



**Voice or Anomie? A brief look at
active citizenship among the youth in
Zimbabwe**

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Contents

Introduction.....	3
Malleability of the concept “youth”	3
<i>Frameworks relating to youth participation and Active Citizenship among youth</i>	5
<i>Challenges to Active citizenship among the youth</i>	6
Anomie and Voice	8
Youth in Zimbabwe	10
Conclusion	12
References.....	13

Introduction¹

Africa is now the world's youngest continent. Creating jobs and opportunities for young people has become one of the concerns at the top of the list of the development agenda in basically every country on the continent (Filmer et al. 2014). The African Youth Charter (African Union Commission 2006:1) asserts that "*Africa's greatest resource is its youthful population and through their active and full participation, Africans can surmount the difficulties that lie ahead*".

Recognition of the importance of the youth is growing as the youth are seen as "*the future of our societies*", and fostering their participation in governance is viewed as key for the functionality of democracies (Pereznieto & Harding, 2013). This can also help in the attainment of internationally agreed development targets (UNDP and DESA, 2016). Despite such positive sentiments, the youth are disproportionately affected by the myriad of governance challenges facing the continent of Africa, stemming from high unemployment, inadequate social safety nets, political violence and civil unrest. According to Chikwanha and Masunungure (2007), age, along with gender, is a central cultural variable in defining social and political relationships. It acts as a pivotal basis for the hierarchical organisation of families and communities. According to Action Aid (2013), the Zimbabwean youth are relatively optimistic in their hope of participating in democratic governance spaces, but risk disappointment by the political field. This does not afford the youth room to participate and be elected as representatives in parliament and local councils.

Efforts aimed at consulting the youth have largely failed to yield the outcomes desired by the youth in addressing youth priorities². Furthermore, evidence from literature shows that adverse inclusion of the youth in politics, political violence, and the marginalisation of the youth narrative is unhealthy for social cohesion. This may lead to anomie, which, according to Powell (1996), is a product of increased individual dislocation from societal institutions. Andersson (2012) posits that engagement of the citizenry in political conversation is a "prerequisite" for social cohesion. This suggests that a connection between the absence of citizen engagement and anomie can be identified. This can leave the youth frustrated and in search of alternative platforms for expression and participation. Under such conditions, youth may become concentrated in anomic participation, where their efforts at increasing accountability from governments (Pereznieto & Harding, 2013), or informing policy (Walker & Pereznieto, 2015), are not valued by the policy practitioners especially governments.

This paper argues that the continued restriction of voice and active citizenship among youth is a major driver of anomie and anomie-driven forms of youth participation. The paper posits that demonstrations, protests and exit (including apathy) are manifestations of anomie rather than voice.

Malleability of the concept "youth"

Youth is a very malleable and fluid concept in theory and practice because it is subject to

¹ Report produced by Daniel Mususa, Researcher (RAU)

² "Youth Participation and Representation in Governance and Democratic Processes in Africa"

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multiple definitions across different international bodies, countries, regional political blocs and cultures. The differences may also stem from the perspectives of those defining it and political expediency. The UN “for statistical consistency across regions” defines 'youth', as those persons between the ages of 15 and 24 years³. Ghana’s National Youth Policy defines anyone between 15 and 35 years as youth (Pereznieto & Harding, 2013). UN Habitat (Youth Fund) in the Agenda 21 defines the youth as individuals in the 15-32 age group⁴, whilst the African Youth Charter (2006) defines young people as individuals between the ages of 15 and 35⁵. In Zimbabwe, the National Youth Policy shows the malleability of the category of youth:

The World Health Organization defines adolescents as people age 10 to 19 and young people as age 10-24. In Zimbabwe, the Ministry of Health, the Zimbabwe National Family Planning Council (ZNFPC) and the Central Statistical Office (CSO) consider those in the age group 10-24 as youth. Similarly, the National Population Policy used the age group 10-24 to define the youth population. However, in the national and district consultations on youth policy formulation, there has not been any consensus on this definition. It is hereby suggested that in the Zimbabwe National Youth Policy, the definition of youth will refer to 10-30 year olds.(2000:7)⁶

Filmer and Fox (2014) contend that we actually have misrepresentation of “who is a youth” and hence the challenges with successfully working with the youth. The African Union Report (UNECA, 2011) shares this view, and also concurs with Mbira’s review of the Zimbabwe National Youth Policy (Mbira, 2016). He points out that the disparities in definitions of youth make it difficult for effective work targeting the youth. This is the bedrock of the challenges hindering active citizenship among the youth.

