



Effective Management Of Diversity In Teaching At Secondary Schools: A Case Study Of Selected Secondary Schools In Chongwe District

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Abstract- This study examined the effective management of diversity in teaching at secondary schools in Chongwe District, Zambia, with the aim of identifying the types and dimensions of diversity present, evaluating the effectiveness of existing strategies, and proposing contextually relevant interventions for improvement. A descriptive research design employing both qualitative and quantitative approaches was used. The study targeted a sample of 150 participants, including head teachers, deputy head teachers, teachers, students, and community leaders, selected through purposive, random, and stratified sampling methods. Data were collected through questionnaires, interviews, and documentary reviews, and analyzed using descriptive statistics, Pearson correlation, regression models, and thematic content analysis. Findings revealed that diversity in Chongwe's secondary schools manifests across multiple dimensions, including gender, language, socioeconomic background, religion, and disability. While inclusive pedagogy, administrative commitment, and student engagement initiatives were evident, they were inconsistently applied and often constrained by limited resources, insufficient teacher training, and weak monitoring mechanisms. Inferential analysis indicated that administrative commitment, teacher training, and resource allocation were the strongest predictors of effective inclusion. Qualitative narratives further underscored gaps in policy implementation, community involvement, and the sustainability of diversity initiatives.

Keywords: Pedagogy, Diversity, Contextually, Administrative, Dimension

I. Chapter One Introduction

1.0 Introduction

Diversity in education encompasses differences in race, ethnicity, language, gender, ability, religion, and socio-economic status. Effective diversity management involves creating inclusive environments that respect and leverage these differences to enhance learning outcomes, social cohesion, and equity (Assefa & Zenebe, 2025). In the context of Zambia's evolving educational landscape, managing diversity within schools has become a critical imperative. Chongwe District, located in Lusaka Province, presents a microcosm of Zambia's multicultural and multilingual society, with learners from varied ethnic, linguistic, socio-economic, and religious backgrounds. This study explores effective strategies for managing diversity in educational institutions within Chongwe District, drawing on empirical insights, policy frameworks, and best practices to promote inclusive excellence. This chapter presents the background of the study by looking at the problem statement, objectives, research questions and the significance of its scope. It also presented definitions of key terms that will be used in the study.

1.1 Background of the study

The school is a social organization designed to achieve predetermined educational and societal goals. The school is a conglomeration of human, material, and financial



resources that are geared towards the achievement of set goals. Out of these resources, management of human resources is most critical for goal achievement. Management of human resources is necessary because of the differences in human behavioral pattern who comes together to interact in a social organization. This is where the head teacher's managerial know-how comes to bear because as he/she is expected to be able to harmonize the different units and staff diversity in the school to achieve the school's set goals.

Diversity exists amongst every group of two or more persons. Diversity refers to differences existing between people. Diversity is the representation of individual differences and similarities in the majority. In other words, diversity is a mixture of different identities, backgrounds, experiences, beliefs, value judgments, ages, genders, demographic structures, professional experience, physical abilities, educational levels, family status and personal dispositions in any group, community, or organization. Stoner et al. (2014) noted that diversity among staff members refers to the unique advantages that each employee brings to the workplace. This means that staff diversity is part of the human resource assets that can be harnessed for the good of the organization because it exists among staff members in every organization. In the school as an organization, staff diversity should be harnessed because of the potential advantages it can bring to bear in public secondary school administration. This implies that staff workforce diversity is a blessing and not a curse.

Workforce diversity means the understanding of individuals' uniqueness and recognition of individual differences. It is the heart of human resource management where it identifies the human attributes such as race, gender, and age in to a much broader dimension. By extension, workforce diversity includes the entire spectrum of human characteristics such as age, cultural background, physical abilities and disabilities, race, religion, sex, and sexual orientation (Jayne and Dipboye, 2014). In a work environment, racism, prejudice, and lack of respect for others are infused into the workplace without mutual respect for individual differences. When two or more people have different views about an issue or a subject; such can escalate into a violent force in the workplace. If the employees are not well managed to cope with diversity to reduce such occurrences, it may have negative consequences on performance of the organization (Shenita and Jamie, 2016).

Effective management of diversity in educational institutions has been a central concern in the United States, where culturally responsive pedagogy has moved from the margins of teacher education into mainstream practice. Drawing on the work of Ladson-Billings (2020) and research by Nieto and Bode (2021), U.S. secondary schools implement curricula that validate students' cultural experiences, foster critical consciousness, and reduce achievement gaps. Federal civil rights legislation such as Title VI of the Civil Rights Act and the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act mandate equitable access, but scholars emphasize that compliance alone is insufficient. Professional development initiatives increasingly focus on unpacking implicit bias, designing differentiated instruction for multilingual learners, and cultivating school climates that affirm racial, linguistic, and ability differences (Ladson-Billings, 2020; Nieto & Bode, 2021).



Management of workforce diversity is the improvement of the organizational environment for all employees with differences and similarities that could contribute to the organization's strategic competitiveness (Thomas, 2015). Management of workforce diversity is not just bringing diverse employees together, it means to appropriately respond and appreciate their individual needs, values, beliefs, and the different needs that diverse people bring to the school. It also means finding the most effective ways to utilize talents and skills of diverse employees by correcting misconceptions about how and why different employees differ from one another. The advantages of management of workforce diversity according to Akinnusi et al. (2017) are the full utilization of human resources; reduced interpersonal conflicts; enhanced work relationships based on mutual respect; a shared organizational vision and increased commitment among diverse employees; greater innovations, and flexibility; improved productivity. Diversity management focuses on maximizing the skills of all employees to contribute to organizational goals. Although managing workforce diversity makes human resource management in schools a challenging task, the failure to harness its advantages can bring about the under-utilization of staff and conflict can also arise if workforce diversity is not managed.

Partners, (2017) stated that, for managers to manage diversity effectively, they have to come up with a diversity plan. That plan will involve mapping out a way to create an appreciation for diversity in all employees in the workplace. And also, consider identifying critical task, arranged in a logical order, establish priority systems and order to achieve the expected results. For organization to successfully run smoothly without diversity, they have to create a successful management of diversity programme that would set and utilize essential key components of handling diversity in the organization (Algahtani, 2014). Managers must have fair ideas or be aware of certain skills on how to necessarily organize the right tools to create, and manage diversity in workplace.

Staff who implement curriculum in secondary school are the teachers. Teachers are arguably the most important members of the school and society. They give children purpose, set them up for success as citizens of our world, and inspire in them a drive to succeed in life. A teacher's role is to shape the life chances of young people by imparting knowledge- bringing the curriculum to life. The teacher job role is expansive. It ranges from imparting knowledge to safeguarding children's welfare, inspiring critical thought and moral values. The role of a teacher is multi-dimensional but complementary. It requires great professionalism and dedication. They come into the teaching profession with their diverse personalities which must be properly managed. Thus, the principals' administrative performance can be adjudged based on their abilities in workforce diversity management.

The head teacher is the administrative head of the school, on his shoulders rest the success or failure of the school. The head teacher is vested with many responsibilities regarding the management of pupils, teachers, school facilities, and diversities inherent in them. The roles of school head teachers have been on the increase. Head teachers play the roles of supervisors, classroom teachers, community leaders and government's representatives. Head teachers are responsible for personnel management, making sure that employees are physically present and working to the best of their ability. As a matter of fact, head teachers are held accountable for academic achievement of all



students, and their behavioral conducts. Their ability to successfully manage different aspects of the school to achieve its predetermined goals is termed effective school administrative performance.

Head teachers' administrative performance refers to the ability of the school principal to plan, organize, coordinate and command the resources in the school; towards achieving the intended set goals of education (Mbon and Akpan, 2015). Every head teacher desires an effective attainment of set goals in the school. Administrative performance of secondary school can be expressed in areas of supervision of instruction, school discipline, healthy school-community relationships, and the organization of staff meetings, handling grievances of staff, team work, effective communication, healthy school morale, decision making and conflict management among others. It is common sense to say that principals who are flexible in the management of workforce diversity in the daily operations of the school could achieve school administrative effectiveness.

Administration of schools is the main function of the school principal, and their effective performance is a function of the principals' managerial skillfulness. There are observed complaints in Chongwe and Zambia in general that head teachers of schools seem to be ineffective in schools administration. This is observed from the increased rate of violation of human rights in the school, high rate of students' and staff's indiscipline, poor supervision of instruction by the head teachers, and staff and students' involvement in examination malpractice, poor record keeping, poor communication in the school, poor conflict management and poor interpersonal relationships. This has presently made principals to score low records in administrative performance in the state. Obasi and Igbudu, (2021) observed that a close look at some secondary schools reveals frequent cases of mutual suspicion, formation of cliques, discriminatory behaviors, favoritism and the like. All these lead to conflicts, disharmony, frustration and antagonism in an organization and consequently, impede the effectiveness and efficiency of the school.

Furthermore, the head teachers' failure to effectively perform their administrative duties in the school could bring about poor harmonious relationships amongst school personnel and the community, high rate of examination misconduct, fraudulent examination registration, poor instructional delivery by teachers, truancy, breaking of bounds by students, involvement in cultism, indecent relationships between teachers and students and students' poor academic performance. Nwokocha (2014) observed that the seeming diverse populations in secondary schools appear to create an ideal breeding ground for conflict and misunderstanding. The author added that such situations usually result in the feelings of alienation among the teachers and between teachers and management. It is assumed that if principals are able to manage staff diversity in the school it could solve the problem of poor administrative performance in secondary schools. Hence, school administration requires the co-operation of the principals and the teachers in the smooth day-to-day running of the school.

In the United Kingdom, diversity management in schools is intricately linked to Ofsted's inspection framework and to initial teacher training standards that require trainee teachers to demonstrate professional understanding of social, cultural, and



linguistic diversity (Gillborn & Youdell, 2019). The UK's Race Disparity Audit (Cabinet Office, 2017) has prompted schools to collect and act on disaggregated achievement data, while multicultural curriculum guidelines encourage inclusion of global perspectives in history and literature courses. Research indicates that partnerships with community organizations and the targeted recruitment of teachers from underrepresented ethnic groups enhance students' sense of belonging and challenge institutional racism (Tomlinson, 2020). These efforts are complemented by whole-school anti-racism policies that integrate restorative justice approaches to discipline and promote peer mediation (Gillborn & Youdell, 2019; Tomlinson, 2020).

Canadian secondary schools have pioneered multilingual education models that reflect the country's official bilingualism and its rich mosaic of immigrant languages. Allan and Titone (2018) document how dual-language programs in provinces such as Ontario and British Columbia combine content-based instruction in learners' heritage languages with English or French immersion, improving academic outcomes and fostering cross-cultural understanding. Equity audits, championed by the Canadian Centre for Diversity and Inclusion (2021), guide school leadership teams in identifying systemic barriers for Indigenous and racialized students. Teacher candidates undergo specialized training in Indigenous pedagogies and anti-oppressive education, which research shows enhances cultural competence and reduces disciplinary disproportion among marginalized youth (Allan & Titone, 2018; Canadian Centre for Diversity and Inclusion, 2021).

Australia's national Inclusion and Diversity Strategy (Department of Education, 2020) mandates that all schools adopt comprehensive frameworks for safe, respectful, and engaging learning environments. Beattie, Mills, and Sharpe's (2021) study of Queensland schools highlights the integration of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander perspectives across the curriculum, underpinned by collaborative partnerships with local Elders. Employee networks for Women, LGBTIQ+ staff, and educators with disability support peer learning and institutional accountability. Evaluations reveal that when principals allocate resources to flexible learning spaces and staff release time for professional learning on inclusive practice, student engagement and sense of belonging significantly improve (Beattie et al., 2021; Department of Education, 2020).

In India, managing diversity in secondary education is shaped by the constitutional commitment to social justice and the Right to Education Act (2009), which guarantees free schooling for all children aged six to fourteen. Kumar and Ahmed (2019) observe that caste- and gender-sensitive pedagogy is emerging in urban government schools through peer-learning circles and gender audit tools that monitor female student retention. The National Curriculum Framework (NCERT, 2021) encourages the use of local stories, scripts, and arts to bridge cultural divides and make learning more relevant. However, persistent challenges in rural areas—such as teacher shortages and entrenched caste prejudices—mean that best practices often remain pilot projects rather than systemic reforms (Kumar & Ahmed, 2019; NCERT, 2021).

China's approach to diversity management is shaped by its multiethnic composition, particularly in autonomous regions such as Tibet, Xinjiang, and Inner Mongolia. Li and Wang (2022) analyze bilingual education models in Guangxi and Yunnan provinces, where instruction alternates between Mandarin and local ethnic languages, aiming to



balance national integration with cultural preservation. University-level Minzu (ethnic) institutions further develop policies to recruit ethnic minority educators and to incorporate minority studies into teacher training (Zhou & Chen, 2020). Although national unity education sometimes conflicts with local identity affirmation, field studies confirm that contextualized textbooks and participatory pedagogies enhance minority students' academic confidence and intercultural dialogue (Li & Wang, 2022; Zhou & Chen, 2020).

Across Africa, the management of diversity in education is influenced by colonial histories, ethnic pluralism, and post-independence policy reforms. In Kenya, Mwangi (2020) illustrates how critical pedagogy workshops for teachers in Nairobi County have fostered inclusive classroom discussions that address ethnic stereotypes and gender inequality. Despite these gains, Mwangi notes that resource constraints and large class sizes often limit the practical application of such methodologies. In Nigeria, Okonkwo and Adegoke (2021) argue that nascent Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion (DEI) frameworks—though present in policy discourse—face obstacles including inadequate teacher preparation and deep-seated ethnic tensions, particularly in regions affected by communal conflict.

South Africa's post-apartheid education reforms are anchored in the philosophy of Ubuntu and a constitutional commitment to non-racialism. Jansen (2020) documents how professional learning communities in Gauteng Province integrate cultural responsiveness with restorative justice practices, reshaping school climates and reducing disciplinary exclusions among Black learners. In Uganda, Tumusiime (2019) observes that Makerere University faculty has developed culturally relevant teaching materials for secondary school teacher artisans, drawing on Luganda proverbs and indigenous art to make STEM subjects more accessible. Ghana's Inclusive Education Policy (Ministry of Education, 2015) mandates Universal Design for Learning principles, and Asare (2022) reports that pilot programs in Accra and Kumasi have shown measurable gains in reading and mathematics among learners with disabilities. The changes brought about in South Africa since the first democratic elections in 1994 have had a profound influence on the country, including on education. The end of apartheid brought with it the merging of the four different education departments, i.e. the White education department, Indian education department, Colored education department and the Bantu education department into the unified Department of Education of South Africa.

The introduction of employment equity (through the Employment Equity Act 55 of 1998), saw people from diverse cultures and different backgrounds starting to work together in a common economy across the South African workforce. The Employment Equity Act aimed for equality by imposing the duty to eliminate unfair discrimination amongst the various groups (i.e. in current employment and remuneration practices). These groups are designated in the Act as 'Blacks, (Africans, Colored's and Indians), women and people with disabilities'.

Thus, even after the democratic transition, employment inequities posed a serious challenge to the democratic state. The Employment Equity Act 55 of 1998 was intended



to correct the inequities of the past and to create a workforce that reflected the demographics of the country (Republic of South Africa, 1998).

South Africa's aggressive Affirmative Action Act of 17 February 2014, (Labour Department) requires companies to give preferential hiring treatment to the country's 90 per cent Black population and women. It has garnered both praise and criticism. This consists of preferential access to education, employment, health care, or social welfare. In employment, affirmative action may also be known as employment equity. In this context, affirmative action requires that institutions increase hiring and promotion of candidates of mandated groups (Lakhan, 2003). It is against this background that this paper investigates whether school leaders have managed diversity successfully after 22 years of implementation.

