

THE CAREER PATH WAY IN SECONDARY SCHOOLS OF ZAMBIA: A REFLECTION OF THE CONTINUITY OF MUSICAL ARTS EDUCATION

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Abstract

Zambia's education landscape has gone through transformations since independence. These transformations were as a result of the nation undergoing rapid socio-economic development prompting a revision of the curriculum at all levels of the education sector. In 2014, the Ministry of Education revised the curriculum with help from the United States Agency for International Development in an effort to improve and enhance pupil performance at secondary school level. Against this background, the Zambia Education Curriculum Framework was developed to provide guidance on the preferred type of education for the nation. This new curriculum gave birth to career paths for learners at secondary school level which was aimed at providing an opportunity to academic progression in line with learners' abilities and interests.

The career pathways are at academic and vocational levels. The vocational career pathway is for learners with ambitions and interests in technical and practical jobs meant to provide practical skills to learners starting from grade 8 to 12.

The study analysed how well the career pathway had been understood by stake holders, to what extent had the curriculum been implemented and determine the place of Musical Arts Education in schools with the introduction of career pathways. The results indicated that the concept of career paths was not fully understood because instead of allowing learners with guidance choose which path they would follow; schools tend to choose for learners the pathway they would want to follow. On the part of Musical Arts Education, the study indicated that the subject had so far suffered and pose challenge of diminution. The study also indicated that leaners' career interest fluctuates as they grow.

Key words: Career Path, Career Interest, Academic Career Path, Vocational Career Path, Musical Arts Education

Background to the Study

Since 1970 when educational reforms were initiated, Zambia's education system has attracted so much debate **on its relevance to meet societal needs**. During pre and post Zambia's independence, vocational training in schools was still despised and unfledged and considered a gateway to low status menial jobs. The result of this emphasis on academic oriented

subjects has resulted into high levels of unemployment in Zambia because the curriculum is tilted to white collar jobs (Banda 2007).

In efforts to ensure that Zambia's education system becomes meaningful, there has been constant revision and tailoring of the school curriculum at all levels according to the changing economic and educational needs. The required modification was to suit the needs of time because despite education always being perceived as a social sector, it is also an economic device for development. In 2014, the government through the Ministry of Education with the help of the United States Agency for International Development revised the curriculum to enhance pupil performance at secondary school level. The revision of the curriculum was in an effort to increase and heighten pupil performance at secondary school level. It was against this background that the Zambia Curriculum Frame work was developed to give guidance on the preferred type of education for the nation. The 2014 Curriculum framework saw the birth of two career pathways.

The career pathways are at academic and vocational levels. The academic pathway is meant for learners with a passion for academic subjects and desire for similar occupations. While the vocational career pathway is for learners with ambitions and interests in technical and practical jobs. The vocational pathway is to provide practical skills to learners starting from grade eight through to grade 12.

In the provision of such a curriculum, schools are expected to closely collaborate with trade institutes and other key stakeholders in various specialisations. This was done in an effort to produce holistic learners with knowledge and skills in relevant fields.

The Two Tier System

Below is summary of the two career pathways as adapted from ECZ (2015) for Senior Secondary School Curriculum:

Academic Career Pathway	Vocational Career Pathway
• Social Sciences	• HE & Hospitality
• Natural Sciences	• Technology Studies
• Business Studies	• Music
	• PE & Sports
	• Art & Design
	• Agriculture

Statement of the problem

The revision of the curriculum which resulted in two career pathways was intended to accord learners with an opportunity to academically progress in line with their abilities and interests. Despite the vocational career pathway being introduced to meet learners with ambitions and interest in practical skills, there seem to be information gap on career guidance among learners and implementation process of the two career pathways which has seen some practical subjects not taken on by most schools. The researcher was puzzled as to why even after the two- path way curriculum was introduced, Musical Arts Education is not offered in most secondary schools of Zambia.

Purpose of the study

The purpose of this study was to establish the place and position of Musical Arts Education in Zambian secondary schools after the introduction of the Career pathway.