In one setting, “youth” ends at 25 years, in another it ends at 35, and in yet another setting a person can be 50 years and still be considered “youth”. It is incontrovertible that with such a wide age span, the concerns of the youth become difficult, if not impossible to map and address. Consequently, youth “participation” remains a buzzword that is thrown about without any clear precision, making it difficult for concerted efforts that can produce lasting outcomes in work aimed at promoting active youth participation. Should youth participation refer to young people being included in decision-making processes (Fleming, 2013), and who should set out the guidelines that define youth participation and, ultimately, active citizenship among the youth?

Notwithstanding the political importance of the youth as a ready, willing and politically vulnerable population group, there are important questions that remain unanswered on a practical level regarding the parameters of assessing active citizenship among the youth:

- How much of the “public”, “social” and “individual” factors shaping youth participation are considered in the parameters and

³ Secretary-General’s Report to the General Assembly, A/36/215, 1981, and <http://www.unesco.org/new/en/social-and-human-sciences/themes/youth/youth-definition/>

⁴ <http://www.unhabitat.org/pmss/listItemDetails.aspx?publicationID=3393>

⁵ <http://www.africa-union.org/root/ua/conferences/mai/hrst/charter%20english.pdf>

⁶ http://www.youthpolicy.org/national/Zimbabwe_2000_National_Youth_Policy.pdf

international/regional/country-level frameworks on youth participation⁷?

- Who defines the terms of youth participation, and what is the objective of youth participation?
- To what end should the youth participate?⁸
- Should participation refer to mere consultation or visits to the youth during election times?
- Should it simply refer to the youth merely voting, being voted for, or being represented?
- When the youth do participate, should that participation be assessed on the basis of how close the agenda was to the youth agenda? Is there a youth agenda?

Ultimately, these questions can be answered with some clarity if the central question of who is “youth” is answered concretely.

Frameworks relating to youth participation and Active Citizenship among youth

There are various international instruments and key guiding frameworks that relate to active citizenship among the youth:

- *2037 Declaration on the Promotion Among Youth of the Ideals of Peace, Mutual Respect and Understanding between Peoples* (UN.1965)⁹;
- *the World Programme of Action for Youth*¹⁰;
- *the UN Resolution A/RES/64/134 of 2009*.¹¹

The last of these proclaimed the year 2010-2011 as the International Year of Youth under the theme of “Dialogue and mutual understanding”. In Africa, the *2000 Dakar Framework for Action on Education for All* (Handler, 2015), and the *African Union’s Plan of Action for the Second Decade of Education for Africa (2006-2015)*,¹² are some of the guiding frameworks on youth participation issues. The African Union also has the *African Youth Charter* of 2006¹³, which focuses on education, employment, and youth quotas in regional, sub-regional and national institutions. The African Union also declared an African Youth Decade (2009-2019)¹⁴

⁷ Broodie et al (2009) [Broodie, E. Cowling, E. Nissen, N. et al Understanding participation: a literature review. *Pathways through participation*] categorise three main classifications of participation: (1) Public-this has to do with decision-making structures and processes and these mainly relate to political activities, (2) Social-this has to do with both the informal and formal structures that are created and operate outside of political or organisational structures, and (3) Individual-this has to do with individual choices, decisions and interactions with the world. These are rooted in subjective experiences (*personal*) of the objective world (*laws, prejudices etc*) i.e. societal structures, norms and value systems with their accompanying rewards, punishments and reinforcement processes.

⁸ Restless Development 2016 “Children, young people and participation Youth Policy Working Paper July 2016” Youth Policy Working Paper in *From Rhetoric to Action: Towards an enabling environment for child and youth development in the Sustainable Development Goals* Available at www.fromrhetorictoaction.org.