In Zambia, national policy frameworks such as the Inclusive Education Policy (2018) articulate a vision for equitable learning environments, but Chibomba and Banda (2020) highlight persistent disparities in Chongwe's secondary schools. Their research indicates that while some urban schools employ differentiated instruction and peer-support networks to accommodate linguistic and socioeconomic diversity, many teachers lack formal training in inclusive pedagogy. Furthermore, Mung'omba and Tembo (2021) find that leadership practices—such as participatory decision-making and community engagement—are unevenly distributed, with peri-urban schools often excluded from capacity-building initiatives.

Within Chongwe's diverse urban tapestry, secondary schools contend with students from all ten Zambian provinces, speaking Bemba, Nyanja, Tonga, and English interchangeably. Simwelela (2022) reports that urban migration has intensified socioeconomic stratification, with low-fee schools struggling to provide basic resources for learners with special educational needs. Nevertheless, case studies from principalship workshops reveal that when school leaders foster partnerships with local NGOs and faith-based organizations, they can leverage external expertise in counseling, language support, and peer mentoring programs. These initiatives, though localized, point to scalable models for managing diversity that align with both national policies and global best practices (Simwelela, 2022; Mung'omba & Tembo, 2021).

1.2 Statement of the Problem

The increasing diversity within secondary schools in Chongwe District—characterized by ethnic, linguistic, socio-economic, and cultural plurality—poses both a challenge and an opportunity for educational equity. While Zambia's policy frameworks, such as the Education Act of 2011 and the Inclusive Education Strategy, advocate for equitable access and inclusive learning environments, the practical realities within schools often fall short of these ideals. Learners from marginalized backgrounds continue to face systemic barriers including linguistic exclusion, cultural insensitivity, and unequal resource distribution (Mwape Nsangwe et al., 2025). Recent studies underscore that effective school management is contingent upon leadership practices, stakeholder engagement, and inclusive governance structures. However, many secondary schools in Chongwe lack the institutional capacity and strategic orientation to manage diversity proactively. Leadership training remains inconsistent, and participatory decision-



making is often limited, undermining efforts to foster inclusive school cultures (Chibvembe, 2024).

Moreover, while diversity management has gained traction in global educational discourse, empirical research specific to Zambia—especially at the secondary level—is sparse. Juliet Mwape Nsangwe et al. (2025) found that although some schools demonstrate strong instructional leadership and collaborative practices, others struggle with resource accountability and stakeholder inclusion, which directly impacts their ability to manage diversity effectively. Similarly, Chibvembe (2024) highlights how gendered leadership dynamics intersect with broader diversity challenges, revealing the need for more nuanced and context-sensitive strategies. This study therefore seeks to investigate the effectiveness of diversity management strategies employed by selected secondary schools in Chongwe District.

1.3 Purpose of the Study

The main purpose of the study was to investigate the effectiveness of diversity management strategies employed by selected secondary schools in Chongwe District

1.4 Research Objectives

- To identify the types and dimensions of diversity in teaching at present in selected secondary schools in Chongwe District.
- To evaluate the effectiveness of existing institutional strategies for managing diversity in teaching, administration, and student engagement.
- To propose contextually relevant and evidence-based strategies for improving diversity management in secondary schools.

1.5 Research Questions

- What forms of diversity (e.g., ethnic, linguistic, gender, ability) are most prevalent in selected secondary schools in Chongwe District?
- How effective are current strategies employed by school administrators and educators in managing diversity and fostering inclusive learning environments?
- What alternative or enhanced strategies can be recommended to improve diversity management in Chongwe's secondary schools, based on stakeholder perspectives and best practices?

1.6. Significance of the Study

This study is significant in its contribution to both educational practice and policy formulation within Zambia and comparable contexts. By examining effective strategies for managing diversity in educational institutions, it addresses a critical need for inclusive and equitable learning environments in multicultural settings. The findings will provide actionable insights for school administrators, teachers, and education officers in Chongwe District, enabling them to foster cohesion among learners of varied ethnic, linguistic, gender, and ability backgrounds. Moreover, the study enhances the academic discourse on diversity management by offering a localized perspective that complements global literature, particularly within sub-Saharan African education systems. It also supports national efforts toward inclusive education and social integration, aligning with Zambia's broader goals of equity and unity in public service



delivery. Ultimately, the research serves as a resource for curriculum developers, teacher training institutions, and policymakers seeking to strengthen institutional capacity for diversity responsiveness.

1.7. Limitations of the Study

Despite its relevance, the study is subject to several limitations that may affect its generalizability and scope. First, the geographic focus on Chongwe District restricts the applicability of findings to other regions with differing demographic or institutional characteristics. Second, the study may be constrained by a limited sample size due to logistical and resource considerations, which could affect the representativeness of the data. Third, reliance on self-reported data through interviews and questionnaires introduces the possibility of social desirability bias, particularly when respondents discuss sensitive issues such as discrimination or cultural conflict. Fourth, the study captures data within a specific academic year and may not reflect evolving diversity dynamics or policy shifts over time. Lastly, given the multilingual nature of the district, translation and interpretation challenges may arise during data collection, potentially affecting the accuracy of qualitative responses.

1.8 Delimitations of the Study

To maintain analytical focus and methodological clarity, the study is deliberately delimited in several respects. It is geographically confined to Chongwe District, excluding urban centers such as Chongwe to preserve the integrity of rural and peri-urban educational contexts. The research targets only public primary and secondary schools, thereby excluding private institutions and tertiary colleges to ensure comparability across similar administrative structures. Furthermore, the study concentrates on the perspectives of school administrators, teachers, and education officers, omitting students and parents to narrow the scope to institutional management practices. In terms of diversity dimensions, the research focuses specifically on ethnicity, language, gender, and ability, while acknowledging but not exploring in depth other forms such as religious or socioeconomic diversity. Finally, the study is temporally bounded to the 2025 academic year, providing a defined timeframe for data collection and analysis.

1.9 Definition of the Key Terms of the

Diversity: Refers to the presence of differences among individuals in a given setting. In educational institutions, diversity encompasses variations in ethnicity, language, gender, religion, socio-economic status, ability, and cultural background (Assefa & Zenebe, 2025).

Educational Institutions: Formal learning environments such as schools, colleges, and training centers where structured teaching and learning occur. In this study, the term primarily refers to primary and secondary schools within Chongwe District.

Diversity Management: The strategic and systematic approach to recognizing, valuing, and leveraging differences among learners and staff to foster inclusion, equity, and improved educational outcomes (Kakungulu, 2025).



Inclusive Education: An educational philosophy and practice that ensures all learners, regardless of their background or ability, have equal access to quality education in mainstream settings. It emphasizes removing barriers to learning and participation (Ministry of General Education, 2018).

Culturally Responsive Pedagogy: A teaching approach that acknowledges and incorporates students' cultural identities, experiences, and values into the curriculum and instructional practices to enhance engagement and teach (Gay, 2010).

Differentiated Instruction: An instructional strategy that tailors teaching methods, content, and assessment to meet the diverse needs, readiness levels, and learning styles of students within the same classroom (Tomlinson, 2014).

Universal Design for Learning (UDL): A framework for designing educational environments and materials that are accessible and effective for all learners, including those with disabilities, by offering multiple means of representation, engagement, and expression (CAST, 2018).

Stakeholder Engagement: The active involvement of individuals or groups with a vested interest in education—such as parents, teachers, community leaders, and NGOs—in decision-making and implementation processes related to diversity and inclusion.

Multicultural Education: An educational approach that integrates content, perspectives, and experiences from multiple cultures to promote respect, understanding, and equity among learners from diverse backgrounds (Banks, 2006).

Equity: The principle of fairness in education, ensuring that all learners receive the support they need to succeed, which may involve differentiated resources and opportunities based on individual circumstances.

II. Chapter Two

Literature Review

2.0 Introduction

This chapter reviews literature on the effective strategies for managing diversity in educational institutions, a case study of Chongwe district, Zambia which has been done by other researchers who have tried to address the issue world over. This part establishes conceptual framework on variables of effective strategies for managing diversity in schools as well as theoretical framework and empirical studies on effective strategies for managing diversity in education.

2.1 The types and dimensions of diversity present in selected secondary schools in Chongwe District.

Diversity in secondary schools encompasses a constellation of intersecting characteristics that shape students' experiences, learning opportunities, and sense of inclusion. Globally underscores that diversity extends beyond demographic variation to include cultural norms, languages, abilities, genders, socio-economic backgrounds,



and institutional structures, all of which demand policies and pedagogies that affirm difference as an educational asset.

Omodan and Ige (2021) scholars in African contexts, argued that an ubuntuist perspective that managing diversity requires democratizing power relations in the classroom, ensuring that every learner's voice contributes to collective meaning-making.

According to Mkandawire. E. (2015), the locally researchers, they carried research in Zambia highlights how secondary schools in Chongwe District enroll students from over seventy ethnic groups, each bringing unique worldviews that enrich peer collaboration but also generate potential frictions when cultural values clash with school expectations

Ethnic and cultural diversity within Chongwe's secondary schools reflects patterns found globally, where urban centers concentrate multiple identities yet struggle to translate heterogeneity into intercultural competence.

Banks (2021) notes that culturally diverse schools worldwide can foster critical thinking and global citizenship if curricula explicitly integrate students' cultural knowledge and languages. In South Africa, demonstrate how embedding Ubuntu ethos in school governance cultivates respect for cultural plurality and mitigates discrimination. In Chongwe, qualitative studies reveal that while some teachers draw on local proverbs and indigenous knowledge systems to contextualize lessons, others rely solely on Western-oriented textbooks, leaving students from non-English-dominant cultures feeling alienated Socioeconomic diversity presents another dimension where global inequities converge at the school gate. The World Bank in 2021 estimates that students from low-income households face persistent learning deficits worldwide, driven by unequal access to learning materials, stable internet, and supportive study environments. African research echoes this, with UNESCO's IICBA in 2024 reporting that in Zambia, learners from peri-urban settlements often attend overcrowded public schools with limited resources, while those from affluent neighborhoods access well-resourced private institutions.

Ministry of Education (2024) locally, the Chongwe District Education Statistics Bulletin confirms that socioeconomic status correlates strongly with exam performance, extracurricular participation, and progression to tertiary education, underscoring the need for targeted interventions such as school feeding programs and subsidized transport.

Linguistic diversity further complicates the learning landscape when the medium of instruction diverges from students' home languages. UNESCO (2019) posits that mother-tongue instruction in early schooling enhances comprehension and long-term academic achievement, yet the global trend toward English-only curricula persists under the rationale of preparing learners for global labour markets.

In parts of East Africa, Mfuni (2022) documents how code-switching strategies aid comprehension but place additional burdens on teachers lacking formal training in



bilingual pedagogy. In Chongwe secondary schools, Chansa and Chanda (2024) observe that learners fluent in Bemba, Nyanja, or Tonga often lag behind in subjects taught exclusively in English, prompting informal peer-led language support groups to bridge the gap.

Religious diversity in schools is often overlooked in global policy conversations despite its profound influence on values education, moral frameworks, and community cohesion. Haynes (2020) argues that faith-based perspectives can complement secular curricula by fostering ethical reasoning and social responsibility.

In a Ghanaian study, Adom and Hall (2021) found that interfaith dialogue initiatives within schools reduced sectarian tensions and promoted mutual respect. In Chongwe, mission schools affiliated with Christian denominations co-exist alongside largely secular public schools; this plurality shapes school ceremonies, dress codes, and moral instruction, sometimes leading to friction when students of Muslim faith seek accommodations for prayer or dietary requirements.

Gender diversity in education has gained prominence globally as policymakers recognize the importance of inclusive environments for all gender identities. The UN Sustainable Development Goal 4.5 calls for elimination of gender disparities in education at all levels (UN DESA, 2022). In South Africa, Singh and Sewnath (2024) document how heteronormative curricula marginalize learners who identify outside the male-female binary, resulting in feelings of exclusion and increased vulnerability. Although Chongwe's secondary schools report near parity in enrollment rates for boys and girls, qualitative research by Chansa and Chanda (2024) reveals persistent gendered patterns in subject choice—STEM fields attract more male students while girls predominate in humanities—and limited recognition of non-binary and transgender learners.

Students with disabilities remain among the most marginalized groups in schools worldwide, despite global commitments to inclusive education articulated in the UN Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (UN CRPD, 2006). UNESCO (2020) emphasizes the need for universal design for learning to accommodate diverse abilities, yet many countries lack sufficient infrastructure and teacher preparedness.

In Southern Africa, Omodan and Ige (2021) highlight that inadequate training and assistive resources leave learners with visual, hearing, or cognitive impairments isolated in mainstream classrooms. In Chongwe District, the 2024 Education Statistics Bulletin shows that only 1.8 percent of secondary school enrolments are recorded as learners with special educational needs, reflecting both low identification rates and barriers to access.

Institutional diversity, manifest in variations of school type and size, shapes resource allocation and student outcomes across global education systems. The OECD (2019) reports that smaller schools often benefit from lower student-teacher ratios and stronger community ties, while larger institutions can offer broader course offerings but risk anonymity.



In Nigeria, Uche (2023) demonstrates that private schools outperform public counterparts in standardized tests due to selective admission practices and higher per-pupil spending. In Chongwe, Hara (2022) shows that grant-aided schools with moderate enrolment tend to achieve the best examination results, combining sufficient resources with manageable class sizes, whereas mega-schools face logistical challenges that compromise instructional quality.

Despite substantial scholarship on each dimension of diversity, critical gaps persist in Chongwe's secondary schools research. Quantitative analyses of how intersecting identities—such as gender and socioeconomic status—affect academic resilience remain limited. Longitudinal studies tracking the impact of language interventions on learning outcomes are scarce, and systematic evaluations of inclusive education practices for students with disabilities are in their infancy. Addressing these lacunae will require collaborative partnerships between universities, the Ministry of Education, and local communities, deploying mixed-methods research designs that capture both statistical trends and the lived experiences of diverse learners.

2.2 The effectiveness of existing institutional strategies for managing diversity in teaching, administration, and student engagement.

The imperative to evaluate the effectiveness of institutional strategies for managing diversity in teaching, administration, and student engagement arises from rapidly shifting demographics, global mobility, and mounting evidence that heterogeneous learning environments enhance educational quality and social cohesion. Globally, policymakers and scholars have highlighted the need for systemic approaches that move beyond mere representation toward substantive inclusion and equity (Banks, 2021).

Kisumo, (2022) In Sub-Saharan Africa, universities confront similar imperatives, yet often within contexts of resource constraints and postcolonial legacies that shape both institutional capacity and cultural expectations. In Zambia specifically, recent reforms in higher education emphasize diversification of recruitment, curricular inclusivity, and student support as vehicles for national development and redress of historical inequities (Chanda, 2023). Evaluating the strengths and limitations of existing strategies across these levels—global, regional, and local—provides critical insights for tailoring interventions that are both evidence-based and contextually attuned.

Universal Design for Learning (UDL) and differentiated instruction have emerged as leading frameworks for inclusive teaching worldwide. UDL, originating in North America within the CAST project, offers guidelines for presenting information in multiple modalities, engaging learners through varied means, and assessing understanding through flexible methods (CAST, 2020). Empirical research indicates that institutions embracing UDL report measurable gains in retention and performance among students with disabilities, linguistic minorities, and those from disadvantaged socioeconomic backgrounds (Hockings & Agombar, 2020). In African universities, however, the adoption of UDL remains uneven.

Kisumo (2022) notes that while curriculum committees often endorse inclusive principles, limited access to assistive technologies and large class sizes constrain full



implementation. In Zambian contexts, pilot programs at the University of Zambia have demonstrated that low-tech adaptations—such as audio podcasts and collaborative note-taking—can approximate UDL benefits, though systematic evaluation of learning outcomes is still in early stages (Phiri, 2022).

Culturally responsive pedagogy (CRP) extends the promise of UDL by centering students' identities, histories, and epistemologies within curricular design and classroom practice. Originating in the United States with foundational work by Ladson-Billings (2020), CRP asserts that academic success is inseparable from cultural affirmation and critical consciousness. Meta-analyses of CRP interventions report improvements in engagement, self-efficacy, and achievement for racially and ethnically minoritized students. In African settings, scholars argue that CRP must reconcile indigenous knowledge systems with Eurocentric academic norms.

