process an undertaking to create spaces where both young people and adults could provide their own understandings of citizenship, civic engagement and issues and then share that information through a youth-adult dialogue generated significant amounts of data.

A neo-gramscian three dimensional framework enabled the inclusion of multiple factors in the data analysis to reveal significant barriers young people met if they wanted to access or participate in YCE activities in the context. The pivotal role of the education system in providing access to many of the YCE activities and the out of school availability of YCE opportunities appear to privilege the participation of mainly young urban males over other groups of young people in society. It is not unreasonable to suggest existing YCE activities may be contributing to divisions among youth populations. It appears YCE activities combined with wider societal forces and the current forms of participation are denying

young people's views, opinions and needs from entering the public sphere, where they may gain recognition.

A mis-match between youth and adult understandings of YCE engagement identified a contradiction and an opportunity for change. A shift from YCE that encourage "active citizenship" towards YCE that enables "activism citizenship" offers the opportunity to facilitate youth participation and strengthen civil society. The inclusion of young people's ideas in both social and political spheres may hold government accountable for their decisions and actions in relation to both national and global affairs. Through dialogue, new modes of thinking may emerge and enable the re-conceptualisation of power and new methods of working so young people and adults are jointly involved in democratic processes. A range of short-term measures are suggested as an immediate response to enhance YCE activities, which assist the re-balancing of some power disparities. It is a long-term process that is required to strengthen civil society to internally determine Zambia's future.

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