

# ZAMBIA

Exploration of the roles and relationships, power and assignments of Student administrative bodies in selected secondary schools on the Copperbelt Province

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## 1. Introduction

The administrative structure in Zambian schools consists of teachers and pupils. On the teachers' side the structure is made up of head teacher, deputy head teacher, senior teachers and the rest of teachers while the pupils' structure consists of prefects and classroom monitors. However, class and school councils have been introduced in all Secondary and in some Primary schools on the Copperbelt since 2009. The introduction of school councils has created misunderstanding between the prefects and council members. This report focuses on the roles and relationships, power and assignments of school council members and prefects in selected secondary schools in order to clear the misunderstandings as reflected in Copperbelt province CRC school and district council's minutes and conference reports.

## 2. Frame of Reference

Zambia like many other nations ratified United Nations Charter on human rights, including the rights of the children and has since been involved in many domesti-

cated activities to maintain this commitment. The country signed the International Convention on Children's Rights in September 1990 and ratified the commitment in December 1991. The Zambian constitution addresses issues of human rights as well as the rights of children.

Under the Zambian law, children have rights and responsibilities and as such all citizens are obliged to respect and uphold these rights. The rights of children are interpreted in terms of the three principles; protection, provision and participation. One of the aims in the Zambian policy of education is to awaken concern of civil liberties and human rights for the consolidation of the democratic character of the Zambian Society (MoE 1996:52). The Ministry of Education has incorporated Child rights in the curriculum in order to interpret and implement the CRC. At university level, programs for students pursuing bachelor degrees in Education have incorporated CRC issues through civic education and social studies. At secondary school level, civic education and civics include CRC issues while social and development studies have elements of CRC at primary school.

Apart from including CRC in the curriculum, secondary schools on the Copperbelt Province have established Class Councils and School Councils. District School Councils have also been established and are operating. The class council is a means for children to raise matters of importance to them and bring these matters to their school council. The school council executive committee members are elected from the class council representatives. The council is composed of the President (chairperson), Vice President (Vice Chairperson) Secretary, and treasurer. The roles and organization of school councils is enshrined in Toolkit for establishing class and school councils (Mwape, *et al* 2006).

Like most schools following the UK system, schools in Zambia have a prefectural system and they have been in existence for more than 60 years. Their history can be traced way back to missionary education. Prefects hold administrative responsibilities. In addition, the discipline of the school is coordinated and organized through prefects (Simpson, n.d). The prefects are appointed by the school administration with recommendations from the outgoing prefects. There are no other official documents in the Ministry of Education setting out the roles and operations guidelines for prefects.

At Primary school level, prefects are chosen by the teachers in grade 7, which is the final year of primary School, and at the end of grade 12, which is the final year of secondary school. In the Secondary School there are more than 20 prefect posts. These include Head Boy, Head Girl, Sports Captain, Vice-Sports Captain, the House Captains as well as Vice-Captains and ordinary prefects. School prefects are expected to act with decorum and be conscientious of the school regulations. They are intended to be akin to staff members in their enforcement of school rules. As a prefect, a student is expected to act with maturity and work to preserve the school building and ensure that pupils

conduct themselves in an orderly and appropriate fashion. The other roles and duties performed by prefects include:

**Monitor set area** - Prefects are generally assigned a set area to monitor. During duty time, prefects should patrol their set areas faithfully and ensure that other students do not loiter and that no mischief is going on. Often, prefects are held responsible for rule-violating behavior that occurs within their set area, so they must ensure that they watch carefully and successfully thwart any attempts and misdeeds.

**Enforce dress code** - Prefects must ask students to modify their attire if they are out of dress code, or give them a dress code violation if the attire cannot be satisfactorily modified. Because they are to enforce dress code, prefects must also strictly adhere to the dress code themselves. If a prefect's attire deviates from the regulation attire, other students see the prefect as hypocritical and are less likely to follow his direction.

**Protect school property** - While patrolling their set areas, prefects must ensure that no damage is done to school property. Preventing this damage is important because damaged school equipment can be highly costly to repair.

**Report any violators** - Prefects must inform school administration of any rule-violations they witness. Commonly, prefects are given a small note books to use for the recording of rule violations.

**Act as student leaders** - Prefects are intended to be role models to other students. In addition to act as leaders of the general student body, some prefects receive their opportunity to take a leadership role within the prefect system. Commonly school administration selects lead prefects. These individuals act as student administrators and oversee all other prefects to ensure that the system operates effectively and all members do their part to ensure the safety of the school environment.