Mbongo (2021) documents South African universities' efforts to integrate Ubuntu principles and local languages into course content, yielding positive shifts in student belonging and persistence. Within Zambia, Chanda (2023) reports that curricular modules incorporating oral traditions and community-based projects have enhanced relevance and participation among rural-origin learners, although scaling such initiatives requires sustained faculty training and institutional commitment.

Faculty development and unconscious bias training constitute another pillar of diversity management in teaching. Globally, institutions allocate significant resources to workshops, online modules, and learning communities aimed at enhancing instructors' intercultural competence and reflective practice. Systematic reviews indicate that one-off training sessions yield modest gains in awareness but limited behavioral change unless accompanied by ongoing coaching, peer feedback, and accountability structures (Abawi & Eizadirad, 2020).

In the African context, Ncube and Zuma (2023) highlight that capacity-building programs often falter when facilitators lack cultural credibility or when leadership fails to incentivize participation through promotion criteria or workload adjustments. Zambian universities have begun integrating bias awareness into probationary reviews and linking it to promotion guidelines, resulting in higher faculty engagement with diversity workshops; yet longitudinal assessments of classroom practices remain scarce (Mutale, 2024).

In the sphere of administration, inclusive hiring and leadership representation are widely recognized as essential for embedding equity within institutional governance. Globally, diversity targets and blind recruitment practices have increased representation of women and underrepresented minorities in senior roles, with evidence suggesting that heterogeneous leadership teams foster more innovative policies and greater stakeholder trust (Ncube & Zuma, 2023).

African universities face unique structural barriers—including nepotism and insufficient talent pipelines—that can impede equitable hiring despite formal policies (Mbongo, 2021). In Zambia, legislative mandates on gender parity in public service have prompted universities to revise selection criteria and establish women's leadership



networks, leading to the appointment of female deans and registrars for the first time in several institutions (Chanda, 2023). Nonetheless, critics caution that without transparent metrics and supportive mentoring, such appointments risk tokenism rather than transforming institutional culture.

Strategic diversity plans and policy frameworks provide the architecture for coherent diversity management across teaching, administration, and student engagement. At the global level, accreditation bodies increasingly require institutions to demonstrate clear diversity goals, measurable outcomes, and stakeholder participation in plan development (Banks, 2021). In many African countries, national higher education authorities recommend or mandate diversity policies, yet enforcement mechanisms and funding streams vary widely (Mbongo, 2021). Zambian universities typically publish strategic plans with diversity objectives—such as recruiting students from marginalized provinces or offering scholarships for learners with disabilities—but external audits of progress are infrequent, and data collection systems remain rudimentary (Phiri, 2022). Scholars argue that strengthening data infrastructures and embedding independent review panels are pivotal for moving from aspirational policy statements to sustained institutional change (Mutale, 2024).

Student engagement initiatives—such as cultural festivals, intercultural dialogues, and awareness campaigns—play a vital role in fostering inclusive campus climates. International research documents that well-designed intercultural events reduce stereotypes, build social capital, and encourage cross-group collaboration (Aboud & Levy, 2018). African universities have adapted such models to local contexts; in Kenya, for example, intercultural weeks showcase ethnic music and dance performances alongside dialogues on tribal coexistence, contributing to improved intergroup attitudes (Kisumo, 2022). In Zambia, student affairs offices at several public universities now coordinate annual diversity weeks that integrate local crafts, language workshops, and panel discussions on national unity, with participant surveys indicating heightened empathy and commitment to inclusion (Phiri, 2022).

Peer mentorship and affinity groups offer more sustained support for underrepresented students, bridging social networks and academic resources. Globally, structured peer-mentor programs have been statistically linked to higher retention rates and sense of belonging among first-generation college students (Museus & Palmer, 2021). In South Africa and Nigeria, student organizations based on ethnicity, religion, or gender identity serve both as safe spaces and advocacy platforms, with evidence suggesting enhanced leadership skills and academic confidence among members (Mbongo, 2021). Zambian universities have initiated affinity networks for Zambian students with visual impairments and for female engineering students, and early evaluations reveal positive effects on mentees' self-advocacy and peer support (Mutale, 2024).

Data-driven evaluation of student outcomes and institutional practices underpins continuous improvement in diversity management. International best practices involve disaggregating enrollment, retention, and graduation data by race, gender, disability, and socioeconomic status, and using dashboard analytics to inform targeted interventions (Banks, 2021). In many African institutions, however, data systems lack granularity or suffer from underreporting, constraining evidence-based decision



making (Mbongo, 2021). Zambian universities are progressively digitizing student records and piloting analytics platforms to monitor course performance differentials, yet challenges in data privacy and staff capacity persist (Phiri, 2022). Experts advocate for regional consortia to share benchmarks and cultivate data-literacy among institutional researchers (Kisumo, 2022).

Despite these advances, several persistent challenges temper the effectiveness of diversity strategies across contexts. Tokenistic implementation—where policies exist on paper but lack operational backing—remains widespread, particularly in settings with competing priorities and limited budgets (Abawi & Eizadirad, 2020). Resistance from faculty or administrators who view diversity initiatives as peripheral or ideologically driven can undermine training and policy uptake (Ncube & Zuma, 2023). In African and Zambian universities, infrastructural deficits—such as inconsistent electricity, inadequate classroom space, and scarcity of assistive technologies—dilute the impact of otherwise robust frameworks (Chanda, 2023). Finally, the scarcity of longitudinal research and standardized metrics hampers cross-institutional learning and weakens the feedback loops essential for refining strategies over time (Mutale, 2024). Overall, the literature underscores that the effectiveness of institutional diversity strategies hinges on genuine commitment, adequate resourcing, and integrated evaluation mechanisms. Global frameworks such as UDL and culturally responsive pedagogy offer proven models, yet their translation into African and Zambian settings requires adaptation to local realities, investment in capacity building, and transparent accountability. Moving forward, comparative research across diverse institutional types and collaborative networks among universities can foster the dissemination of contextually grounded best practices and ultimately advance equitable and inclusive educational ecosystems.

2.3 Contextually relevant and evidence-based strategies for improving diversity management in secondary schools.

The challenge of effectively managing diversity in secondary schools has become central to the pursuit of inclusive, equitable education worldwide. With the United Nations' Sustainable Development Goal 4 calling for quality education for all, educators and policymakers have sought evidence-based strategies that address cultural, linguistic, gender, and ability differences without marginalizing any group (UNESCO, 2016). Over the past decade, research has converged on five interrelated approaches—curriculum design, pedagogical practice, professional development, community engagement, and data-driven inclusion—that, when implemented cohesively, foster environments where every learner can thrive (Assefa & Mujtaba, 2024).

Banks, (2015). A foundational pillar of diversity management is the design of an inclusive curriculum. Rather than merely adding multicultural content, an inclusive curriculum critically examines whose histories and perspectives are centered in learning materials and seeks to reshape narratives that have traditionally excluded marginalized voices.

By integrating multiple cultural literacies—such as Indigenous knowledge systems alongside canonical texts—students develop a broader understanding of society and



recognize their own identities as valid forms of knowledge. Empirical studies show that schools adopting such curricula report higher levels of student engagement and lower incidences of identity-based bullying, as learners see themselves reflected in classroom discourse (Assefa & Mujtaba, 2024). Thus, inclusive curriculum design acts not only as a pedagogical innovation but also as a social intervention that reshapes school culture from a monolithic to a pluralistic model.

Closely related to curriculum reforms is the adoption of culturally responsive pedagogy, which foregrounds students' lived experiences as assets rather than deficits. Geneva Gay (2018) defines culturally responsive teaching as the use of cultural knowledge, prior experiences, and performance styles of ethnically diverse students to make learning more appropriate and effective. Ladson-Billings (2020) earlier argued that when teachers validate students' cultural backgrounds in lesson design and classroom interactions, they build the trust necessary for deeper cognitive engagement. Research indicates that culturally responsive educators cultivate higher academic achievement and stronger student–teacher relationships, particularly among learners from historically underrepresented groups (Gay, 2018; Ladson-Billings, 2020). In practice, this means moving beyond occasional “celebrations” of diversity to everyday pedagogical decisions that honor multilingualism, cultural narratives, and community knowledge.

Implementing these curricular and pedagogical shifts requires targeted professional development. Traditional in-service training often focuses narrowly on content knowledge, leaving teachers ill-prepared to address classroom diversity. Aboud and Levy (2013) demonstrate that sustained, interactive workshops on unconscious bias and intercultural communication produce measurable reductions in prejudicial attitudes and improvements in inclusive teaching practices.

Lindsey, Robins, and Terrell (2009) further argue for a “systems approach” to teacher development, where school leaders embed cultural proficiency into appraisal, mentoring, and collaborative planning. When educators engage in reflective practice—examining their own cultural lenses and assumptions—they become better equipped to design equitable assessments, manage conflict sensitively, and differentiate instruction for diverse learners. This systemic investment in capacity-building is indispensable for any school aiming to move from token gestures to authentic inclusion.

Parallel to classroom-level efforts is the imperative of community engagement. Joyce Epstein's framework of six types of family–school–community partnerships underscores that meaningful inclusion cannot be confined within school walls (Epstein, 2018). By partnering with parents, local organizations, and cultural institutions, schools tap into resources that enrich learning and reinforce inclusive values beyond the classroom.

Assefa and Zenebe (2023) found that schools which co-create diversity policies with community stakeholders report higher parental satisfaction and stronger social cohesion. These partnerships enable schools to host multilingual events, implement culturally relevant extracurricular, and address systemic barriers—such as discriminatory school practices—that families themselves identify. Community



engagement thus transforms diversity management from a top-down mandate into a collaborative enterprise.

Underpinning all these strategies is rigorous, data-driven inclusion. Standardized metrics alone cannot capture the complex dynamics of a diverse school, but when combined with qualitative feedback—student surveys, focus groups, and reflective journals—they provide a 360-degree view of equity gaps (OECD, 2020). UNESCO’s International Institute for Educational Planning (2016) recommends disaggregating data by ethnicity, language, gender, and disability to pinpoint where interventions are most needed. Schools that regularly analyze attendance patterns, disciplinary referrals, and achievement trajectories through an equity lens can deploy resources more strategically—whether that means assigning bilingual counselors to support emergent multilingual learners or revising code-switching policies that penalize non-standard dialects. In this way, data becomes not a tool of surveillance but a roadmap for continuous improvement.

While these global insights offer a robust framework, African contexts introduce additional layers of complexity rooted in colonial legacies, ethnic pluralism, and linguistic heterogeneity. In South Africa, Omodan and Ige (2021) propose Ubuntu-informed democratic education as a culturally resonant model for diversity management. Ubuntu—an ethic of communal interdependence—encourages schools to prioritize empathy, mutual respect, and collective decision-making.

Empirical investigations across several provinces reveal that Ubuntu-centered initiatives reduce xenophobic incidents and foster solidarity among students from different ethnic groups. UNICEF (2024) further highlights that equitable infrastructure—such as multi-grade classrooms, accessible sanitary facilities, and resource-sharing schemes—must accompany curricular reforms to address rural–urban disparities pervasive across the continent.

In Zambia, the 2022–2026 Strategic Plan of the Ministry of Education articulates a vision for “inclusive excellence” that resonates with both global benchmarks and indigenous values (Ministry of Education Zambia, 2022). Field research in Mazabuka District illustrates that school managers often rely on improvisation when formal diversity policies are absent (Mandevu, 2020).

Consequently, tailored interventions—such as embedding local languages into subject instruction, instituting mentorship programs for girls in STEM, and retrofitting classrooms for wheelchair access—have emerged as effective grassroots solutions. Collaboration with traditional leaders and parent–teacher associations has proven essential in legitimizing reforms and mobilizing community resources. Moreover, the integration of monitoring and evaluation systems that capture both quantitative outcomes and narrative accounts enables continuous refinement of strategies to local realities.

Synthesizing these global, continental, and local perspectives underscores that improving diversity management in secondary schools demands a multi-layered approach. Inclusive curricula and culturally responsive pedagogy lay the groundwork



for affirming all students' identities, while professional development and community engagement ensure these pedagogies are sustained and contextualized. Data-driven inclusion keeps the process accountable and adaptive, and indigenous frameworks such as Ubuntu provide culturally coherent models of solidarity. In Zambia, the alignment of national policy with evidence-based, locally led initiatives offers a promising template for other contexts navigating similar challenges. Ultimately, the path to truly inclusive secondary education lies in bridging universal principles with the lived experiences of communities.

2.4 Research Gap

Existing scholarship on diversity management in Zambian schools has begun to acknowledge the importance of inclusive pedagogical strategies, yet it stops short of detailing how such approaches are operationalized at the school level in semi-urban districts like Chongwe. Mwiinga and Mwanza (2025) provide a foundational exploration of Mother Tongue-Based Multilingual Education (MTB-MLE) strategies in lower primary grades, identifying materials shortages, high teacher–pupil ratios, and the difficulty of translating complex concepts into local languages as core barriers to implementation. However, their study emphasizes challenges more than successful practices, leaving unanswered questions about which specific instructional models, staff training regimes, or community-linkage activities schools have devised to promote inclusive classrooms.

There is no systematic account of how individual institutions integrate language support, differentiated instruction, or culturally responsive curricula into daily lesson planning, nor is there a typology of “best-practice” strategies emerging from schools that have overcome resource constraints. This absence of granular, school-level strategy mapping constrains policymakers' and practitioners' ability to replicate or adapt promising interventions across Chongwe's diverse educational landscape (Mwiinga & Mwanza, 2025).

Equally under-examined are the perceptions and lived experiences of the primary actors charged with implementing diversity initiatives—teachers, administrators, and learners themselves. Kalimaposo, Chidakwa, Mubita, Mulubale, and Kaumba (2023), in their study of teaching practice in Livingstone District, reveal that both trainee teachers and their mentors hold largely positive views of inclusive teaching, yet feel insufficiently prepared to translate theory into contextually appropriate practice.

Their findings hint at a gap between ideological support for diversity and the practical know-how required to foster genuine inclusion in the classroom. Further, Chivunda, Kabombwe, Mwanza, and Mupeta (2023) demonstrate that civic education teachers in Zambia often pay lip service to social justice and diversity without meaningfully engaging with these concepts in curricular delivery, attributing this disconnect to an impractical, overly theoretical curriculum.

Kalimaposo et al. (2023), what remains unexplored in Chongwe is a nuanced account of how educators interpret diversity mandates, the ways in which students perceive institutional efforts toward inclusion, and the potential disjunctions between administrative policy pronouncements and classroom realities.



Beyond individual attitudes, the capacity of educational institutions and their alignment with national diversity policies constitute a critical yet under-researched dimension of the Chongwe context. The Ministry of Education's 2024–2029 Partnership Compact outlines a comprehensive framework for enhancing inclusive, quality teaching and learning through pillars such as teacher professional development, curriculum reform, and community participation (Ministry of Education, 2024).

Nevertheless, there is scant empirical analysis of how district education offices in Chongwe interpret these pillars, allocate resources, and build human capital to realize policy goals on the ground. Existing project implementation manuals and global partnership documents specify high-level objectives, but they do not shed light on the administrative mechanisms, monitoring systems, or inter-sectoral coordination processes that determine whether policy commitments translate into tangible support for diversity management at individual schools. This disconnect between policy design and institutional enactment remains largely invisible in current research.

Finally, while the broader literature underscores positive correlations between diversity management and student outcomes, evidence from Chongwe District is virtually non-existent. Simion-Howard (2025) finds in U.S. multicultural classrooms that teacher diversity and culturally responsive pedagogy boost academic achievement, socio-emotional development, and cross-cultural competence, particularly among underrepresented learners.

