

Chapter 56

Constitutional Knowledge, Rights–Based Development, and Citizenship in Zimbabwe: Past, Present, and Future

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ABSTRACT

This chapter seeks to assess the trends in rights-based development (RBD) and citizenship in Zimbabwe based on constitutional knowledge to proffer options on how the public can become constitutionally knowledgeable towards developing the nation. The chapter is informed by constitutional knowledge gathered through qualitative data from document analysis and literature on this discourse. The chapter first discusses the provisions of RBD and citizenship in Zimbabwe in light of the constitution. It assesses the trends in RBD and citizenship in Zimbabwe past, present, and the future to analyze the trends in the changes in the development of the nation, based on constitutional knowledge. Lastly, it proffers policy options on ways to nurture constitutionally knowledgeable citizenry.

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INTRODUCTION

The current socio-economic and political landscape in Zimbabwe has brought a different meaning to the role of the constitution to the citizens. As such, there seems to be changes in the level of participation and knowledge of the constitution from the past, and the present. The level of knowledge tends to increase with time. The aim of this chapter is to assess the trends in rights-based development (RBD) and citizenship in Zimbabwe based on constitutional knowledge to proffer options on how the public can become constitutionally knowledgeable towards developing the nation. For the politicians, the constitution is a political document meant to sustain those in power and not fully representing the public. Unlike in the past, the public is now aware of some of the provisions stated in the constitution, especially on issues of gender which has been mainstreamed by most organizations in the country. Albeit this increasing awareness and knowledge of the constitution, there remains some ambiguity among the citizenry with regards knowledge on rights based development. This is contrary to the fact that the state should make some efforts to publicize the constitution since it seems little is being done in terms of full participation and interpretation of the constitution. It remains known to the policy-makers (the state or the government) and those who are studying along those lines yet the rest of the public remains ignorant. The constitution, as the ‘mother law’ in the land, has to adhere to the closures and the preamble of the act. Constitutional knowledge and rights based development is based on participation. Rights based development (RBD) is a process of development primarily aimed at human development and is informed by principles of rights, equality, social justice, participation and human dignity . Of late, the public has been given room to participate during the drafting of these policies, but it appears as if the powers are limited since some issues are not considered in policy-making.

The chapter is structured as follows: introduction to the study, the research methodology and theoretical framework which outlines the various schools of thought informing the study. The theoretical framework is followed by a review of literature on the global and regional experiences in constitutionalism. This part is preceded by a section which presents the results on constitutional development and rights based development in Zimbabwe. The results are followed by a discussion of the results and comparison with literature. The last section provides a conclusion of the study with some policy recommendations.

METHODOLOGY

The research follows a qualitative research approach. This approach provides a better understanding of the constitution-making and trends in rights based development. This study employs a case study of Zimbabwe. Secondary data sources such as textbooks, government reports, journals were the main sources of data. The data was analyzed based on themes emerging from the data- thematic analysis.

THEORETICAL PERSPECTIVES

Constitutional theory and elite theory of constitutional making process are discussed in this section. Constitutionalism by definition is the limitation of political power to ensure the enjoyment of rights and liberties guided by the rule of law (Lang and Wiener, 2017). The basic proposition of this theory is that groups and individuals within networks and institutions are driven and act primarily on the basis of

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