Existing situation in Zambia today is that School Councils and Prefects work in isolation. There were, when this project started, a misunderstanding of roles between school councils and prefects as reflected in Copperbelt province CRC school and district council's minutes and conference reports.

The change project is premised on articles 3 and 12 of the CRC (in the best interest of the child and respect for the views of the child). These articles enhance provision, protection and participation. While prefect bodies should or are expected to enhance provision of education and protection of child, very little is done to enable them participate in school decision making process. On the other hand within the same schools, the school council members should be or are expected to be actively involved in decision making process that impact on participation, protection and provision. This has

created the misunderstanding as regarding roles and relationships, power and assignments between the two student administrative bodies.

### 3. Purpose

To explore the roles and relationships, power and assignments of school council and prefectural body in three selected high schools on the Copperbelt province.

### 4. Methodology

The change project targeted head teachers, deputy head teachers, link teachers, patrons/matrons for prefectural bodies, school councils and prefectural bodies at Kitwe Boys, Chingola and Chililabombwe Secondary Schools on the Copperbelt province. Below are the activities carried out during the project.

#### **Reporting back in home country**

The team reported back to the Provincial Education Officer (PEO) and submitted a written report about the training in Sweden. On 24<sup>th</sup> July 2012, the project plan was submitted and the team sought permission to implement the project. The PEO granted permission and pledged support the team and CRC activities as a whole.

#### **Developing instruments for data collection.**

An interview schedule was developed (*Appendix A*)

#### **Sensitization and consultative meeting of stakeholders**

On 9<sup>th</sup> August 2012, the team oriented the stakeholders and got their views of the project. After explaining the project to them, they were also asked to outline the roles of the prefects and school councils and the challenges these two bodies face in their operations.



Participants working in groups

In attendance were head teachers, Senior Education Officer- Guidance and Counseling (SEO-G), deputy head teacher, teacher, Senior Education Standards Officers (SESO), Education Officer- Teacher Education (EO-TED) and Education Standard Officer (ESO) general.

The participants suggested that the project expands the stakeholders to include

- District Resource Centre Coordinators under 'a' stakeholders
- SEO guidance and counseling, Education Officer (EO TED) and Head teachers association to be included under 'b' stakeholders
- Deputy Head teachers to be included under target group for teachers in the three selected high schools, where the project will be implemented.

## Pretest

Pretest of the designed instruments was conducted at Helen Kaunda Secondary School on 14<sup>th</sup> September, 2012 and thereafter the instrument was revised by rewording and dropping certain questions.



Girls at Helen Kaunda under pretest

## Group discussions and interviews

Discussions and interviews were carried out at Kitwe Boys, Chingola and Chililabombwe Secondary school. These discussions targeted head teachers, link teachers for school councils, patrons for prefects, prefects and school council members.



Change Agents discussing with prefects and school councils members

## Indaba I

The meeting was held at Chingola Secondary School on 12<sup>th</sup> October, 2012. In attendance were pupils, teachers, Education Standards officer (ESO), District Education Standards Officer (DESO), District Education Board Secretary (DEBS) and Head teachers. In all they were 57 participants.



Patrons and link teachers during group work



Pupils Group discussions

### **Mentor and change agents visit to project schools**

Mentor and change agents visited change project schools and Kitwe College of Education on 19<sup>th</sup> and 20<sup>th</sup> March, 2013. The mentor had group interviews with pupils and then with school administrators on the operations of prefects and school councils.

### **National Conference**

The national conference was held at Moba Convention hotel on 21<sup>st</sup> March 2013 in Kitwe. The conference reviewed CRC activities on the Copperbelt and also learnt how batch 16 change agents had progressed in the implementation of their change project. One key note presentation was by our mentor Bodil Rasmusson from Lund University. Participants included prefects, school council members, change agents, PRCCs, EO-TED, DRCCs, DEBS, DESO, ESOs, head teachers, link teachers, atron for prefects, Copperbelt PEO, PESO, and chairperson for Civic Education Association.



Bodil with CRC Change Agents after the conference



## Change Agents school visits

School visits by the change agent were held from 5<sup>th</sup> to 7<sup>th</sup> August 2013. Starting with Chingola Secondary on the 5<sup>th</sup> and ending with Chililabombwe on the 7<sup>th</sup> August 2013



Prefects, School council members, link teacher and change agent at Chingola Secondary School

The focus of the school visits was to find out how prefects and school council members were operating after the Indaba and National conference in which the roles and relationship, and power and assignments of the two student administrative bodies were clarified. The group discussions were held with selected prefects and school council members and then with head teachers by the Change Agent.