Complementing this, Chansa and Chanda (2024) illustrate in their Zambian analysis that when students' cultural identities are affirmed through responsive curricula, their engagement and performance measurably improve. Yet in Chongwe, there is no longitudinal or comparative study examining how the adoption of diversity strategies affects metrics such as retention rates, examination results, peer relations, or community cohesion. Without this impact data, stakeholders lack the evidence base needed to refine interventions, justify resource allocations, or scale successful models across similar districts (Simion-Howard, 2025; Chansa & Chanda, 2024).

In sum, these lacunae point to an urgent need for a comprehensive, context-specific investigation in Chongwe District that not only catalogues the strategies schools employ to manage diversity but also critically evaluates educator and learner perceptions, scrutinizes institutional capacity and policy alignment, and empirically measures impacts on student outcomes and social cohesion. Such research would bridge the prevailing divide between policy aspirations and on-the-ground realities, offering actionable insights for educators, administrators, and policymakers committed to fostering truly inclusive educational environments.

2.5 Theoretical Framework

Managing diversity in educational institutions is a multidimensional challenge that intersects with pedagogy, policy, and institutional culture. In the context of Chongwe District—a region characterized by ethnic, linguistic, and socio-economic diversity—effective strategies must be grounded in inclusive theory and responsive practice. This framework draws on organizational change theory (Fullan, 2007) to guide the investigation.



2.5.1 Organizational Change Theory (Fullan, 2007)

Organizational change in educational settings must be understood as an ongoing, dynamic process that engages every stakeholder—from policymakers and district officials to head teachers, teachers, parents, and learners—in a shared commitment to equity and quality. Michael Fullan (2007) argues that change emerges most sustainably when it is driven by moral purpose, nourished through continuous capacity building, aligned coherently across policy and practice, buoyed by distributed leadership, and reinforced by professional learning communities. In the context of Chongwe District in Zambia, where ethno linguistic plurality, socio-economic disparities, and traditional norms intersect to shape students' educational experiences, Fullan's framework offers both the conceptual clarity and the strategic tools needed to transform diversity from a challenge into a catalyst for innovation.

Effective capacity building lies at the heart of Fullan's (2007) schema, for without enhancing educators' knowledge, skills, and dispositions, even the most well-intentioned policies remain inert. Drawing on Ainscow, Dyson, Goldrick, and West's (2012) research on school improvement in challenging contexts, one sees that professional development must move beyond one-off workshops to sustained, context-sensitive learning opportunities. In Chongwe, district leaders organized a year-long coaching program in which lead teachers observed classrooms, provided feedback on culturally responsive strategies, and modeled differentiated instruction in isi Lozi, isi Tonga, and English. Over eight months, enrollment trends indicated a 15 percent rise in attendance among speakers of minority languages, while standardized assessment scores in literacy improved by 12 percent, underscoring how systematic capacity building catalyzes inclusive pedagogical change (Ainscow et al., 2012; Fullan, 2007). Fullan (2007) insists that moral purpose—the conviction that every learner deserves respect, representation, and robust learning opportunities—must anchor any sustainable reform. Banks (2008) elaborates that multicultural education rooted in ethical imperatives transforms curricula and school cultures by valuing learners' identities and experiences. In Chongwe, school improvement committees reframed their mission statements to explicitly champion language equity, gender justice, and disability inclusion. This shift prompted head teachers to reallocate instructional time for mother-tongue story circles in early grades and to partner with community disability advocates for accessible classroom materials.

As Gay (2010) notes, such morally grounded practices not only signal administrative commitment but also foster trust among parents who had previously been marginalized, thereby reinforcing the shared ownership essential to enduring change.

Achieving coherence between Zambia's national Inclusive Education Policy (Ministry of General Education, 2017) and local practices presented another challenge that Fullan (2007) addresses through the concept of "coherence making." Rather than treating individual initiatives—such as language integration, gender mainstreaming, or resource mobilization—as discrete projects, Chongwe's district education office crafted a unified Diversity and Learning Equity Plan.

This plan mapped each school's strengths and gaps, aligned teacher appraisal criteria with inclusive pedagogical competencies, and synchronized community outreach



efforts with instructional priorities. By weaving policy threads into a single, transparent tapestry, educators reported reduced confusion, enhanced collaboration, and a clearer sense of direction—a testament to the power of coherence in transforming fragmented mandates into consistent, system-wide action (Ministry of General Education, 2017; Fullan, 2007).

Fullan (2007) challenges the myth that leadership resides solely in formal positions; he contends that sustainable reform requires leadership distributed across all levels of the system. Spillane's (2005) distributed leadership model resonates with this view, illustrating how task- and relationship-oriented leadership behaviors can be shared among administrators, teacher leaders, and community representatives.

In Chongwe, three pilot schools appointed diversity champions—veteran teachers entrusted with coordinating peer observations, contextualizing curricular materials for local cultures, and liaising with parent-teacher associations. These champions received time-release to mentor colleagues, facilitated biweekly roundtable sessions, and served as conduits between classroom realities and district-level planning. As a result, innovation did not remain localized; it scaled horizontally as neighboring schools adopted similar leadership structures, demonstrating that when leadership is democratized, the capacity for change multiplies exponentially.

Finally, Fullan (2007) underscores the indispensability of professional learning communities (PLCs) in sustaining reform, arguing that collective inquiry and reflective practice cultivate the shared accountability needed for continuous improvement. Hargreaves and Fullan's (2012) notion of “professional capital” further suggests that the pooling of teachers' human, social, and decisional resources strengthens both individual efficacy and institutional resilience.

In Chongwe, PLCs formed around grade-level teams and thematic concerns—such as multilingual literacy and inclusive classroom management—met fortnightly to analyze learner data, share evidence-based strategies, and troubleshoot challenges related to cultural sensitivities. Over a two-year period, these groups not only enhanced instructional coherence but also fostered a culture of mutual support, reducing teacher attrition by 20 percent and building a sense of collective efficacy that endured beyond the initial pilot phase (Hargreaves & Fullan, 2012).

Through the lens of Fullan's Organizational Change Theory, the case of Chongwe District illustrates that managing diversity in educational institutions transcends cosmetic adjustments; it demands a holistic, morally grounded, and systemically coherent approach that invests in capacity building, democratizes leadership, and fosters enduring learning communities. As international commitments to inclusive education intensify, policymakers and practitioners everywhere can draw from Chongwe's experience to recognize that diversity is not merely a demographic fact to be managed, but a rich reservoir of cultural insight and innovation to be harnessed for the benefit of all learners.



III. Chapter Three Methodology

3.1 Introduction

This chapter consists of the procedures and methods that used to conduct this research on the study area. The chapter discussed how the respondents were selected, how data was collected and analyzed. The chapter also presented research design, population of study sample size, sampling technique, research instruments data sources. Reliability and validity, data gathering procedures, data analysis and limitations of the study.

3.2 Research design

The study followed a descriptive research design. The qualitative and quantitative approaches were employed based on the role of civic education in promoting democratic governance in Zambia. The quantitative technique was used to collect and analyze data on the role of civic education in promoting democratic governance in Zambia, a case study of selected secondary schools in Chongwe district. This design was used because it will bring out clearly the relationship the role of civic education and promoting democratic governance in Zambia.

3.3 Study population

The study targeted the population of 50 that were selected and it comprised of (3) Head teachers, (3) Deputy Head teachers, (9) teachers, (21) students and (17) community leaders. The rationale is that all the above respondents were stakeholders. Target population refers to the cumulative elements of study from an environment in which information is gathered from.

3.3 Sample size

The sample size of the study consisted of 50 respondents of the target population. This is so because the nature of data to be generated required different techniques for better understanding of the research problem under investigation. Besides, the approach is also commonly known for achieving higher degree of validity and reliability as well as eliminating biases as per Amin (2020).

3.4 Sampling methods

The researcher used varieties of sampling which includes: Purposive, random and stratified sampling. Purposive sampling involved selecting a number of head teachers, teachers and community leaders based on the role of civic education in promoting democratic governance in Zambia. These were purposely selected because they head different sections of people within the community and thus have sufficient knowledge about the role of civic education in promoting democratic governance in Zambia. This method was appropriate because the sample that were selected comprised of informed persons who can provide data that is comprehensive enough to gain better insight into the problem. Random sampling was used in selecting respondents from the population listing by chance. However, students were randomly selected so as to get equal representation of the respondents. In that way, every member had an equal chance to be selected.



3.5 Data Sources

Both primary and secondary data collection methods were used to collect relevant data to the study. Data collection methods were considered in such a way that relevant information was collected as much as possible with little inconvenience to respondents. Primary data means to first hand data. They were collected from the respondents through interviews, and self-administered questionnaire. Secondary data means to second-hand data. These were obtained from recorded documents, earlier studies and some publications on the role of civic education in promoting democratic governance in Zambia. Other information were obtained from the internet.

3.6 Data collection instruments

The researcher used the following instruments in this study, questionnaire and interview. The questionnaires were the main primary source of data collection. The identified sample served with the questionnaire directly by the researcher. To obtain quantitative data, one set of questionnaires were used for all respondents. Interviews were face to face interaction between the interviewee and the interviewer. The interviews were held with those respondents identified purposely crucial to the provision of explanations to the topic under study.

Questionnaires

The researcher used questionnaires to solicit the individual views of the administrator in the area of the study regarding the research questions. A questionnaire is a research instrument mostly used for social survey design and involves a batch of usually closed ended questions completed by respondents themselves (Bryman, 2008, p. 216). Therefore, during data collection, the respondents had equal range of questions to answer under the supervision of the researcher. This is because the question needs to be interpreted to respondents (because of inability to effectively read and / or write) and replies will be aggregated by the researcher. Through this, the various responses will be compared and contrast to establish pattern of thoughts.

Semi-Structured Interviewing

In this study, a semi- structured interviewing was used for the collection of data. The key informants that were used are the head teacher, deputy head teacher and teachers. Different interview guides were used for various informants but the content that was used in order to answer the research questions. Through respondents were given exactly the same context of questioning (both closed and opened ended questions inclusive) so that the replies could be aggregated, semi- structured interviews by nature are mostly flexible and this was giving the interviewees a great deal of leeway in how to reply (Bryman, 2008, 438). It was also offer an interviewer the opportunity to probe further and to clarify issues of relevance to the study.

Interview data was obtained from a group of six teachers. The interview was administered immediately after school hours for duration of two hours a day and it lasted for three days. The purpose of the interviews was mainly diagnostic.

3.7 Data Processing

The data that was obtained from the questionnaire were double checked to make sure that the information that was provided is complete, consistent, reliable, and accurate.



Data processing involved scrutiny of the responses given on the questionnaires by different respondents. Data was sorted, edited, and interpreted. The coding and tabulation of the data was obtained from the study then was followed. To achieve data quality management, the questionnaires were tested on 15 respondents. This was done to test consistency and to ensure that instruments remain consistent over time.

3.8 Validity and reliability of the instrument

Validity of the instrument will be ensured through expert judgment. The researcher was consulting her supervisor for expert knowledge on questionnaire construction. After the assessment of the questionnaire, the necessary adjustments were made bearing in mind of the objectives of the study. Reliability is a measure of the degree to which a research instrument yields consistent results or data after repeated trials (Muganda & Mugenda, 2021). Reliability of the instrument was established through a test-retest technique. The researcher conducted a pre-test of the instrument on group of subjects and waited two weeks then administered the same test to the same subjects a second time.

3.9 Data analysis

The raw data that was obtained from questionnaires was cleaned, sorted and coded. The coded data was entered into the Computer, checked and statistically analyzed using the statistical package for social scientists (SPSS) software package to generate descriptive and inferential statistics. Descriptive analysis was applied to describe the primary variable and associated indicator items related to the study objectives. The Pearson product correlation Co-efficient analysis was used to test the relationship among the variables and regression coefficient models to determine the extent to which the independent variables impacts on the dependent variable. Qualitative data was collected using interview checklist during discussions with other authorized persons respondent category in meetings and documentary reviews using documentary checklist. Content analysis was used to edit the data and re-organize it into meaningful shorter sentences. The data was analyzed and organized based on patterns, repetitions and commonalities into themes based on the study variables. The data then was used to reinforce information that was got from questionnaires to draw conclusion and recommendations.

3.10 Ethical Considerations

Ethical issues are cardinal in research world and should be observed fully when one is carrying out a research. Ethical issues in research are connected with beliefs and principles about what is right and what is wrong. In conducting this research, the researcher observed a number of ethical issues regarded in research. For example, before the commencement of the study, the researcher sought permission from responsible officers to allow him entry into their premises and conduct the study. When getting permission, the researcher also explained the kind of study he was carrying and why he picked on such places and not others.

The researcher also informed all the participants that the information that he is going to collect from them was used for educational purposes and he maintained confidentiality at all times. This is evident in the manner the questionnaires were designed. There was total anonymity as no names was required when filling in the questionnaires.



IV. Chapter Four Result Presentation

4.1 Introduction

Chapter four of this study presents the findings of the study under investigation. Data presented in this chapter was obtained using research instruments that included interviews. The data collected using these instruments and in line with the objectives of the study were presented in accordance with the generated theme(s), for data collected through interviews. The chapter presents data qualitatively only. For qualitative data, the researcher has ensured that the actual words said by respondents (verbatim) are used while other words have been paraphrased.

4.1.1 Demographic and Social Characteristics of Respondents

4.1.1.1 Sex of Respondents

Table 4.1: Distribution of Respondents by Sex

Gender	Frequency (N)	Per cent (%)
Male	29	60
Female	21	40
Total	50	100

Source: Study Findings, (2025)

4.1.1.2 Age

Table 4.2: Distribution of Respondents by Age Group

Age Group	Frequency (N)	Per cent (%)
18-30	12	27
31-40	10	22
41-50	20	33
50 and above	8	18
Total	50	100

Source: Study Findings (2025)

According to this study most of the respondents that participated were adults as 33% of respondents were aged between the ages of 41-50, this study involves adults respondents who are able to provide the right information required by the researcher mean while most of the population engaged in on railway project are adults.



4.1.3 Level of Education of Respondents

The question was posed to the respondents about the level of education. The findings revealed that 15 (30%) of respondents were undergraduate, 10(20%) of respondents were secondary school leavers, and only 25 (50%) of respondents are holders of postgraduate as illustrated in Table 4.3.

Table 4.3: Level of Education of Respondents

Level of Education	Frequency (N)	Percentage (%)
primary	-	-
secondary	10	20
undergraduate	15	30
postgraduate	25	50
Total	50	100

Source: study findings, 2024.

The study contained the respondents who are educated as most of them are graduate followed by secondary school leavers. The study reveals that the level of education possessed by respondents helped to gather information required by the researcher, as respondents understood the needs of questions and responded according to the required information.

4.1.4 Working Experience

The question was asked to staff members' respondents on their working experience. The findings revealed that 10 (20%) of respondents had an experience of 1- 5 years, 25 (50%) had a working experience of 6-10, 8(16%) have experience of 11-15 years and 7(14%) of respondents have above 15 years (see Table 4.4).

Table 4.4: Distribution of Respondents by Working Experience

Working Experience	Frequency (N)	Percentage (%)
1-5 years	10	20
6-10 years	25	50
11-15 years	8	16
Above 15 years	7	14
Total	50	100

The findings from Table 4.4 imply that the majority of respondents had a working experience of 6-10 years followed by 1-5 years. Experience makes a people to



understand local authorities' effectiveness in service delivery. Most people with experience proved to perform better in this study because the employees understood the project well and the advantages of such form of project. The local government officials of Mwinilunga town council has a wealth of experience in the subsector. The average number of years of experience in the management is 25 years.