Objectives of the Study

- a. To determine the extent to which the stakeholders have understood the Career pathway concept
- b. Analyse implementation process of the career pathway
- c. Establish the extent to which the learners in secondary schools have access to career information
- d. Determine how the implementation process has enhanced the sustainability of Musical Arts Education in secondary schools

Literature Review

According to International Youth Foundation (2014), it was observed that primary and secondary levels were too academic and did not provide knowledge and skills to meet social economic development of the nation. The academic curriculum was biased towards **white collar jobs** which are rare in Zambia today as compared to vocational curriculum which would orient learners to acquiring skills for self- reliance and employment opportunities. Banda (2007) stated that due to this perception, Zambian education system has been churning out thousands of primary and secondary school learners with aspirations to get white collar jobs. Writing about Career Guidance in the context of the education or school system, Kochhar (2013) defines Career Guidance as a process that is intended to help learners cope

with problems relating to occupational or career choices, plans and adjustments. Kochhar’s definition emphasises on career guidance which should assist individual learners in solving problems pertaining to career choices, plans and adjustment with due regard to individual characteristics and needs and their relations to occupational opportunities.

Herr et al (1996) reported that career as a set of multiple processes, techniques or services designed to assist an individual to understand and to act on self-knowledge and knowledge of opportunities in work, education and leisure and to develop the decision making skills to create and manage his or her own career development. Career guidance was to provide information that would guide them to choose their life careers so that the career decisions they make in life would help them cope with life as they progress by age. According to O’Hara (2000), a well planned and coordinated career guidance increases career orientation, career planning and career exploration. O’Hara’ sentiment on the role of career guidance is well reflected by Chipango (2015) explanation on how the Zambia Curriculum Framework on career pathway linked all levels of education from general certificate to tertiary and adult literacy. He further explained how the two career pathway was to help learners progress in their education according to their areas of interest and abilities.

Super’s Life-Span, Life-Space Theory

Donald Super created a developmental model in 1980 which emphasized on how personal experiences interact with occupational preferences in creating one’s self-concept. Super’s self-concept is the belief that our identities and by extension our career identities are a product of how we see ourselves. Our vocational choices put this concept into practice in the real world. Super viewed career development as a lifelong activity. Recognizing that people change over their lifetime, he also identified different areas or “life-spaces” that help make a person who they are. Super’s theory also emphasise the fact that other people are involved in our lives and thus impact who we are and choices we make.

Super’s five life and career development stages

Stage	Age	Characteristics
Growth	birth-14	Development of self-concept, attitudes, needs and general world

		of work
Exploration	15-24	"Trying out" through classes, work hobbies. Tentative choice and skill development
Establishment	25-44	Entry-level skill building and stabilisation through work experience
Maintenance	45-64	Continual adjustment process to improve position
Decline	65+	Reduced output, prepare for retirement

Super's Theory implication on career choices:

- Children's career choice intentions change from a fantasy stage to more realistic options as they grow up Hartung et al.,(2005)
- By adolescence, children would explore various career options and develop career choice intentions consistent with one's own abilities, values, and interests (Kracke, 2002).
- There is a relationship between the career interest of adolescents and the later career choice (Low et al. 2005).
- The study by Falck et al. (2010) showed the stability of career aspirations from adolescence to adulthood. In their study, students who stated entrepreneurial intentions at age 16 were shown to have a significantly higher probability of being an entrepreneur at age 33 compared to those who did not indicate any entrepreneurial intentions.
- Schmitt-Rodermund (2007) in his study showed a relationship between entrepreneurial interests at the age of 13 years and entrepreneurial activities 20 years later.
- Chileshe (2006:3) explains that "Adolescence is a period of making choices, especially concerning the future and Stead (1987) also states that adolescents need assistance in making subject choices and deciding on careers.

- Bandura et al. (2001) in his studies suggested that adolescent career choice is influenced by many factors, including life context, personal aptitudes, and educational attainment.

Methodology

Research Design

The research used qualitative approach and descriptive research design was used since the researcher wanted to understand the information on career guidance in schools and get respondents opinions on the implementation process of the two career pathways. The data was collected using interview schedules and document analysis. Interviews were conducted while the researcher had also to do document analysis of the school curriculum, time tables and a pathway chosen was done.

Data Collection

The study collected primary data from sampled grade 8 to 12 pupils in six schools namely, Chongwe, Kasisi, Margarate Mwachiyeya, Mukamambo II, St Theresa, and, Silverest secondary schools using interviews. Key informant interviews were also used to collect data from school administrators and teachers.

Sampling Techniques

The sampling technique employed was purposive sampling for the schools as they represent major old schools with one new school in Chongwe district. Purposive sampling was also used for teachers and learners targeted as they were reliable for the study.