⁹ UN A/RES/20/2037 www.un-documents.net/a20r2037.htm

¹⁰ “World Programme of Action for Youth” <https://www.un.org/development/desa/youth/world-programme-of-action-for-youth.html>

¹¹ The resolution proclaimed the year 2010 as the International Year of Youth: Dialogue and Mutual Understanding Available at : http://www.un.org/en/ga/search/view_doc.asp?symbol=A/RES/64/134

¹² African Union 2006 “Second Decade of Education for Africa (2006-2015)” http://www.adea-comed.org/IMG/pdf/SECOND_DECADE_OF_EDUCATION_FOR.pdf

¹³ https://au.int/sites/default/files/treaties/7789-file-african_youth_charter.pdf

¹⁴ www.un.org/en/africa/osaa/pdf/au/african_youth_decade_2009-2018.pdf

for African governments to give prominence to youth issues.

Zimbabwe has the *Zimbabwe Youth Council Act* (Chapter 25: Amended 1997), the *National Economic Empowerment Strategy*, the *Zimbabwe Youth Economic Empowerment Strategy for Investment* (ZIMYES) and the Constitution of Zimbabwe (Sections 14 and 20), with Section 20 “making specific provision for youth education and training, representation and participation, employment and economic empowerment.” (Murinda, 2017). The National Youth Policy seeks to “ensure that all young women and men are given meaningful opportunities to reach their full potential, both as individuals and as active participants in society and stresses the importance of the active involvement of young people in national development” (Mbira, 2016)¹⁵.

Challenges to Active citizenship among the youth

Efforts to solicit and utilize youth views have often been ad-hoc, resulting in young people becoming frustrated, often to the point of withdrawing their participation and becoming apathetic. Young men and women have to contend with multiple barriers to their active citizenship because of inadequate human capital investment and high unemployment rates among youth (UNDESA, 2015). Furthermore, the engagement and participation of civil society more generally, and that of young people, is often stifled by the state (Walker & Pereznieto, 2014). The youth vote in fewer numbers, and stand as candidates less often, while remaining less represented in electoral managerial functions than adults (IDEA, 2015). Consequently, vast numbers of the youth in Africa feel alienated, abused, taken advantage of by political actors and governments alike. Repeated failure of youth attempts to remedy the marginalization fuels frustrations and a sense of helplessness with the status-quo.

Arguably, the biggest obstacle to youth participation is the perception that the youth are not engaged, “not too bothered with participating in governance and participation issues” (Manning, 2006). This results in a negative orientation towards working with the youth and this negativity pervades the frameworks and initiatives around youth issues. The frameworks that relate to youth issues globally, regionally and locally, are hamstrung by their normative approach, an air of aloofness and being out of touch with the issues that the youth actually face in their day-to-day attempts to participate. This normative approach stems from an unwillingness to challenge the attendant political expediency in country-level definitions of youth. The emphasis on ‘local and cultural differences’ within each country is actually an evasion of confrontation with member countries over the politically sensitive definition of “youth” by international bodies.

In the end, the situation on the ground regarding domestication of international guiding frameworks is one of adults’ political needs against the needs of the youth. In countries where the youth are viewed as radicalized threats to the government (Sukarrieh & Tannock, 2015), active citizenship among the youth is only possible when the youth participation and agenda sit well with the agenda of the “organizing adults” (Tisdall, 2008). For the Zimbabwean youth, active citizenship is further hamstrung by the problems relating to the fact that the “youth agenda” is not clearly defined so that all the youth identify with and aspire for (Mususa, 2017).

¹⁵ Mbira, T. “Review of the National Youth Policy”. Zimbabwe Youth Council, 21 September 2016
<http://zimyouthcouncil.org/?p=191>

For the local frameworks, such as Zimbabwe's National Youth Policy, challenges abound such as concerns over the population validity of the document. There are problems with the comprehensiveness and representativeness of the sample of the "youth" and this leaves massive questions over whose views are actually contained in the policy.¹⁶ Inevitably, this has a knock-on effect about the issues of ownership of the policy, and, at an operational level, questions over who, other than the government is willing to use the document as a guiding framework. Recursively, the State, on the one hand, and non-state actors on the other, pull in different directions, and, in the end, it is the youth that suffer. Attempts to foster active citizenship among the youth are weakened by these conceptual and "theoretical" issues that very seamlessly cascade to the practical levels. Mclean and Hilker (2009) emphasise that national youth policies are only effective to the extent that they are properly resourced, backed by political will and a contextual relevance drawn from meaningful use of youth perspectives. Mbira (2016) highlights the poor financial commitment for the National Youth Policy by the Zimbabwean government. The low-scale work in pursuit of stimulating active citizenship among youth is reflected in the muted activity among the youth in Zimbabwe. Due to "inequalities in power, economic or political[factors], opportunities are unequally distributed among classes in a social structure" Blau & Blau. 1982).