## Indaba II



Part of the Consultative meeting participants

The meeting was held at Chingola Secondary School on 8<sup>th</sup> August 2013. The objectives of the consultative meeting was to consult with stake holders on the formulation



of roles for the prefects, school councils and link teachers to go into the pamphlet and also to share findings on how things are in schools between the prefects and the school council after the Indaba on the clarification of roles and the National conference of March, 2013. The participants included all change agents based on the Copperbelt, Provincial Education Standard Officer, All Copperbelt province DEBS, Teachers and pupils from the Change project schools.

The participants were asked to discuss the following

- What has changed in their existence as prefect and school council members?
- How were they operating?
- What challenges were they facing if any?
- What they wished to happen?

## 5. Results

The results are organized according to the way the activities were implemented.

### **Sensitization and Consultative meeting of Stakeholders**

The stakeholders felt that the project was very good and came at the very right time. They pledged to support it. The meeting also revealed that prefects protect the interest of school administration rather than their fellow pupils and had more privileges than school councils. Interestingly, they also mentioned that there was a legal backing for the existence of the prefects but they failed to produce a written document up to the time of this report. The roles of prefects were just to enforce school rules such as maintaining discipline, law and order. They explained that prefects were nominated by fellow pupils but administration had a final say on who becomes a prefect. On the whole, prefects did not participate in decision making.

The participants further explained that there was no law which compels school administrators to invite school council representative to attend school board and Parent teachers Association (PTA) meetings. School council members needed continuous sensitization on the channels of communication and their roles if they had to operate effectively. They felt continuous sensitization was important in the operations of School Councils to fill up gaps created due to transfer of staff, deaths and other pupils graduating and others taking up office. All teachers need to be sensitized in CRC and take an active role in sensitization of school council members.

The participants further suggested that CRC should be on the agenda of provincial Stakeholders Continuous Professional Development (CPD) meetings. There was need to plan and include school council activities in the school, district and provincial budgets. The District Education Board Secretaries (DEBS) should sensitize head teachers during meetings on the importance of school councils. In order to maintain peace, both prefects and councils members should be present in meetings requiring pupils representation. In School board governance, only a pupil representative is mentioned and did not indicate who should sit on the meeting between the two pupil representative bodies. The roles that stakeholders discussed were based on Mwape *etal* (2006).

In conclusion they urged batch 16 to work according to the project plan and encouraged them to start work immediately as there was need to narrow the gap between school councils and prefects.

### **Focused Group discussions and interviews with prefects and school councils members**

The discussions confirmed that there were misunderstanding between school councils and prefects which emanated from power distribution, undefined roles, lack of sensitization on the part of the teachers and pupils and lack of collaboration between the two student bodies.

The prefects revealed that there were no written roles for the prefectural student body and roles were only verbally assigned to them. They used school rules as guidelines. There was no orientation on the roles from school administration. However, fellow outgoing prefects oriented the new ones. Those oriented, did the same to the rest of their colleagues.

All teachers and pupils were aware of the existence of the prefects and were fully aware of their operations. They had a direct communication to administration, and they got feedback immediately. They had teachers (patron) to guide their operations.

### **Relationship with school council**

The discussions with the prefects revealed that there was a bad or no relationship at all between the prefects and the school council members. School councils operated like a secret society with their dark corner meetings. Prefects were recognised by a different uniform, while school council members were distinguished by the invisible tie or badge which was not even sufficient for every school council member. They felt favoured by

the school administration than the school council as they even had a room to operate from.

The discussions, interviews and observation revealed that prefects did not understand Child rights and the operations of the school councils. They felt that school council members liked poking their noses in other people's issues. It was noted that the school councils operated with unwritten roles. The roles were verbally assigned by pupils themselves and there was no orientation on the roles by the school administration. Pupils from Temweni, Chiwala and Luanshya Boys secondary schools oriented them on school council operations. School council members felt that without guidelines, they were bound to error. The toolkit which provides roles for school council members was not available in school and majority of the council members had never seen it before. They operated with a lot of difficulties and no support from the School Administrations.

Interestingly, all teachers and pupils were aware of the existence of school councils but not everyone was aware of what the school councils should be and did in the school. Communication was through the link teacher to administration, and who usually did not bring back the feedback. They operated with little or no recognition at all by the school administration and were not usually consulted in decision making except when there were riots in school.

The presence of the school councils had improved teaching and learning through introduction of gate closing, period registers, class passes and reporting of teachers that were not teaching effectively. Moreover, in one school, there was school council representative on the PTA and school board to participate in school administration. The council member encouraged other pupils who had problems to see the appropriate teachers and administration, thereby encouraging them to be coming to school. It was observed the school councils impact was not felt because their status was compromised by the teachers and school administration.