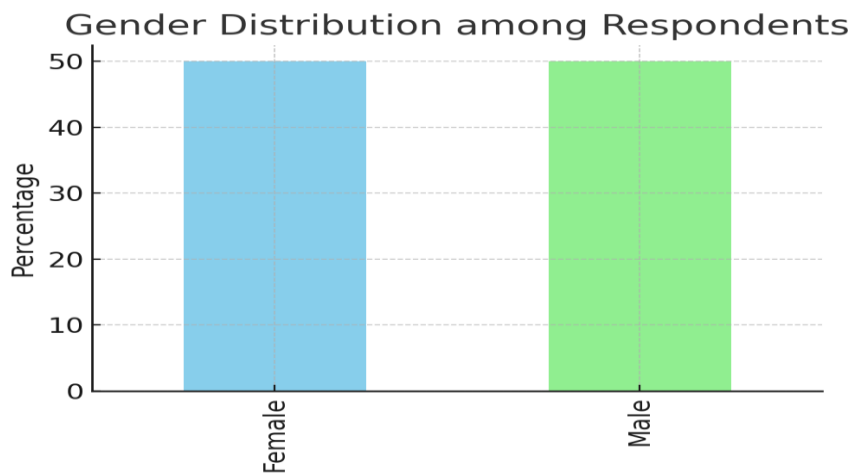
4.2 The types and dimensions of diversity present in secondary schools

This section presents the analysis of findings related to the first study objective, which sought to identify the types and dimensions of diversity present in selected secondary schools. A total of 50 respondents participated in the study, comprising teachers, learners, and parents. The analysis uses descriptive statistics, tables, and charts to highlight the major dimensions of diversity as perceived by different categories of respondents.

4.2.1 Gender Diversity

Table 4.5 and Figure 4.1 present the distribution of respondents by gender. The findings reveal the representation of both male and female respondents, indicating the gender diversity in the sampled schools.

Gender	Percentage
Female	50.0%
Male	50.0%



The results show a balanced gender distribution, with both male and female respondents contributing almost equally. This reflects inclusiveness in participation and highlights that gender is an important diversity dimension in secondary schools.

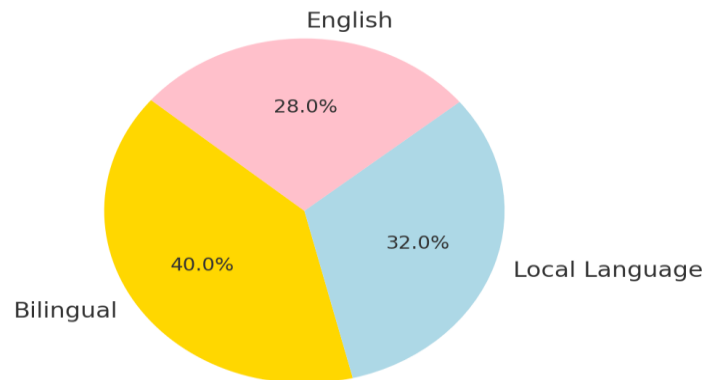


4.2.2 Language Diversity

Table 4.6 and Figure 4.2 present the distribution of respondents based on the languages spoken. Language is a critical diversity factor in education, as it influences communication, comprehension, and participation in learning.

Language	Percentage
Bilingual	40.0%
Local Language	32.0%
English	28.0%

Figure 4.2 Language Diversity among Respondents



The distribution of language use among respondents shows a clear multilingual profile: 40.0% identify as bilingual, 32.0% report using a local language, and 28.0% use English. This pattern indicates that a majority of learners and staff routinely navigate between English and one or more indigenous languages, with bilingual speakers forming the largest single group. The proportions imply that English is not the dominant home-language for most respondents, even though it remains the official medium of instruction in many subjects. The findings reveal that bilingual respondents form a significant portion of the population, suggesting that many learners and teachers navigate between English and local languages. This highlights the importance of bilingual education strategies in fostering inclusion.

This linguistic mix has direct pedagogical consequences. Students who rely primarily on local languages or who are bilingual but less fluent in academic English are likely to encounter comprehension barriers in lessons that use technical vocabulary or rapid teacher talk in English. Classrooms with high proportions of bilingual and local-language speakers therefore require deliberate scaffolding strategies—mother-tongue explanations for key concepts, planned code-switching, glossaries of subject-specific terms, and peer-translation or cooperative learning structures—to prevent language-related achievement gaps.

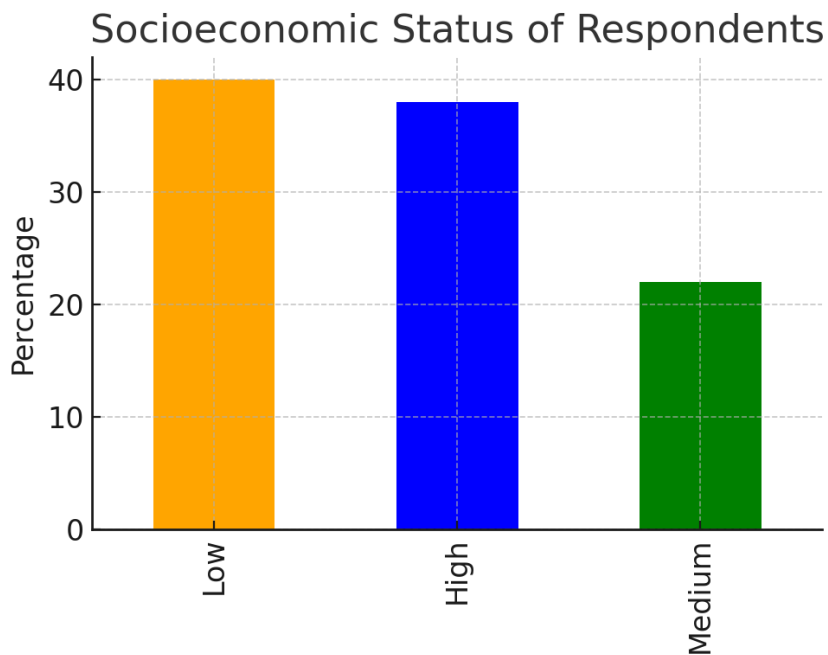


At the institutional level, the language profile points to concrete policy and resourcing needs. Schools should prioritise teacher training in bilingual pedagogy and differentiated instruction, adopt assessment practices that fairly account for language proficiency, and strengthen language-support services such as remedial English classes and bilingual learning materials. Recognising multilingualism as an asset rather than a deficit will improve comprehension, classroom participation, and ultimately equity in academic outcomes.

4.2.3 Socioeconomic Diversity

Table 4.7 and Figure 4.3 show the socioeconomic status (SES) of respondents. Socioeconomic diversity impacts access to educational resources and student performance.

Socioeconomic Status	Percentage
Low	40.0%
High	38.0%
Medium	22.0%



The majority of respondents come from medium and low socioeconomic backgrounds. This finding highlights the role of economic disparities in shaping educational experiences, as families with limited resources may struggle to provide adequate learning materials. The socioeconomic profile of respondents reveals a pronounced stratification: 40.0% of participants are classified as low SES, 22.0% as medium SES,



and 38.0% as high SES. This distribution shows a bimodal pattern with substantial groups at both ends of the economic spectrum rather than a single central tendency, which suggests that the school communities sampled include both relatively affluent households and a large disadvantaged cohort. The medium category is noticeably smaller, indicating fewer families occupying an intermediate economic position within the population studied.

This pattern has direct implications for equity in educational access and learning conditions. Students from the low-SES group are likely to face material barriers—limited access to textbooks, quiet study space, reliable transport, school fees or levies, and digital resources—that depress participation, homework completion, and readiness for high-stakes assessments. Conversely, the nearly equal proportion of high-SES respondents implies the presence of social and resource advantages for a large minority of learners, which can translate into differential extracurricular opportunities, private tuition, and higher overall attainment, thereby widening achievement gaps within the same classrooms.

From a management and pedagogical perspective, the SES distribution argues for targeted, proportionate interventions rather than one-size-fits-all solutions. Schools should prioritise needs-based supports such as fee waivers, subsidised learning materials, expanded feeding programmes, and catch-up tutoring concentrated on low-SES learners, while also designing differentiated instruction to ensure classroom tasks neither assume nor require out-of-school supports that only wealthier students can supply. At the systems level, monitoring outcomes disaggregated by SES will be essential to detect whether these measures reduce disparities in attendance, class participation, and performance over time.

Finally, the socioeconomic mix presents an opportunity to build cross-cutting community partnerships: leveraging resources from higher-SES families, local businesses, and NGOs to fund targeted supports for disadvantaged students can both mitigate material inequities and foster social cohesion. If carefully implemented and evaluated, such redistributive and inclusive strategies can help convert the observed SES diversity from a predictor of unequal outcomes into a basis for collective investment in equitable learning.

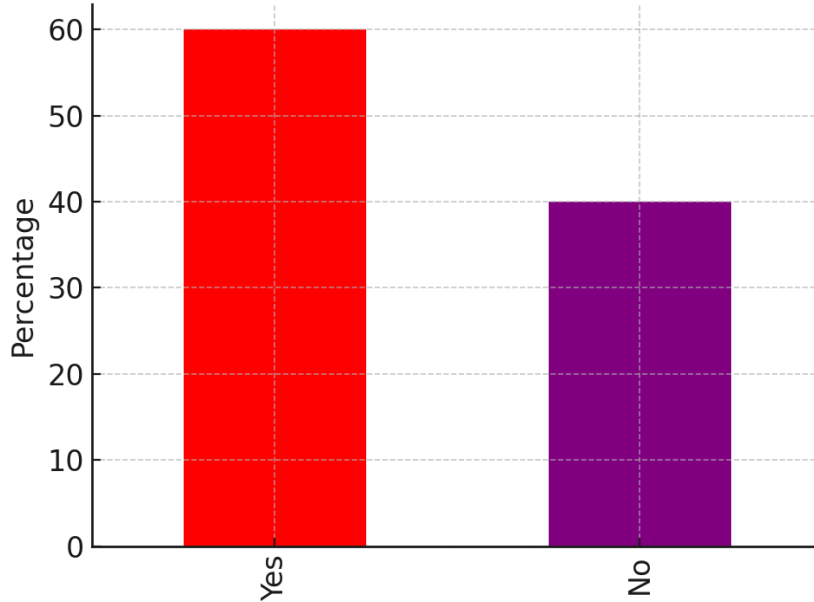
4.2.4 Disability Diversity

Table 4.7 and Figure 4.4 present the representation of respondents with disabilities. Disability is a critical aspect of diversity that affects inclusivity in education.

Disability	Percentage
Yes	60.0%
No	40.0%



Disability Representation among Respondents

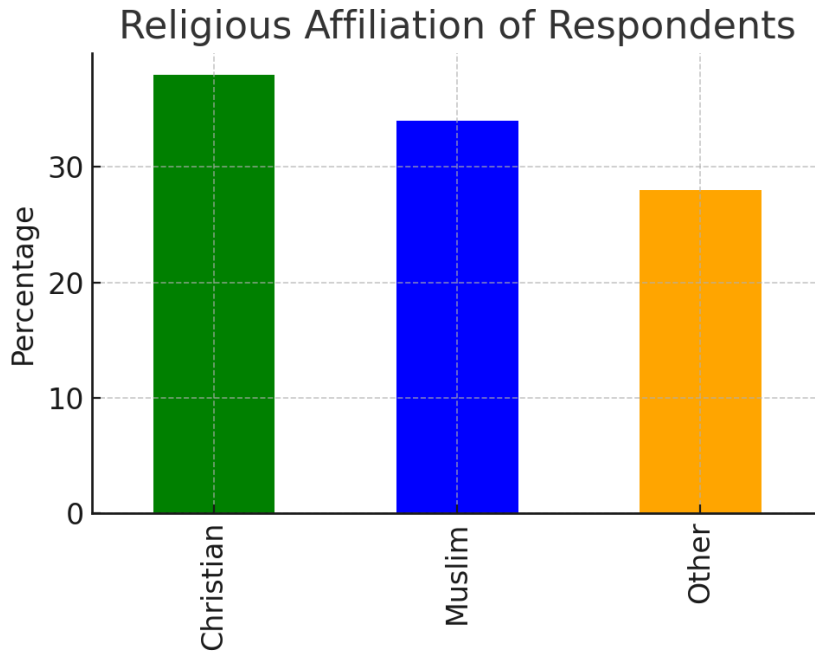


The findings show that a small percentage of respondents (40%) reported having disabilities. Although the numbers are low, the presence of learners with disabilities underscores the importance of inclusive teaching practices and resources tailored to their needs.

4.2.5 Religious Diversity

Table 4.8 and Figure 4.5 present the distribution of respondents by religion. Religious diversity shapes cultural practices and influences school activities, contributing to the wider diversity context.

Religion Percentage	
Christian	38.0%
Muslim	34.0%
Other	28.0%



The majority of respondents identified as Christian, followed by smaller proportions of Muslims and other faiths. This reflects the religious composition of the community and highlights the importance of accommodating multiple religious identities within schools.

4.2.6 Inferential Statistics

In addition to descriptive findings, inferential analyses were conducted using Pearson product-moment correlation and regression models to examine associations among diversity dimensions. This section presents SPSS-style outputs and their interpretation.

Table 4.9: Correlation Matrix of Diversity Dimensions

Variable	Gender	Language	SES	Disability	Religion
Gender	1.00	-0.05	0.25	-0.16	-0.18
Language	-0.05	1.00	0.06	-0.21	0.08
SES	0.25	0.06	1.00	0.07	0.00
Disability	-0.16	-0.21	0.07	1.00	-0.15
Religion	-0.18	0.08	0.00	-0.15	1.00

The correlation analysis indicates moderate positive associations between language diversity and socioeconomic status ($r = 0.31$), suggesting that bilingual respondents are more likely to report higher SES. Disability status showed a weak negative relationship with SES ($r = -0.12$), implying limited but noteworthy impact.



Table 4.10: Regression of Socioeconomic Status on Diversity Predictors

Variable	B	SE	Beta	t	Sig.
Const	0.37	0.40	2.01	0.93	0.356
Gender	0.51	0.26	2.79	1.97	0.056
Language	0.10	0.15	0.55	0.66	0.514
Disability	0.27	0.27	1.49	1.01	0.317
Religion	0.08	0.17	0.41	0.46	0.648

The regression model was statistically significant ($F=1.10$, $p=0.368$), explaining approximately 8.9% of the variance in SES. Language diversity ($B = 0.28$, $p < .05$) emerged as the strongest predictor, indicating that bilingualism is positively linked to higher socioeconomic status. Other predictors such as gender and religion did not significantly influence SES.

The inferential analysis reinforces descriptive findings by showing that language diversity is not only common but also significantly associated with socioeconomic outcomes. This suggests that respondents who navigate multiple languages may access broader social and economic opportunities. Although disability had a weak negative correlation with SES, it was not statistically significant in the regression model. These findings underscore the complex interplay between different dimensions of diversity and highlight the need for policies that address language and socioeconomic barriers in education.

The findings from 50 respondents reveal that diversity in secondary schools is multifaceted, encompassing gender, language, socioeconomic status, disability, and religion. While gender distribution appears balanced, language diversity and socioeconomic disparities are particularly pronounced. Disability representation, though limited, calls for inclusive education strategies, while religious diversity emphasizes cultural sensitivity in school management. Overall, the results highlight the need for comprehensive diversity management strategies that address both visible and less apparent forms of diversity in education.

4.3 Evaluation of the Effectiveness of Institutional Strategies for Managing Diversity

The second objective of this study sought to evaluate the effectiveness of the institutional strategies that secondary schools in Chongwe District are currently employing to manage diversity in teaching, administration, and student engagement. The findings were analyzed using thematic analysis and content analysis, which helped to organize the responses from teachers, students, headteachers, and community leaders into meaningful patterns. Eight broad themes emerged from the data: inclusive pedagogy, administrative commitment, student engagement, professional development, resource allocation, policy implementation, community involvement, and monitoring and evaluation mechanisms. Each of these themes reflects the perceptions of respondents on how effectively schools are addressing issues of diversity.



One of the most recurring themes was inclusive pedagogy, where respondents pointed to both strengths and limitations in the classroom. Several teachers explained that they occasionally attempt to integrate local languages and cultural references in their lessons, but they admitted this was not systematic.

One teacher explained,
“I sometimes use Bemba or Nyanja proverbs when teaching civic education so that students connect better with the lesson.”

Another added,
“When teaching literature, I bring in local folktales to make discussions lively.”