Informed by an expansive stakeholder consultation process, the Zimbabwe National Youth Policy document clearly identifies, among others, the following challenges faced by the youth in Zimbabwe¹⁷:

- High rate of youth unemployment;
- Lack of definition of youth problems and fragmented response to youth concerns;
- Youth exploitation including sexual abuse, child labour, domestic abuse;
- Lack of access to resources overshadowing the focus on youth concerns;
- Inadequate implementation of global plans of action for youth; and
- Lack of a co-ordinated strategic plan to tackle youth issues.

Muzwakhe (2004) summarises the challenges that confront the youth in Africa as a lack of coordination of youth policies, slow ratification of the international instruments that deal with youth issues, and the lack of political will among the leaders to involve the youth in policy formulation processes. Abdullahi (2017)¹⁸ asserts that the factors holding back active citizenship among the African youth include:

- Cultural practices and norms that discriminate against young people hence constricting their participation and representation in democratic and governance processes.
- Rules and inclusion criteria that marginalize and systematically exclude the youth from governance and decision making processes.
- Limited access to quality education and decent job opportunities resulting in

¹⁶ See for example <http://www.youthforumzim.org/index.php/component/content/article/44-news/177-zimbabwe-youth-council-which-youths> and

<https://bulawayoyouthcouncil.wordpress.com/2011/04/21/zimbabwe-youth-council-zyc-a-disappointment-to-zimbabwe%E2%80%99s-democratic-aspirations-by-eric-donald/>

¹⁷ http://www.youthpolicy.org/national/Zimbabwe_2000_National_Youth_Policy.pdf

¹⁸ *Youth Participation and Representation in Governance and Democratic Processes in Africa*"

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https://au.int/web/sites/default/files/newsevents/mediaadvisories/31946-ma-cpa-summit_press_conference_statement_-_final_23_jan_2017.pdf

- high youth unemployment, and
- Gaps between norm setting and actual implementation of international, continental, regional and national laws and normative guiding frameworks.

A UNECA (2011) report¹⁹ indicates that it is doubly difficult for young people living with disabilities to participate in education, development and governance processes.. The same report shows that in several African countries the level of unemployment among people with disabilities is two or three times higher than the able-bodied. The disabled youth and displaced young people are particularly vulnerable sub-groups within the youth population. Efforts to stimulate their active citizenship should account for these vulnerabilities through rigorous analyses of the vulnerability contexts and adoption of targeted measures rather than one-size-fits-all approaches. Given the weakening of social safety nets in Zimbabwe, it is imperative that consciously directed efforts are made to ensure that no youth are left behind.

According to UNECA, there is scanty evidence of the work being done by national youth councils and youth parliaments to empower youth²⁰. Available evidence points to one-off events that are not followed up, or sustained in the long term (UNECA. 2011)²¹. Tracey and Kahuthia (2017) also stress that culture, lack of governments' political will to overcome postcolonial and dictatorial attitudes, which did not value youth participation, add to the woes that cripple active citizenship among the youth.

In Zimbabwe, youth representation in powerful political posts is minimal. Youth participation is concentrated in political violence and low end electioneering during campaigns (Action Aid, 2013; Oosterom et al, 2016). It is this marginalization which has been linked in literature, to youth violence and thus, can be looked at in the debate about "voice" or "anomie".

Anomie and Voice

Anomie is a term introduced originally by Emile Durkheim and extended by Robert Merton who looked at suicide and crime/deviance respectively. Durkheim posited that anomie is a state when people decide to act on the sole basis of their own evaluations of morality, irrespective of society's morals, because of a breakdown in society's standards and values or a lack of purpose or ideals (Durkheim.1893). Merton developed and expanded on the same concept of anomie in his "Social Strain Theory" (Merton. 1938). He proposed that society exerts pressure on people to achieve socially accepted goals (for example the typical success '*get educated, graduate, get a job, marry and have children*'), and yet the same society may not give people access to the accepted means for achieving those goals. In turn, failure to access those means, for example as in failure to participate, leads to strain or anomie which may in turn result in deviance or crime (Hillbert, 1986).