Data Analysis

Thematic analysis was used to analyse qualitative data by grouping the data according to emerging themes. Social Package for Social Sciences (SPSS) was used to generate tables of frequency and charts.

Results and Discussions

Vocalisation Policy in Zambia

The results indicated that although the vocationalisation policy was mainly aimed at offering employment to school leavers and drop outs; findings indicate that vocationalisation of either primary or secondary education did not significantly improve the employability of school leavers or drop-outs. This may be attributed to the fact that in most cases employers still insist on a post-secondary qualification (International Youth Foundation, 2014). The introduction of the vocationalized track should not just be looked at in terms of its desired possible results but there is need to also consider its feasibility in a developing country like Zambia. While the policy may be working well in other countries, there is no reason to believe it can work the same way in Zambia. There is certainly, a world of difference among countries in terms of economic circumstances. It was discovered that adequate preparatory groundwork should take into account the resources required for implementation, which is one of the most important steps to take before making any reform of this magnitude. This would help schools to provide both career pathways.

It vividly showed that most schools prefer the academic pathway which seems to be cheaper than the vocational one which requires huge amounts for infrastructure and material mobilisation. This is because the cost was found to be very high compared to the academic subjects. Cummings (1988) who conducted the unit costs associated the findings with the teaching of practical subjects in Kenya and estimated that a single practical subject taught to a class of about fifteen to twenty pupils would take at least twice as much capital as the academic subjects combined.

Respondents also indicated that the evidence does not seem to authenticate the conformist thinking that practical subjects will automatically facilitate employment. Although some skills focus on personal growth (such as critical thinking and self-motivation) to facilitate self-reliance attitudes and such skills do not necessarily require a separate pathway in order to be taught. Considering the cost of two career pathway, the vocational pathway is not easy for secondary schools to implement. This is because even schools where the concept is correctly implemented, there is definitely requirement for new infrastructure and equipment in order to meet its demands.

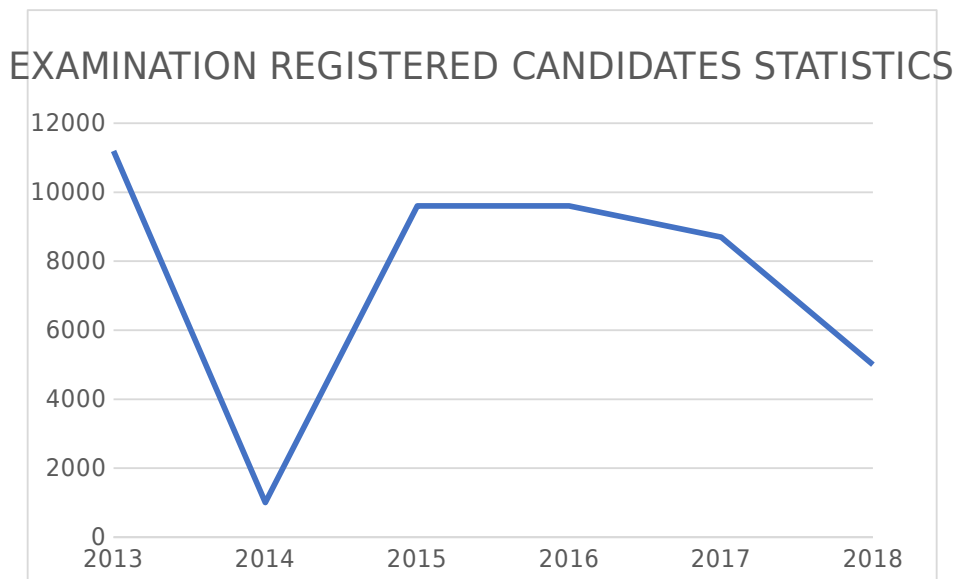
Career Information and implementation

Studies indicated that there is information gap on career choice. The learners do not really know and understand the concept of career choice. For instance, one of the career guidance teachers at school X confessed that learners in their school have never been guided on two career pathways instead they just find academic pathway already chosen for them. Out of the six schools, guidance teachers confessed that learners were not given information on career choice related to vocational pathway instead learners were mostly encouraged to take up academic subjects that could guarantee them white collar jobs

The study also reviewed information gap on part of the learners as the implementation of this policy in schools never considered guidance to learners by helping learners make meaningful decisions. Most respondents indicated that the policy needed early planning and establish goals which were to be understood by the end beneficiaries who are the learners. When the policy was first implemented, students were made to write tests in order to place them in study subjects of their strength, however, no tests were given in Music education. This did not last long and schools started to choose the career pathway they wanted to follow instead of giving chance to the students to choose.