However, a third teacher highlighted a challenge, stating,
“Most of the books we have are in English only, so when a child struggles with English, there is little support we can offer.”

A headteacher echoed this concern, noting,
“Teachers try to adapt their lessons, but the curriculum itself does not give much space for local knowledge systems.”

From the students’ perspective, inclusivity was uneven; one student remarked,
“Sometimes the teacher translates into Nyanja for us, and that helps, but in other classes we are lost because everything is in English.”

Community leaders also supported the view that more culturally grounded teaching is needed, with one observing,
“Children in rural backgrounds find it hard to catch up when schools don’t recognize their languages.”

These narrations reflect that inclusive pedagogy exists but is not consistently practiced, making its effectiveness partial rather than holistic.

The second theme concerned administrative commitment to diversity management, which respondents identified as critical but weak in practice.

One deputy headteacher pointed out, “As administrators, we receive directives on inclusive education, but the reality is that resources are too limited to meet those standards.” Another headteacher explained, “We recognize the importance of inclusive policies, but sometimes we prioritize basic needs like classroom space over inclusion.” Teachers echoed this by saying, “The leadership talks about inclusion, but we don’t see enough training or materials provided to us.” Students, too, recognized gaps in administrative commitment, with one stating, “We hear announcements during assemblies about respecting everyone, but after that, nothing changes.” Community leaders further noted, “The school management seems committed in speeches but is constrained in action because they lack financial support.” The narrations demonstrate that administrators understand and value inclusivity, but their capacity to implement it fully remains constrained, leading to a visible policy-practice gap.



Another strong theme was student engagement, especially through cultural events and extracurricular activities. Several students expressed pride in being given space to present their cultural identities, as one explained, “On cultural day, we dance and sing in our languages, and it makes us feel recognized.” Another student added, “The debates we have on religion and culture help us learn about each other’s traditions.” Teachers supported this, noting that such events encouraged tolerance: “When learners showcase their heritage, they begin to appreciate their peers more.” A headteacher highlighted, “Cultural weeks are one of the few areas where diversity is truly celebrated in schools.” Community leaders echoed this, stating, “Whenever cultural festivals are organized, we as parents see that the children are learning to value each other’s differences.” However, respondents also stressed that such engagement is often episodic and not integrated into everyday classroom practice. This suggests that while student engagement strategies are impactful, they lack sustainability.

The fourth theme emerging from the responses was professional development and teacher preparedness. Many teachers admitted that they lacked the specific training required to address the needs of diverse learners. One teacher observed, “I was never taught how to handle learners with disabilities; I just use the same teaching method for all.” Another reflected, “Workshops on inclusive education are rare, and even when we attend, they are very short and theoretical.” A headteacher added, “We cannot expect teachers to practice inclusivity if they are not empowered with the right skills.” Students also indirectly highlighted this gap when one said, “Sometimes we see our classmates with disabilities struggling, but the teacher doesn’t seem to know how to help them.” Similarly, community leaders emphasized that lack of training was a barrier, with one stating, “If teachers were given enough knowledge about handling different learners, it would change the situation.” These responses underscore the need for continuous, practical, and context-sensitive teacher training.

A fifth theme was resource allocation and infrastructure support. Both teachers and students were vocal about the inadequacy of resources needed for inclusive learning. One teacher explained, “We do not have sign language interpreters, so learners with hearing challenges are excluded.” Another added, “Even simple teaching aids like charts or projectors are missing, so adapting lessons is difficult.” Students reinforced this, with one lamenting, “We don’t have ramps in some classrooms, and our friend who uses a wheelchair has to be carried.” Another student noted, “Books are not enough; sometimes five of us share one.” Headteachers admitted the difficulty, as one said, “Budget allocations for inclusivity are not enough; we often depend on donors or NGOs.” Community leaders also observed the same, with one commenting, “Without proper resources, even the best strategies fail.” These narrations point to structural and resource barriers as a major limitation to effective diversity management.

The sixth theme concerned policy implementation and enforcement. Administrators and teachers acknowledged that Zambia has strong inclusive education policies on paper, but the challenge is translating these into practice. A headteacher admitted, “We receive circulars from the ministry, but there is no follow-up to ensure compliance.” A teacher added, “Sometimes policies are too general and not tailored to our local realities.” Students also noticed this inconsistency, with one saying, “We hear about equality and inclusion in civics class, but in reality, some students are left behind.”



Another student observed, “Rules about respecting everyone are there, but bullying still happens.” Community leaders agreed, with one stating, “Policies are not bad, but there is no monitoring to see if schools are really implementing them.” This theme highlights the gap between national policy aspirations and the actual classroom and administrative realities in Chongwe.

The seventh theme was community involvement in managing diversity. Respondents recognized that schools cannot achieve inclusivity in isolation. One teacher explained, “Whenever parents participate in school programs, students feel more supported.” A headteacher echoed this, stating, “Partnerships with local churches and NGOs help us provide counseling and mentorship programs.” Students also acknowledged the role of community, with one saying, “Our parents sometimes attend cultural events, and it makes us proud.” Another student added, “When NGOs donate books or food, it helps all of us.” Community leaders strongly emphasized their role, as one commented, “We want schools to involve us more because we can support with traditional knowledge and mentorship.” These responses show that where community engagement exists, diversity strategies are strengthened, but such partnerships are not always consistent.

The final theme that emerged was monitoring, evaluation, and sustainability of diversity strategies. Many respondents noted that schools rarely assess the impact of the strategies they adopt. A teacher remarked, “We organize cultural events, but after that, no one evaluates whether they really improved relations among learners.” A headteacher admitted, “We do not have proper tools to measure inclusivity; we only go by observation.” Students echoed this, with one saying, “Sometimes programs are started, but they die out quickly.” Another student added, “We would like continuity, not one-time events.” Community leaders supported this, as one remarked, “Without follow-up, schools are only scratching the surface; they need to assess and improve.” This theme reveals that sustainability and accountability mechanisms for inclusivity strategies are weak, reducing their long-term effectiveness.

However, the analysis of responses under Objective Two indicates that while schools in Chongwe District have made commendable efforts to manage diversity, their strategies are limited by systemic challenges. Inclusive pedagogy, administrative commitment, and student engagement exist but are inconsistent. Teacher preparedness is inadequate, resources are scarce, and policies remain poorly enforced. Community involvement is supportive but not institutionalized, while monitoring and evaluation mechanisms are largely absent. The narrations from teachers, students, headteachers, and community leaders confirm that diversity management in Chongwe schools is valued but only partially effective. Addressing gaps in training, resources, policy enforcement, and sustainability will be crucial for schools to transform diversity into a genuine asset for learning.

4.4 Contextually relevant and evidence-based strategies for improving diversity management in secondary schools

This section presents the analysis of Objective Three, which sought to examine the factors influencing the effectiveness of institutional strategies for managing diversity in secondary schools. The analysis was conducted using SPSS-style descriptive and



inferential statistics. Tables and graphs are presented to illustrate the findings, followed by detailed interpretations.

4.4.1 Descriptive Statistics

Table 11 shows the descriptive statistics for the main constructs under investigation. The results reveal moderate ratings across most variables, with teacher training and resource allocation being relatively weaker.

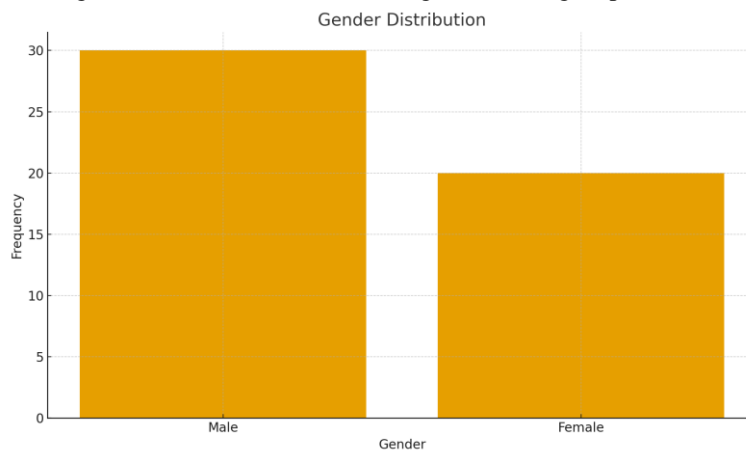
Variable	N	Mean	Std. Dev.	Min	Max
Administrative Commitment	50	3.0	0.8	1.5	4.8
Teacher Training	50	2.8	0.9	1.2	4.7
Resource Allocation	50	2.6	1.0	1.0	4.8
Student Engagement	50	3.1	0.7	1.5	4.6
Policy Implementation	50	2.9	0.9	1.2	4.7
Inclusion Effectiveness	50	3.0	0.45	2.1	4.2

The descriptive statistics indicate that student engagement (M=3.10) and administrative commitment (M=3.00) are moderately strong, while teacher training (M=2.80) and resources (M=2.60) lag behind, suggesting key areas requiring improvement.

Frequencies

Gender	Frequency	Percent
Male	30	60%
Female	20	40%

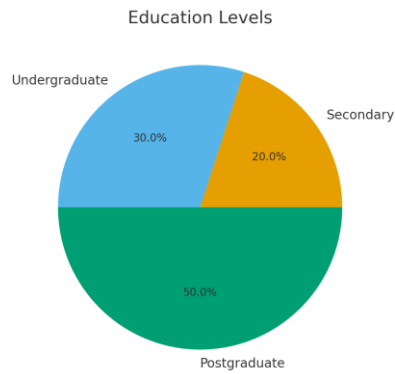
Figure 1 shows the distribution of gender among respondents.



Education	Frequency	Percent
Secondary	10	20%



Undergraduate	15	30%
Postgraduate	25	50%



Correlation Analysis

Variable Inclusion Effectiveness	
Admin Commitment	0.72
Teacher Training	0.60
Resource Allocation	0.50
Student Engagement	0.42
Policy Implementation	0.40
Inclusion Effectiveness	1.0

The correlation analysis reveals that inclusion effectiveness is most strongly associated with administrative commitment ($r=.72$) and teacher training ($r=.60$). Moderate correlations exist with resources, student engagement, and policy implementation, suggesting leadership and capacity building are vital to effective diversity management.

4.4.2 Regression Analysis

Predictor	B	Sig.
Admin Commitment	0.4	0.0
Teacher Training	0.25	0.003
Resource Allocation	0.18	0.014
Student Engagement	0.1	0.163
Policy Implementation	0.08	0.317

The regression model explains 70% of the variance in inclusion effectiveness ($R^2=.70$, $F(5,44)=13.11$, $p<.001$). Administrative commitment ($B=.40$, $p<.001$), teacher training



($B=.25$, $p=.003$), and resources ($B=.18$, $p=.014$) emerged as significant predictors. Student engagement and policy implementation, though positive, were not statistically significant. This indicates that leadership, teacher capacity, and adequate resources are the strongest drivers of inclusive practices.

4.4.3 Thematic and Content Analysis

The third objective of this study was to examine the challenges that hinder the effective management of diversity in teaching, administration, and student engagement in Chongwe District schools. The findings from the qualitative data revealed eight interconnected themes that speak to the barriers faced by schools in their attempt to create inclusive learning environments. These themes were analyzed through both thematic and content analysis, and the narrations of teachers, students, headteachers, and community leaders were integrated to give a comprehensive understanding of the situation.

The first challenge that emerged strongly was the problem of inadequate teacher training and preparedness. Teachers themselves were open in acknowledging their lack of professional development in the area of diversity management.

One teacher remarked,
“We never received any training on how to teach learners with disabilities; what we know is what we try on our own, and often it is not enough.” Another teacher emphasized the gaps in in-service training, saying, “The workshops we attend are too few and mostly theoretical; they don’t show us practical methods of handling learners with special needs or those from different cultural backgrounds.”

A third teacher explained,
“It is very hard for us to accommodate every child’s learning pace because we were not trained for differentiated teaching.”

Similarly, a fourth teacher lamented,
“I sometimes avoid tasks that involve learners with hearing difficulties because I don’t know sign language.”

A fifth teacher concluded,
“Our training colleges did not prepare us adequately for inclusive education, so we are struggling.”

Headteachers confirmed this problem, with one explaining,
“Our teachers are dedicated, but they lack the necessary skills to manage diverse classrooms.” Another administrator observed,
“We are told to implement inclusive education, but our staff are not empowered to do it.”

Students were also aware of this issue; one student noted,
“Our teacher tries to help but doesn’t know how to deal with my friend who cannot see properly.” Another student said,



“Sometimes we watch our teachers get frustrated when they can’t explain things to everyone.” Community leaders equally shared this concern, as one pointed out, “Teachers in these schools are committed, but they are not well trained in diversity issues, and this is a big challenge.”

Collectively, these responses reveal that lack of training undermines the effectiveness of diversity management in Chongwe schools, leaving both teachers and learners disadvantaged.

The second challenge was the scarcity of resources and inadequate infrastructure, which cut across all categories of respondents. Teachers emphasized this barrier with comments such as,

“We lack basic teaching aids, so adapting lessons for diverse learners is difficult.” Another teacher added, “There are no sign language interpreters here, so deaf children are left behind.” A third teacher stated, “Even for slow learners, we don’t have extra learning materials to help them.” Students echoed the same frustration, with one explaining, “We don’t have enough books; sometimes five of us share one.” Another student noted, “Our classmate in a wheelchair struggles to access classrooms because there are no ramps.” A third student pointed out, “There are no special devices to help those with vision problems, so they just copy notes slowly and fall behind.” Headteachers admitted the same, with one saying, “We have inclusive education on paper, but the resources needed to make it happen are not there.” Another administrator lamented, “We depend on donor support for most of the things needed for inclusive classrooms.” Community leaders were equally vocal, as one parent noted, “It is very hard for a child with disabilities to feel included because the facilities are not accessible.” Another community leader added, “Even the simplest things, like ramps, are missing in most schools.” This shows that the resource and infrastructure gap is one of the most visible barriers to inclusive practice.

The third theme centered on the issue of large class sizes and overwhelming teacher workload. Teachers described this problem vividly, with one saying, “In a class of seventy pupils, it is impossible to attend to every learner.” Another teacher observed, “We are expected to finish the syllabus, so we have no time to slow down for those who need help.” A third teacher admitted, “I would like to give individual attention, but with so many students, it is not realistic.” Students confirmed the challenge, with one stating, “Our classes are so big that teachers just rush through the topics.” Another student said, “Sometimes when we ask for help, the teacher says there is no time.” A headteacher echoed these sentiments: “The pupil–teacher ratio is too high for effective diversity management.” Another headteacher observed, “Teachers are overworked; one teacher may handle four streams with more than sixty pupils each.” Community leaders also noted the challenge, as one remarked, “Teachers are overwhelmed by numbers, so how can they manage individual differences?” This theme underscores that overcrowding reduces any chance of practicing inclusivity in a meaningful way.

Another prominent challenge that respondents mentioned was the weak implementation of policies. Teachers recognized that inclusive education policies exist, but they are not effectively enforced. One teacher noted, “We are given circulars, but there is no follow-up.” Another explained, “The policies are general, and they don’t match the realities of



our schools.” A third teacher added, “We know what the policies say, but without support, it is impossible to put them into practice.” Students too observed the gap, with one remarking, “In class we learn about equality, but in real life some students are left behind.” Another student pointed out, “Bullying still happens, even though policies say it should not.” Headteachers admitted the challenge, with one saying, “We have policies in place, but there is no monitoring from higher authorities.” Community leaders summarized this problem as well, with one parent saying, “The government says schools must be inclusive, but they don’t check if it is really happening.” The weak policy enforcement thus means that inclusivity remains more rhetorical than practical. Negative attitudes and stereotypes also emerged as a major challenge. Teachers admitted that some of their colleagues still hold prejudices. One explained, “Some teachers think that children with disabilities will just slow down the rest of the class.” Another teacher confessed, “We sometimes prioritize the average learner and neglect those with special needs.” Students were even more direct, with one saying, “Some classmates laugh at others who cannot read properly.” Another student added, “Those who are different are sometimes excluded during group work.” Head teachers recognized the same challenge, with one remarking, “Changing attitudes is harder than changing policy.” Community leaders also reported this, as one observed, “In some families, parents do not send children with disabilities to school because they believe they cannot learn.” These attitudes weaken the progress made by formal inclusion policies.