According to Emile Durkheim, anomie is the derangement and alienation of the individual from his society. This derangement occurs when an individual experiences regulation that constrains their personal agency and their individual efforts to bring about social change are thwarted by the social structures and regulations. Anomie thus is a condition whereby the social bond between society and the individual is broken down by the disjunction between the

¹⁹ United Nations Economic Commission for Africa 2011 [Africa Youth Report 2011 Addressing the youth education and employment nexus in the new global economy](#) UNECA: Addis Ababa, Ethiopia

²⁰ United Nations Economic Commission for Africa 2011 "Regional Overview: Youth in Africa" Fact Sheet

²¹ United Nations Economic Commission for Africa and the United Nations Programme on Youth 2011

goals ascribed to the person and the means available for achieving those goals (Bernburg, 2002). Some conditions for anomie include the collapse of citizens' trust in political institutions, increase in political cynicism and the belief that corruption is rife in high places (Gamson, 1968). Under such conditions the social and moral norms that bind society and frame individuals' sense of collective belonging and membership to society break down and are replaced by individually orientated actions which depart from socially defined "right" behavior (Acededo. 2005). Essentially, people begin to view society as responsible for their alienation, powerlessness and isolation from social institutions. This results in the citizenry losing faith in the possibility of attaining their goals under the regulations and structure of society their society. This is anomie and may be the factor most of the Zimbabwean youth's response to the restrictive and adverse political environment in Zimbabwe

'Voice' here is taken from Albert Hirschman's work "*Exit, Voice and the State*" (Hirschman. 1978). Hirschman argues that people attempt to express their views, to protest or seek redress, when a service provider such as the State fails to provide the services they require. From this conception, citizens have "voice" when the polity has room for them to speak out and their concerns are incorporated by the policy-making processes. When they do not have voice, other options are resorted to, such as "exit", withdrawing participation or migrating to another town or country, depending on the feasibility of each option. Lack of voice may also be a manifestation of an anomic situation.

When citizens express their views, and are heard and responded to accordingly by the State, they have voice (Hirschman. 1978). Expression of concerns (the demand side) can also be met with an unresponsive government (supply side) which arrests or suppresses alternative narratives.

What is the option that remains available for a citizenry facing such a response? According to Hirschman, the citizenry (or customer in Hirschman's terms) has the option of protesting (*voice*), staying in that state of affairs (what Hirschman terms *loyalty*) or choosing an alternative service provider (*exit*). Exiting is both a form of exerting pressure on the service provider, but also signifies giving up and replacing the goals and the means with new one. Thus, looking at the large number of Zimbabweans migrating to other countries, "exit" can be taken to symbolize anomie: the citizens have given up hope of the adverse conditions turning round for the better. Citizen apathy in voting and in attending community/governance meetings called for by councils and political actors also symbolize withdrawal and "exit" driven by anomie.

Merton and Durkheim assert that failure to access the socially defined means to desired outcomes leads to a weakening of "the bonds of morality". These are the boundaries that define 'right' and 'wrong' behavior, and their weakening leads to deviation from those norms, and in extreme cases, this leads to crime. When these boundaries are blurred like this, individuals are left without 'objective parameters guiding individual behaviour'. This then leads to anomie where anyone does anything as they deem fit and necessary in dealing with societal pressure.

Merton (1968) declares that, when individuals lose hope in the ability of societal institutionally prescribed means (voice and participation), they sever themselves from such societal constraints to rid themselves of those aspects that hinder their voice. When individuals come to the conclusion that they can no longer work with the prescribed means they become anxious, and this uncertainty and normlessness is the anomic condition. Unemployment has been highlighted as a

major driver for young people joining rebel movements (Tracey & Kahuthia, 2017), and is one of the factors that advocates of the problems caused by “youth bulges” identify (Urdal, 2006).