The school council members confirmed that they had a very bad or no relationship at all with prefectural body. They never had any meetings together since the two student bodies had different duties. They felt that prefects were favoured and given much power by the school administration and teachers e.g. if a school council member and a prefect report late, the school council member is punished, while the prefect is let free.

The discussions revealed that the implementation of child rights by the school council members was a source of misunderstanding. For example, school council intervention in pupils who were punished during learning hours by prefects was seen as poking their

noses into prefects business. Prefectural bodies and some teachers did not understand child rights. No wonder, in one school, it was learnt that rights were hung by the gate once at school and only picked on the way home.

The school council suffered from inferiority complex as they had no office to operate from and a special uniform. Prefects were recognised by a different uniform, while school council members were distinguished by the invisible tie or badge which was not even sufficient for every school council member.

### **Interviews with head teachers, link teachers and prefect matrons and patrons**

The respondents admitted that there was a misunderstanding between prefects and school council members. They also felt that both pupils' administrative bodies were important to the management of the school. They explained that with high pupil to teacher ratio situation, teacher's capacity to maintain order in school was difficult. Hence there was need to bring in pupils to assist in enforcing order. However, they did accept that it was not the role of pupils to maintain order and discipline in school.

They also recommended the school councils for bringing in positive changes in school administration through the number of projects they had implemented. In fact one deputy head teacher strongly recommended to only have one pupil's administrative body – the school council as it was serving the interest of the learners as opposed to prefect who serves the administration.

### **Indaba I with school council, prefectural board, teachers and school administrators**



Pupils discussing during the indaba

It was agreed that both student administrative bodies should be treated equally by teachers and school administration and there should be equal power distribution between them. Both students' administrative bodies should have different uniform and

should introduce at the same time during the assembly by the school administration. Moreover, it was pointed out that school council members should not be humiliated when being corrected as it was with the prefects and prefects should also have someone to punish them when they are wrong.

Teachers, pupils, prefects and school council members should be oriented on the roles of the two administrative bodies and the roles printed in a booklet for future reference. Both prefects and school council members should be oriented at the same time. This will enable both bodies to be aware of one another's' roles. In addition, the tool kit should be given to every school council member and also the guidelines be provided for the prefects in order for them to operate effectively.

It was agreed that the two student administrative bodies should be having joint meetings to enhance collaboration between them. However, it was important there should be separation of powers in the way they discharge their duties. The two were interdependent on one another like the legislature and judiciary. School council should make rules with the help of the administration and these rules should be presented to the prefects to implement.

Both prefects and school council members should participate in decision making by attending both the Parent Teacher Association (PTA) and school board meetings. In conclusion it was agreed that child rights to be respected by teachers, school council, teachers and school administrators.



Head teachers, Link teachers and school council patrons having a discussion

## **Change Agents school visits after the clarified roles at Indaba**

The subsequent visits to schools revealed the following

- before the indaba, prefects and school council members worked as individual bodies. School council made rules by themselves, but this time, prefects were present as class council members.
- the head boy and the head girl were invited to attend school council meetings so that they listen to complaints concerning the prefectural body.
- school Council operated with more recognition by the school Administration.
- there was consultation on decision making in school. Teachers consulted the school council and encouraged them to take action on issues arising.
- prefectural body had realised that School council are part and parcel of school administration. There were consultations between the two student bodies.
- both pupils' administrative bodies had understood their limits
- school council members were introduced at assembly, that they are student leaders, just like prefects.
- there was transparency as the role of each student body is known.
- both pupils' administrative bodies had room to meet from.
- among the two schools out of the three, where there was no school council representation on the board, one school head teacher felt there was need to include them.
- the role of the monitor that was abolished by school council had been reinstated because they had understood their roles.
- there was a lot of sensitisation on several issues e.g. prefects stopped being corrupt.

## **Challenges**

The subsequent visit to the schools revealed that Grade 12 pupils did not have much respect for school council. Grade 12 pupils felt that they were superior because some council members were from lower grades. This made it difficult for school council to operate effectively as rights with responsibilities were not fully understood by pupils

Moreover, at times the school council broke the channel of communication by confronting teachers who failed to perform to their expectation, thereby, having conflicts with the teachers.

Another challenge observed was that sometimes feedback was not given by school administration on issues raised by school council.