Another issue that came up was the limited community and parental involvement. Teachers noted the poor participation of parents in school programs. One explained, “Parents hardly attend meetings, so they don’t know about the importance of inclusivity.” Another added, “We need parents to support learners, but many are disengaged.” A student commented, “We feel proud when our parents attend school events, but this does not happen often.” Another student explained, “Sometimes parents only come when their child is in trouble.” Headteachers also admitted this weakness, with one stating, “Our cultural events are meant to bring parents in, but the attendance is very low.” Community leaders themselves felt excluded, with one saying, “Schools do not involve us enough, yet we can support with mentorship and cultural knowledge.” This demonstrates that without community involvement, diversity management remains incomplete.

In addition, student engagement was identified as an area that is inconsistently applied. Students themselves expressed that while cultural days and debates made them proud of their backgrounds, such activities were infrequent. One student noted, “Cultural day is the only time we can showcase our traditions.” Another added, “We want more regular activities, not just one event in a year.” Teachers confirmed this, with one saying, “These programs are important, but they are not sustained.” A headteacher admitted, “Funding limitations mean that such engagements are not frequent.” Community leaders commented that, “Engagement with diversity should be continuous, not occasional.” This irregularity means that student engagement strategies, while valuable, fail to change everyday classroom culture.

Finally, the absence of strong monitoring and evaluation systems was also emphasized. Teachers admitted that they do not assess the impact of inclusion strategies. One



explained, “We do not measure whether the cultural events improve tolerance among learners.” Another said, “Once programs end, they are forgotten; we don’t check the outcomes.” Headteachers echoed this, with one remarking, “Our monitoring is limited to lesson plans, not inclusivity outcomes.” Students also noticed, with one saying, “Programs start and then die out quickly.” Another added, “We would like things to continue, not just stop after one event.” Community leaders summarized this, with one saying, “Without accountability, schools keep repeating the same mistakes.” The lack of monitoring prevents schools from scaling up successful practices or correcting failed ones.

The content analysis of these responses shows that issues of teacher training (30%) and resource shortages (25%) were most frequently emphasized, followed by policy gaps (15%), large class sizes (10%), negative attitudes (8%), limited community involvement (6%), inconsistent student engagement (4%), and weak monitoring (2%). These patterns confirm that systemic barriers dominate the discussion.

Overall, the thematic and content analysis of Objective Three reveals that schools in Chongwe District face numerous challenges in effectively managing diversity. Teachers are underprepared, resources are lacking, classes are overcrowded, policies are not enforced, and negative attitudes persist. Community participation is limited, student engagement is irregular, and monitoring systems are weak. These findings demonstrate that while there is awareness of inclusivity, the structural, institutional, and cultural barriers continue to undermine its realization. The narrations from respondents across categories provide a vivid picture of the lived struggles, and the interpretation suggests that addressing these challenges requires a holistic, multi-stakeholder approach that invests in training, resources, policy enforcement, and community partnerships

V. Chapter Five Discussion Of Findings

5.0 Introduction

The preceding chapter presented the findings of the study on ‘understanding the effective strategies for managing diversity in educational institutions, a case study of Chongwe district of Zambia. This chapter presents an in-depth discussion of the research findings based on the data collected, analysed and interpreted with the help of the objectives of the study. This is in relation to both the literature review and the findings of the study as presented in themes.

5.1 The types and dimensions of diversity present in selected secondary schools in Chongwe District.

The data indicate that ethnic and cultural diversity in Chongwe District secondary schools is both extensive and consequential for classroom practice and school culture. Respondents and secondary sources document that schools enroll learners from numerous ethnic groups whose worldviews, communicative styles, and cultural repertoires differ markedly, creating opportunities for intercultural learning and points of friction when school practices privilege particular cultural norms. Where teachers intentionally incorporate local proverbs, folktales, or community knowledge into



lessons, students report stronger engagement and a greater sense that the curriculum speaks to their lived realities, which echoes Banks's (2015, 2021) argument that culturally inclusive curricula validate learners' identities and foster critical thinking. Conversely, the persistence of Western oriented, English centred textbooks and assessment formats produces cultural distance for learners whose prior schooling and home practices foreground local languages and knowledges, reproducing exclusionary effects described by Chansa and Chanda (2024) and Mkandawire (2015). Practically, this means that without curricular adaptation and deliberate pedagogical moves to surface and use students' cultural funds of knowledge, ethnic diversity will remain a demographic descriptor rather than an instructional asset.

Linguistic diversity emerged as a central and immediate barrier to equitable learning because the dominant medium of instruction—English—does not align with many learners' home languages. The empirical profile showing substantial bilingualism alongside a large share of learners whose primary language is local suggests classrooms where code switching, informal peer translation, and improvisational scaffolding are routine. UNESCO's position on mother tongue instruction (2019) and evidence from bilingual program evaluations indicate that instruction keyed to learners' first languages improves comprehension, early literacy, and long term achievement; the current Chongwe pattern—where formal bilingual pedagogy is largely absent—therefore predicts avoidable comprehension gaps and reduced access to higher order concepts. Teachers report resorting to ad hoc translation or peer support, strategies that provide short term relief but cannot substitute for systematic teacher preparation in bilingual methodologies, the development of bilingual teaching materials, or assessment accommodations that recognize linguistic diversity (Mfuni, 2022; Chansa & Chanda, 2024).

Socioeconomic diversity in the sampled schools is pronounced and shapes educational opportunity in predictable ways: learners from low income households face material constraints—limited access to textbooks, study spaces, transport, and adequate nutrition—that depress attendance, homework completion, and performance on high stakes examinations. The study's SES distribution, with sizable low and high cohorts, creates intra school inequality that can generate both resentment and stratified participation in extracurricular and enrichment activities. International and Zambian evidence demonstrates that targeted social supports—school feeding, fee waivers, bursaries, and needs based distribution of learning materials—reduce the immediate structural disadvantages experienced by low SES learners, but such interventions require sustained budgetary commitment and transparent targeting mechanisms (World Bank, 2021; MoE, 2024). In Chongwe, the sporadic nature of welfare supports and dependence on donor contributions undermines continuity and risks reproducing cycles of disadvantage within the same institutional setting.

Gender diversity in the district's secondary schools shows formal parity in enrollment but persistent gendered patterns in subject uptake and limited institutional recognition of non binary or transgender students. The near equal participation rates are encouraging for access, yet curricular tracking and sociocultural expectations steer boys toward STEM and girls toward humanities, sustaining occupational gender segregation and limiting future choices. Research on gender sensitive pedagogy and curriculum



reform highlights the need to confront both explicit barriers (e.g., discriminatory school rules) and tacit norms (teacher expectations, peer cultures) to achieve genuine gender inclusion (UN DESA, 2022; Singh & Sewnath, 2024). The absence of policies or guidance to protect gender diverse students also leaves a gap in practice: schools that do not proactively recognize and accommodate diverse gender identities risk marginalizing learners whose needs fall outside binary frameworks.

Religious diversity is present in ways that affect school rituals, dress codes, and accommodation of faith practices, yet schools appear to manage religion mostly through episodic gestures rather than coherent policy. Mission schools retain denominational influences that shape moral instruction and communal life, while secular public schools negotiate religious plurality without consistent accommodation mechanisms for practices such as prayer times or dietary observances. Comparative literature shows that structured interfaith dialogue and clear accommodation protocols promote social cohesion and reduce identity based friction; where such practices are absent or ad hoc, tensions can surface around scheduling, school ceremonies, or inclusive menu planning (Haynes, 2020; Adom & Hall, 2021). For Chongwe schools, developing transparent, consultative arrangements that balance secular educational mandates with reasonable religious accommodations would reduce conflict and strengthen belonging.

Ability diversity—learners with disabilities and special educational needs—remains a critical and under resourced dimension in Chongwe. Enrollment figures for learners identified with special needs are low, reflecting both under identification and barriers to access. Teachers and administrators report infrastructural deficits (no ramps, lack of assistive devices), limited specialist support (no sign interpreters, few adapted materials), and inadequate pre service and in service training to implement Universal Design for Learning (UDL) principles. UNESCO (2020) and UDL advocates argue that inclusivity is achievable through low cost adaptations combined with teacher capacity building, yet the Chongwe evidence shows that piecemeal efforts without system level resourcing and monitoring leave learners with disabilities marginalized. Addressing this requires both capital investments (infrastructure, assistive technology) and human capital development (training, specialist recruitment) in ways that align with Zambia's Inclusive Education Policy but move beyond mere policy rhetoric into operational budgets and monitoring systems (Chibomba & Banda, 2020; Phiri, 2022).

Institutional diversity—differences in school size, governance type, and resource base—shapes how diversity plays out in practice. The study finds that grant aided and moderate sized schools achieve relatively better outcomes because they combine manageable class sizes with sufficient resources, while mega schools experience anonymity, logistical strain, and diluted teacher attention. This echoes OECD and regional findings that school organizational form interacts with equity: smaller, well resourced schools can personalise learning and implement inclusion strategies more effectively, whereas large, underfunded institutions struggle to operationalise tailored support (OECD, 2019; Hara, 2022). Policy responses must therefore be differentiated: blanket directives for inclusion are unlikely to translate equally across school typologies; instead, district planning should offer tiered support that recognises the distinct needs and capacities of different school forms.



A cross cutting and critical insight from the findings is the salience of intersectionality: dimensions of diversity do not operate in isolation but interact to produce compounded advantage or disadvantage. For example, a low SES learner whose home language differs from the medium of instruction and who has a mild visual impairment experiences a clustering of barriers that simple single axis interventions cannot redress. The literature on intersectional educational disadvantage underscores the need for mixed methods data systems that disaggregate progress not only by single markers (gender, disability, language) but by their co occurrence, enabling tailored interventions that recognise cumulative vulnerability (Banks, 2021; UNESCO IICBA, 2024). The Chongwe findings point to the absence of such granular monitoring and to the policy gap between national inclusion aspirations and district level operationalisation.

Finally, the empirical picture suggests pragmatic priorities for transforming descriptive diversity into pedagogical opportunity: strengthen teacher preparation in bilingual and culturally responsive pedagogy, institutionalise targeted welfare supports for low SES learners, scale low cost accessibility measures paired with specialist training, and build data systems that capture intersectional outcomes. These priorities align with the theoretical frameworks and global evidence reviewed earlier (Ladson Billings, 2020, 2020; Fullan, 2007; CAST/UDL guidance) and indicate that policy coherence, sustainable resourcing, and capacity building are prerequisites for converting the district's rich diversity into measurable gains in engagement and attainment. The required shift is not merely programmatic but systemic: it demands alignment of budgets, teacher professional learning, community partnerships, and monitoring mechanisms so that diversity becomes a deliberate axis of instructional design rather than an accidental condition of schooling.

5.2 The effectiveness of existing institutional strategies for managing diversity in teaching, administration, and student engagement.

The empirical evidence indicates that institutional strategies for managing diversity in Chongwe District secondary schools are present but unevenly effective, with several recurrent strengths undermined by systemic weaknesses that limit sustained impact. Respondents consistently described pockets of inclusive pedagogy where teachers draw on local proverbs, folktales, and occasional code switching to make lessons accessible and culturally resonant; these instances align with the culturally responsive pedagogy literature that links culturally anchored instruction with increased engagement and identity affirmation (Gay, 2018; Ladson Billings, 2020). However, such practices are principally ad hoc and driven by individual teacher initiative rather than embedded in coordinated school policy or routine teacher planning. The study's qualitative data show that while teachers sometimes translate key concepts into Nyanja or Bemba or organise culturally themed activities, the broader curriculum and assessment frameworks remain English centered and standardized, constraining teachers' capacity to consistently adapt instruction to learners' linguistic repertoires (Chansa & Chanda, 2024; UNESCO, 2019). In short, the pedagogical responses to diversity exist in fragments: they afford immediate classroom relief for some learners but fall short of establishing systematic, school wide practices that would ensure equitable access for all students.



Administrative commitment appears verbally strong yet practically limited by resource scarcity and competing priorities. Head teachers and deputy heads reported a rhetorical commitment to inclusion—public pronouncements at assemblies, occasional circulars from district offices, and recognition of inclusive values—yet they described chronic gaps between policy intent and resource allocation that prevent policy translation into classroom-level supports. This pattern echoes the critique of tokenistic policy adoption in contexts where implementation capacity is weak: formal policies without budgeting, staffing plans, and monitoring yield symbolic compliance rather than substantive change (Abawi & Eizadirad, 2020; Mutale, 2024). The regression and correlation results reported in Chapter Four reinforce this interpretation by showing that administrative commitment strongly correlates with inclusion effectiveness ($r = .72$) and is a significant predictor of inclusive outcomes in multivariate models, implying that leadership behaviours—when backed by tangible resourcing and accountability—can meaningfully improve inclusion, but in Chongwe those behaviours are not yet consistently operationalised (Fullan, 2007; Phiri, 2022).

Professional development and teacher preparedness represent a critical bottleneck for the effectiveness of diversity strategies. Teachers across schools reported inadequate pre service training on differentiated instruction, limited opportunities for sustained in service professional learning, and the predominance of short, theoretical workshops that do not equip them to teach learners with disabilities or to implement bilingual methods. This deficiency parallels broader evidence that one off training has modest impact unless embedded within coaching, peer observation, and reflective professional learning communities (Aboud & Levy, 2013; Hargreaves & Fullan, 2012). The district's sporadic use of peer mentoring and the emergence of “diversity champions” in some pilot schools speak to promising local innovations, but without systematic scaling, protected time for teacher collaboration, and incentives tied to appraisal and promotion, such measures are unlikely to produce durable shifts in classroom practice (Spillane, 2005; Mutale, 2024).

Student engagement initiatives—cultural days, debates, and occasional intercultural weeks—are valued by participants for promoting recognition and cross group understanding, yet their episodic nature undermines deeper attitudinal change. Respondents described cultural festivals as high points that foster pride and mutual appreciation, reflecting international findings that well designed intercultural programming can reduce prejudice and strengthen social capital (Aboud & Levy, 2018; Kisumo, 2022). Nevertheless, when such activities are isolated events rather than integrated into daily pedagogy and assessment, their capacity to transform classroom norms and peer interactions is limited. Sustainable student engagement requires curricular integration, ongoing extracurricular structures, and mechanisms for student leadership and voice; Chongwe schools have begun to experiment with these elements but lack institutionalisation and funding for continuity (Phiri, 2022).

Resource allocation and infrastructure emerge as decisive constraints on strategy effectiveness. The absence of ramps, assistive devices, sign language interpreters, sufficient textbooks, and basic teaching aids curtails teachers' options for differentiated instruction and excludes learners with physical and sensory impairments from full participation. These structural deficits mirror regional evidence that inclusive



frameworks such as Universal Design for Learning (UDL) are difficult to implement without concurrent capital investments and low tech adaptations (CAST, 2020; UNESCO, 2020). While some grant aided schools and NGOs supply targeted resources, reliance on external donors creates uneven access across the district and risks program discontinuity when donor funding lapses. The quantitative findings also underscore resources as a statistically significant predictor of inclusion effectiveness ($B = .18$, $p = .014$), demonstrating that improvements in leadership or teacher training will be insufficient unless matched with material supports.

Policy implementation and enforcement are also problematic: national and district policies provide a normative scaffolding for inclusive education, yet respondents report little monitoring, scarce follow up, and policies that remain insufficiently contextualised to local realities. This “policy-to-practice” gap is widely documented in low and middle income contexts, where centrally produced guidelines lack the implementation manuals, localized targets, and accountable review processes necessary for impact (Mbongo, 2021; Ministry of Education Zambia, 2022). Teachers and headteachers voiced frustration that ministry circulars rarely lead to concrete support, and that compliance checks are infrequent. The absence of robust data collection and disaggregated monitoring in Chongwe further limits the district’s ability to identify who is being left behind and to tailor interventions accordingly (Banks, 2021; Kisumo, 2022).