The mismatch between socially defined means for voice and participation and the actual reality on the ground (electoral violence, strong men, weak institutions, lack of accountability, etc.) creates disaffection and leads individuals to re-orient own actions towards own evaluation of the reality more than the normative rules and guidelines such as the constitution and other policies. Apathy, and exit appear the rational steps for the ordinary citizen once in doubt of the sincerity and capacity of public officials, structures and institutions to adhere to the constitution, guiding frameworks and value systems. Thus, youth participation in violence, demonstrations and protests is symptomatic of anomie rather than voice. Lack of access to the normatively defined means lead to anomie (Merton. 1968) thus lack of voice leads to anomie. Feelings of marginalisation and helplessness produce loss of faith and trust in those means²², leading people to resort to their own ideas which frequently lead to violence as a form of expression of voice, and hence anomie (Bernburg, 2002).

Youth in Zimbabwe

For the Zimbabwean youth, the “voice” option means an ability to participate in elections, including voting into office their preferred “service provider” representatives. Do citizens have voice in a situation where election outcomes since the year 2000 have been hotly disputed with evidence of voter intimidation, electoral violence, challenges with the voters’ roll and other irregularities in constituency demarcation among a host of other concerns around the electoral process? Youth participation through attending rallies, voting in primary elections would appear to demonstrate participation but do the youth view this as voice and expression of youth agency? Against the backdrop of adverse inclusion of the youth (Hickey and du Toit, 2007) primary data from engaging the youth is needed to qualitatively interrogate whether attending political rallies and being involved in other activities such as political violence means the youth have voice or they are anomic in their efforts to participate. Literature is replete with evidence of unmet youth needs such as employment and social security. A cross-national study of African youths’ participation in politics, which included Zimbabwe, provided a pessimistic picture of African youth (Chikwanha & Masunungure. 2007):

- The absence of a wide generational gap between the youth and their elders across the Afrobarometer countries confirms that there is an “anti-authoritarian” consensus; neither the young nor their elders express a preference for a non-democratic order;
- The youth are less satisfied with their countries’ democracy than their elders and even more pessimistic about the democratic future of their regimes;
- The youth are more optimistic about economic affairs but more pessimistic in political affairs than their older folk;
- Inter-generational assessments tend to converge with regard to evaluations of the country’s current economic circumstances and yet evaluations of individual living conditions differ significantly between the youth and the

²² See again *Youth Participation and Representation in Governance and Democratic Processes in Africa*
Press Statement By H.E Dr. Aisha L. Abdullahi

old;

- Both age groups (young and old) agree that government performance in service delivery, especially in economic management, is lacklustre;
- Youths are clearly more critical of their elected political leaders than the elders. They disapprove more of the political leadership's performance;
- A worrying revelation is that African youths are less trustful of their public institutions. They portray an unhealthy lack of confidence in key institutions;
- Generally, both the youth and their seniors see more corruption among policy administrators (especially civil servants) than policy makers (politicians like the president, members of parliament and local councilors);
- The youth are shy to participate in politics and, throughout the Afrobarometer group of countries, they display lower levels of participation than their elders. However, even if youngsters have a greater propensity to protest, there is no generation gap with regard to actual participation in street demonstrations;
- There is a widespread feeling of political inefficacy across the generations with up to seven in ten in each category expressing a sense of subjective political incompetence. Both generations find politics and government rather too complicated to understand;
- Though there is a wide educational gap between the two generations, both groups exhibit similar levels of political discussion;
- The generation gap in party affiliation is substantial. The elders are more partisan than their juniors.

A more recent study on Zimbabweans' risk taking behaviour showed that the youth are more risk averse than older people, while the "middle class" urban and educated are very risk averse when compared to the urban and uneducated as well as the rural citizens (Masunungure et al. 2017). The study also established that risk taking varied markedly across provinces and ethnic groupings. The reasons for these variations are not clear right now but their existence demonstrating the need for inquests into the legacies of past violence such as the liberation war, electoral violence and the role of personal and communities' risk perceptions in active citizenship among rural and urban youth in Zimbabwe. Against the backdrop of youth risk aversion concentrated among the educated urban youth, it can be theorized therefore that the youth are anomic: they have lost belief and trust in national oversight institutions such as parliament, Zimbabwe Republic Police, the ability of the law to protect and promote youth rights and civil liberties. From the conception of anomie, the Zimbabwean youth do not believe in the means and the goals so normatively set before them by the Zimbabwean polity. They have also lost faith in the ability of the Zimbabwean polity in the current milieu, to provide room for expression of youth voice; hence the rise in prominence, of civil movements in 2016 and youth apathy in electoral processes.