## Indaba II

The participants were mixed and then grouped to work on group tasks, which was to define the roles of the prefects, school council, patrons and link teachers. We wanted to see if there were other new roles other than what was submitted last time and also to see if there was a consistence in the roles. The identified and defined roles would be published in a pamphlet by batch 16. Roles were defined as follows:

### Roles of Link Teachers/patron and matrons

- Must link the pupils to the administration.
- Disseminate information between the pupils and the administration.
- Ensuring that there is order between the prefects and the school council representatives.
- Being available for pupils.
- Orientation of the pupils.
- Help implement the plans of the school board.
- Role models.
- Coordinate and monitoring the progress of the school council.
- Bridging the gap between the school council and administration.
- Guiding the school council.
- Working hand in hand with the prefectural body and the matron/patron.
- Sensitizing other teachers on the roles of the school council.
- Following up on issues discussed and giving a feedback from the administration.
- Explaining the rights and responsibilities to the pupils.
- Speak on behalf of pupils.
- Help protect rights of pupils.
- Help fulfill pupils' wishes.
- Advocate for better learning conditions.

### Roles of School Council

- Link between administration and pupils.
- Formulating school rules.
- Speak on behalf of the pupils.
- Help the administration with sensitization.
- Protect the rights of pupils.
- Advocate for better learning conditions and
- Sit on the board and assist in decision making.



## Roles of Prefects

- Ensure that school rules are followed.
- Implement and enforce the rules formulated by the school council.
- Ensure that pupils wear a recommended uniform.
- Maintain discipline and order in school, in the absence of a teacher.
- Help the school in implementation of co-curricular activities.
- Acting as an eye and ear of the administration and
- Protecting other pupils.

## 6. Discussion and Reflections

The misunderstanding between the school councils and prefectural bodies was real and needed concerted effort by all change agents, administrators and teachers. Clarification of roles and relationships, power and assignment had assisted in clearing the misunderstanding between the two pupils' administrative bodies. However, this is not the end by itself, there is need to continuously sensitize both the administrators and new students on the roles of each pupils administrative body. Moreover, there is serious need to avail the toolkit for establishing the school councils to the members and each school formulating or adapting guidelines to enhance prefectural body operation. Without written guidelines there is a likelihood of abuse of power by any of the two administrative bodies and school administration which could result in misunderstanding.

Surprisingly the two student administrative bodies had become closer to each other and appreciated each other roles. Students had a lot of ideas that needed exploration. The head teachers, link teachers and patrons were supportive to school councils after sensitization. With this developing trend, could it be possible that the two student administrative bodies work as one body? There is need to explore this developing trend in order to enhance child rights in schools.

## 7. Way forward

Change Agents should continue sensitizing and monitoring the stakeholders involved in CRC implementation in the three schools. The lesson learnt from this project will be rolled out to other schools on the Copperbelt province. By so doing we will be narrowing the gap for batch 18 to continue with their project, which is focusing on creating a

platform for the two student administrative bodies to work together in decision making according to CRC norms. Moreover, the team will need to publish the developed the roles and relationships, power and assignment of the school councils and prefectural bodies and have them distributed to schools to guide the operations of the two.

## 8. List of References

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# Appendix A

## INTERVIEW SCHEDULE

Exploration of the roles and responsibilities, power and assignments of school councils and student administration at Kitwe Boys, Chililabombwe and Chingola High Schools

### *Personal details*

School ..... Position .....

### *School characteristics*

Number of pupils      male .....      female .....

Total .....

Number of teachers      male .....      Female .....

Total .....

Number of classrooms: .....

### *School councils*

- Have you got a functional School council?
- Are there any written roles for school council members?
- What are the roles of the school council?
- Are the school council members oriented on their roles?
- How do they operate?
- Who assigns roles to school council members?
- How are the roles assigned to the school council members?
- How often does the school council meet?
- Are there any guidelines to assist you in the implementation/ organization of school councils?
- How effective is the structure of school council in your school?
- Has it improved the organization of school?
- Are there class councils?
- How many class councils are there?

### *School Prefects*

- Do School Prefects bodies exist?
- Are there any written roles for school prefects?
- Are the prefects oriented on their roles?
- How do they operate?
- What are the roles of the prefect?
- Who assigns roles to prefects?
- How are the roles assigned to the prefect members?
- How often do prefects meet?
- Are there any guidelines to assist you in the implementation/ organization of prefects?
- How effective is the structure of prefects in your school?
- Has it improved the organization of the school?
- 

### *Relationships between the councils and prefect members*

- How is the relationship between School council members and prefects in your school?
- How could the relationship between the school council and prefects be enhanced