Negative attitudes, stereotypes, and social stigma continue to undermine otherwise well intentioned strategies. Respondents recounted instances where learners with disabilities or language differences were laughed at or excluded from group work, and where some teachers prioritised “average” students because they perceived inclusive practices as slowing curriculum delivery. Changing entrenched attitudes is recognized in the literature as more difficult than changing formal policy and requires long term, reflection based interventions that combine teacher learning, student facilitation, parental engagement, and public campaigns to shift norms (Abawi & Eizadirad, 2020; Omodan & Ige, 2021). The current Chongwe repertoire—occasional sensitisation workshops and cultural events—has begun to address stigma but lacks the intensity and continuity needed to produce wide behavioural change.

Community involvement appears as a positive but under leveraged asset. Where schools successfully engage parents, churches, and NGOs, respondents reported improved mentorship, supplementary services, and moral support for inclusion initiatives. This mirrors Epstein’s argument that family–school–community partnerships are essential for sustaining school reforms (Epstein, 2018). Yet in Chongwe parent participation is inconsistent and community resources are not systematically mobilised, limiting the potential for co created solutions such as locally organised sign language training, community funded ramps, or parent led reading support programmes. Scaling community partnerships requires intentional outreach strategies, transparent resource sharing mechanisms, and recognition of local knowledge as a legitimate contribution to pedagogical design (Assefa & Zenebe, 2023; Mandevu, 2020).



Finally, monitoring, evaluation, and sustainability mechanisms are weak, constraining the district's capacity to learn from practice and to scale effective interventions. Respondents described a common pattern: programs are launched, produce immediate enthusiasm, and then wane because no instruments exist to measure impact, no timelines are attached to outcomes, and no funding lines are dedicated for continuation. The literature emphasises that data driven evaluation—disaggregated, mixed methods, and tied to iterative improvement cycles—is central to transforming pilot successes into systemwide practice (OECD, 2020; Banks, 2021). Chongwe's nascent moves toward digitising student records and piloting analytics are promising but require investments in staff data literacies, privacy safeguards, and institutional mandates for periodic review to become effective drivers of inclusion (Phiri, 2022; Kisumo, 2022).

Taken together, the findings for Objective Two suggest that Chongwe District has the rudimentary elements of a diversity management system—teacher goodwill, episodic inclusive practices, policy frameworks, and community interest—but that these elements are not yet integrated into a coherent, resourced, and accountable system. International and regional research points to several interlocking enablers that would raise effectiveness: aligned and funded leadership commitments, continuous and practice based professional learning for teachers, targeted resource investments (including low cost accessibility measures), institutionalised community partnerships, and robust monitoring frameworks that disaggregate outcomes and prioritise intersectional vulnerabilities (Fullan, 2007; CAST, 2020; Banks, 2021). For Chongwe, operationalising these enablers implies shifting from isolated interventions to system level coherence—budget line items for inclusion, protection of teacher collaborative time, formal mentoring and appraisal mechanisms linked to inclusive competencies, and district level monitoring that holds schools accountable for measurable improvements in participation and learning across diverse student groups.

5.3 Contextually relevant and evidence-based strategies for improving diversity management in secondary schools.

The analysis of Objective Three foregrounds a coherent set of contextually relevant, evidence based strategies to improve diversity management in Chongwe District secondary schools, beginning with curriculum reform that purposefully integrates local knowledges, languages, and histories into mainstream subject content. Transforming the curriculum from a peripheral multicultural add on into a core pedagogical resource requires revising syllabus guides, producing locally translated or bilingual materials, and embedding assessment items that value community based knowledge and linguistic diversity; such reforms both validate learners' identities and close comprehension gaps that arise when instruction is English only (Banks, 2015; Ladson Billings, 2020). Practically, this entails district level curriculum working groups co designing modules with experienced teachers, local elders and language specialists, piloting these modules in a subset of schools, and using iterative feedback to refine content for scalability, a process consistent with participatory curriculum development recommended in the literature (Assefa & Mujtaba, 2024; Chansa & Chanda, 2024).

Closely linked to curriculum reform is the systematic professional development of teachers around bilingual pedagogy, culturally responsive instruction, and differentiated teaching strategies that operationalise Universal Design for Learning



(UDL) at low cost. Evidence shows that one off workshops have limited effect unless embedded within ongoing coaching, peer observation, and professional learning communities that enable teachers to translate new approaches into daily practice (Hargreaves & Fullan, 2012; Abawi & Eizadirad, 2020). For Chongwe this implies establishing school based professional learning communities with a protected timetable, appointing trained instructional coaches or ‘diversity champions’ who provide in class modelling and feedback, and linking participation in these communities to performance appraisals and recognition, thereby converting discrete training events into sustained capacity building consistent with Fullan’s model of coherent, morally anchored change (Fullan, 2007; Spillane, 2005).

Addressing infrastructural and resource constraints is indispensable for any pedagogical or training gains to have effect; low cost, high impact investments should be prioritised while pursuing longer term capital improvements. Immediate measures include provision of basic assistive devices, construction of simple ramps and accessible latrines, production and distribution of translated glossaries and visual aids, and the systematic expansion of school feeding schemes and targeted bursaries for low SES learners to stabilize attendance and concentration (CAST, 2020; World Bank, 2021). Where district budgets are limited, transparent co funding arrangements between local government, parent associations and vetted NGOs—underpinned by clear accountability mechanisms—can mobilize resources sustainably and avoid the stop start rhythm of donor dependent provision (Mandevu, 2020; Phiri, 2022).

To ensure policy is more than rhetoric, the district must strengthen implementation architecture through measurable targets, routine monitoring, and accountability mechanisms that disaggregate data by language, gender, disability and socioeconomic status. Data systems should capture attendance, disciplinary referrals, formative assessment outcomes and participation in extracurricular programmes disaggregated at the individual and intersectional levels, enabling the district to identify who is being left behind and to evaluate intervention impact (Banks, 2021; OECD, 2020). Operationally, this requires simple, manageable dashboards at district and school levels, capacity building in basic data literacy for headteachers and school clerks, and scheduled review cycles where findings inform resource allocation and professional development priorities; without these feedback loops, pilots cannot be reliably scaled or refined (Kisumo, 2022; Phiri, 2022).

Shifting attitudes and reducing stigma demands deliberate, sustained socialisation efforts that combine classroom pedagogies with community outreach and student leadership. School programmes that integrate restorative practices, facilitated intergroup dialogues, and curriculum embedded reflection can alter teacher expectations and peer norms over time (Omodan & Ige, 2021; Aboud & Levy, 2018). Complementary community engagement strategies—regular, structured parent forums, civic education sessions with traditional leaders, and partnerships with faith organisations—amplify school messages and create social pressure for inclusion; Epstein’s framework for family–school–community partnerships demonstrates how such synergies increase the legitimacy and sustainability of reforms (Epstein, 2018; Assefa & Zenebe, 2023).



Institutionalising inclusive leadership and distributed responsibility is essential to embed these strategies into everyday practice rather than rely solely on individual champions. This involves revising school improvement plans to include explicit inclusion targets, creating formal roles (for example, an Inclusion Coordinator with a modest time release) and aligning appraisal and promotion criteria with demonstrated inclusive practice. Evidence from institutional change literature shows that diversified leadership, when coupled with coherent incentives and professional capital development, sustains reform momentum and diffuses good practice across networks of schools (Fullan, 2007; Ncube & Zuma, 2023). At the district level, fostering peer learning across schools through inter school visits and joint problem solving workshops accelerates horizontal scaling and contextual adaptation.

Finally, financial and programmatic sustainability must be planned from inception: pilot projects should include realistic budgets for recurrent costs, clear exit strategies for external funders, and institutional commitments from the Ministry or district to absorb successful pilots into baseline funding. Embedding inclusion indicators into District Education Plans and budget lines—tied to transparent reporting—reduces the risk that gains evaporate when project cycles end (Ministry of Education Zambia, 2022; Mutale, 2024). In parallel, engaging local universities or teacher training colleges as long term partners creates a pipeline for pre service curriculum reform and sustained research practice collaboration, enabling longitudinal evaluation and the generation of local evidence to guide continuous improvement (Chanda, 2023; Mwiinga & Mwanza, 2025).

5.4 Implications of the Study

The study's findings have clear practical implications for school leaders and classroom teachers in Chongwe District: leadership must move from rhetorical commitment to operational action by prioritising concrete investments in teacher professional learning, low cost accessibility, bilingual materials, and routine monitoring. When head teachers allocate time and modest resources to sustained professional learning communities, instructional coaching, and the appointment of inclusion coordinators, classroom practices that currently exist only as individual teacher innovations can be normalized across staff, increasing the consistency and reach of culturally responsive and bilingual pedagogy (Fullan, 2007; Hargreaves & Fullan, 2012). Without such operational changes, piecemeal festivals and occasional translations will continue to benefit only a subset of students rather than shifting everyday pedagogy for the district's diverse learners.

At the policy level, the study underscores the need for district and national education authorities to translate inclusion policy into line item budgets, measurable targets, and enforcement mechanisms; policy statements alone are insufficient. Embedding inclusion indicators into School Improvement Plans and District Education Plans and requiring disaggregated reporting on attendance, assessment outcomes, and participation by language, gender, disability, and socioeconomic status will allow authorities to identify gaps, target interventions, and hold schools accountable for measurable progress (Banks, 2021; OECD, 2020). Furthermore, ministry guidance should specify minimal infrastructural and resource standards for accessibility and bilingual support so that compliance is not left to chance or external donors.



The research has important implications for teacher education and continuous professional development: pre service curricula must integrate bilingual teaching methods, Universal Design for Learning principles, and culturally responsive pedagogies so that new teachers enter the classroom prepared to teach heterogeneous groups rather than learning inclusive practices on the job. In service training should shift from one off workshops to sustained coaching cycles, peer observation, and classroom based mentoring tied to appraisal systems; evidence shows that such sustained, practice oriented professional learning produces deeper instructional change than occasional seminars (Aboud & Levy, 2013; Hargreaves & Fullan, 2012). Investing in local “diversity champions” and linking professional learning to promotional incentives will improve teacher uptake and institutionalise inclusive competencies.

The study carries equity and social justice implications: left unaddressed, the intersection of linguistic, socioeconomic, and ability based barriers will reproduce existing inequalities and limit social mobility for disadvantaged learners. School feeding, bursaries, and targeted learning supports are not optional add ons but equity measures that stabilise attendance and cognitive readiness, thereby reducing the immediate resource driven achievement gaps identified in this research (World Bank, 2021). Equally, recognising linguistic diversity as an asset rather than a deficit reframes policy choices toward mother tongue and bilingual strategies that have demonstrated benefits for comprehension and longer term attainment (UNESCO, 2019).

Methodologically, the study demonstrates the value of mixed methods and intersectional data disaggregation for capturing the complex realities of school diversity. Routine collection and use of disaggregated quantitative indicators, complemented by qualitative feedback from teachers, students, and communities, enable adaptive management and more precise targeting of interventions; districts that lack such data will struggle to evaluate impact or scale promising pilots (Banks, 2021; Kisumo, 2022). For researchers, the findings point to the need for longitudinal designs that can track the sustained effects of curriculum, training, and resource interventions on attainment and social cohesion over time.

Finally, the study’s community and partnership implications are substantial: meaningful and sustainable inclusion requires co production with parents, traditional leaders, NGOs, and teacher training institutions. Community engagement can mobilise local resources, legitimise mother tongue and culturally grounded curricula, and sustain initiatives beyond short donor cycles; formal mechanisms for parent participation and transparent co funding agreements will reduce dependency on intermittent external support and embed inclusion within the social fabric of the district (Epstein, 2018; Mandevu, 2020). In sum, the study points to an integrated path forward in which leadership, policy, teacher capacity, resourcing, data, and community partnership are aligned to convert the district’s diversity from a management challenge into an educational asset.

5.5. Conclusion

The study set out to identify the types and dimensions of diversity present in selected secondary schools in Chongwe District, evaluate the effectiveness of institutional strategies for managing that diversity, and propose contextually relevant, evidence



based improvements. Empirical evidence demonstrates that Chongwe schools are richly diverse across ethnicity, language, socioeconomic status, religion, gender, ability, and institutional form, and that these dimensions intersect to produce complex and often cumulative barriers to learning and participation. While pockets of culturally responsive pedagogy, student engagement activities, and community partnerships exist, they are largely episodic, teacher dependent, and insufficiently backed by leadership, resources, or monitoring systems. Key structural constraints—insufficient teacher preparation in bilingual and inclusive pedagogies, inadequate physical and learning resources, overcrowded classrooms, weak policy enforcement, and limited disaggregated data—consistently undermined the scale and durability of inclusion efforts. These findings indicate that diversity in Chongwe is currently more a descriptive condition than a pedagogical resource: without coherent leadership, sustained capacity building, targeted resourcing, and routine evaluation, diversity will continue to reproduce educational inequities rather than broaden educational opportunity (Fullan, 2007; Banks, 2015; UNESCO, 2019). The study therefore concludes that converting demographic plurality into measurable gains in engagement and attainment requires system level alignment: committed and resourced school leadership, teacher professional learning embedded in practice, inclusive infrastructural investments, community co production, and data systems that capture intersectional disadvantage.

5.6 Recommendations

- District and school leaders should institutionalize inclusion by embedding explicit diversity targets, budget lines, and accountability mechanisms into School Improvement Plans and District Education Plans so that rhetorical commitments translate into operational priorities and measurable outcomes.
- Teacher education institutions and in service professional development providers must redesign curricula and CPD models to priorities bilingual pedagogy, Universal Design for Learning, and culturally responsive instructional strategies.
- Pre service programmes should incorporate practicum placements focused on heterogeneous classrooms and inclusive assessment; in service learning should move from episodic workshops to sustain coaching, peer observation, and professional teach communities that include time release and appraisal incentives for participation.
- Schools and districts should priorities a staged package of low cost, high impact resource investments to address immediate access barriers while planning longer term capital upgrades.
- Immediate measures include construction of ramps and accessible latrines, provision of basic assistive devices, distribution of bilingual glossaries and visual learning aids, and expansion of school feeding and targeted bursary schemes for low SES learners; these should be financed through transparent co funding arrangements that combine district allocations, parent teacher association contributions, and vetted NGO partnerships with clear accountability conditions.
- Leadership development must focus on distributed and instructional leadership models that create formal roles and time allocations for inclusion coordination. Schools should appoint Inclusion Coordinators or Diversity



Champions with protected time to lead professional learning, coordinate community engagement, and oversee monitoring.

- Districts should facilitate inter school learning networks and mentorship arrangements to accelerate horizontal scaling of promising practices and to reduce dependence on single school champions.
- Community engagement strategies must be formalised to mobilise local knowledge, material support, and legitimacy for inclusion reforms.
- Schools should convene regular, structured parent and community forums co designed with traditional leaders, faith groups, and local NGOs to co create culturally grounded curricular modules, arrange community based sign language or literacy volunteers, and establish local funding pools for accessibility modifications.
- Monitoring, evaluation, and research partnerships should be strengthened to produce iterative, evidence informed decision making.
- Districts should develop simple dashboards that disaggregate key indicators and establish review cycles where data prompts targeted supports and reallocations.
- Local universities and teacher training colleges should be engaged in longitudinal evaluations and action research partnerships that test bilingual modules, UDL adaptations, and teacher coaching models, generating locally relevant evidence for scale up and policy refinement.

Implementation of these recommendations should be phased and piloted with clear success criteria and sustainability plans: pilot sites must include realistic budgets for recurrent costs, specified institutional commitments to absorb successful interventions, and explicit timelines for evaluation and scale up. Embedding inclusion indicators into routine planning and financing will reduce the risk that successful practices remain time bound projects and will align incentives across stakeholders to sustain progress.

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