Although the two way career pathways empower learners with career choice, there is need to start career identification and interests by the learners themselves as early as Early childhood Education level. The successful implementation of the vocational career pathway requires a great deal of resources and careful planning. Findings also indicated a great decrease in the number of grade 12 pupils who sat for Musical Education examinations.

Below is the trend on how the examination for Musical Education has been in the last six years as adapted from Examination Council of Zambia: 2019.



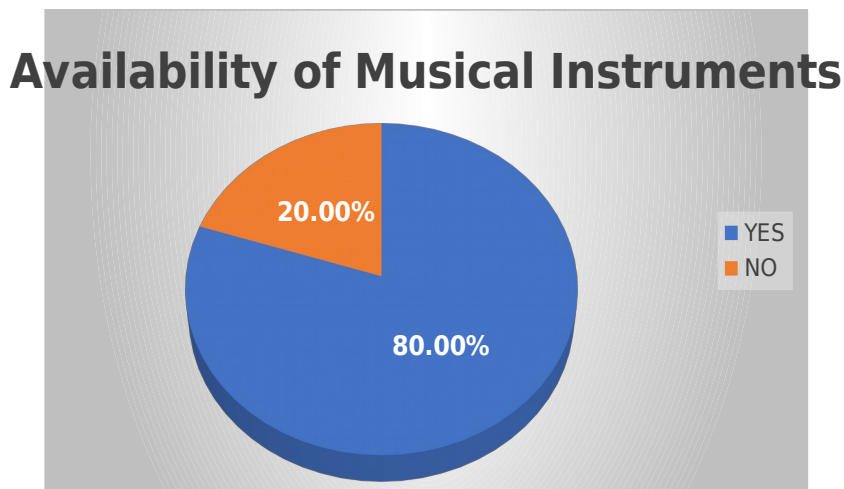
Implications for the sustainability of Musical Arts Education in Zambia

In Zambia, we have two universities offering Bachelor of Music Education (Chalimbana and Rusangu Universities). Other institutions offering diploma in Music education are many for example Evelyn Hone College, Mufulira College of Education. A lot of Music teachers are being channelled out by colleges and universities. Despite the large number of teachers for Music, Musical arts Education in Zambia has suffered great set back with the introduction of two career pathways.

Firstly, learners are not given chance to choose which career pathway they would follow instead schools choose for learners. One of the major reasons given by administrators interviewed was that, practical subjects are very expensive to maintain in schools because they are not being funded with enough money to buy equipment and for infrastructure development of specialised rooms

According to the findings of this research, out of six secondary schools in Chongwe district of Lusaka Province, no school was offering music. At one school which used to offer music, they have a local policy of alternating between Musical Arts education and Fine Arts. In that particular school, when Music was introduced at Grade ten level, only one class would take music until they wrote their grade 12 examinations that would be when another class would be introduced. One of the shocking findings were that almost all secondary schools received woodwind instruments from the Ministry of General Education through the District Board

Secretary's office and they were just gathering dust with no one to teach and use them as shown below.



In schools, the career guidance does not offer information related to the importance of Musical Arts in relation to self-reliance job opportunities. Learners who were interviewed on how much information they had on Music Arts Education indicated ignorance of having received any career guidance related to vocational pathway or music. It was also discovered that the implementation of the two career pathway came late because choice of a career should start at an early stage according children's interests and abilities and develop them as they grow in relation to Super's theory.

Conclusion

The study established that the concept of career pathway was not well understood which led to unsatisfactory implementation process on the choice of career pathway by schools. Schools choose the pathway for learners instead of giving learners to choose which one they would want to take up according to their interests and abilities. The concept of career pathway is to expose both paths in each school and learners should be allowed to make choices. This is attributed to the fact that Music education is viewed to be expensive in terms of teaching and learning materials despite a lot of teachers of music being channelled out every year. The learners lack information on career choices which is supposed to be provided by the guidance career office. According to the findings, there is great danger in the continuity of Musical Arts Education in Zambia if the Career Pathway is not carefully studied and implemented accordingly. According to Super theory, if career development is on-going, it is only applicable for learners to be exposed to both career paths beginning from birth.

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