In the Zimbabwean polity, age is a vector of inequality that effectively blocks youth access to resources, opportunities and decision-making. Other factors that compound youth exclusion are inequalities in access to employment, education and skills training, social capital, gender, location, social status, politics, ethnicity and disability (Chikwanha and Masunungure, 2007). Political parties' interest in youth is mainly manifested in attempts to control and direct its activities. Political parties attempt to control and direct youth activities while the youth are drafted into vigilante groups committing violence against other citizens (Action Aid, 2013).

These factors cumulatively limit youth enthusiasm for political participation and the exercise of citizenship rights by the youth. When the citizenry expresses its voice, airs out its disgruntlements and that voice is heard and addressed by the government there is a working democracy. When voting in local council, parliamentary and presidential elections is free and fair, when citizens exercise their democratic rights as enshrined in the constitution and there is no retribution, illegal arrests, disappearances and intimidation of citizens then the citizenry has voice. However, when there is systematic intimidation of citizens, systematic flaws in electoral processes and citizens' demonstrations expectedly meet with State-led violence and tear-gassing of protesters the citizens have no voice. Youth efforts to participate under such conditions reflect anomie rather than voice.

Conclusion

While it is desirable that individuals exercise their democratic rights including freedom of expression, and voting in democratic elections through which citizens get an opportunity to remove non-performing representatives from office, realities on the ground point to a different situation. The government is out of touch with the challenges facing the youth such as high unemployment, collapsing industry, a dense vendor population among others. The conditions under which the citizenry can be able to express its voice on governance and development priorities are absent in Zimbabwe. Rather, the polity is replete with intolerance of youth views, dominance of partisan lenses that do not accept views from other political orientations, outright disregard for basic human rights and empty pro-poor rhetoric by the government and political parties. There is a need to gather primary evidence on how to practically engage young women and men and how to maintain that engagement. The youth have attempted to express their views through various means which are prescribed by the constitution of the country and other policy frameworks but the desired outcomes have not been realized. The mismatch between the constitution, policies and the reality on the ground cause disillusionment with the guidelines forcing the youth to re-assess their position relative to the ideals of these policies and constitution. That disillusionment or 'derangement' in Merton (1968)'s terms is the anomie. Thus, when the youth fail to participate in credible elections or when they participate in elections while expressing doubts over the election process and the election result, are they expressing voice or they are anomic?

The reality of violence against voices that deviate from the ruling party's position, lack of room for youth leadership and general participation by the youth in political parties and local government structures testifies to the relegation of youth to an "after-thought", despite the normative frameworks such as the constitution and pro-youth international treaties and conventions. The evidence on the ground shows that due to experiences with violence and repression, the youth are fearful of exercising their citizenship rights. Rather than merely participating ritualistically, the youth actually evade participation. The only forms of relatively unencumbered youth participation hitherto, have been demonstrations and the social media which apparently, have not led to the realization of the youth agenda. The attractiveness of "exit" works to a limited extent as not all the youth have access to leaving the country and deriving a desirable existence outside Zimbabwe's borders. Thus, the net effect is anomie. The youth are disenchanting with the little room and prospects that society has to offer and they have come to expect the State's heavy handed repressive reaction to expression of the youth voice. Consequently, youth apathy needs to be looked at in more detail rather simplistic labelling of the youth as disengaged and uninterested. Instead, efforts should be channeled towards seeking an appreciation of the factors that make the youth pull away from engaging

with democratic governance institutions that they should normally engage with. Research is needed to understand youth rationalities for shying from activities that they should ordinarily participate in as active citizens and to identify the factors that make the youth feel isolated, neglected, undervalued and those that make them youth retreat from using their voice to express their concerns and eventually why the youth are apathetic and not engaged in democratic governance processes. Ultimately, there is a need to investigate youth perceptions towards the practical relevance to the youth, of attempting to participate in political processes in Zimbabwe. To understand the manifestations and construction of active citizenship among the youth, it is paramount that analyses address the manifestations of income, status, residence, educational attainment, employment status, political and religious ideological differences, social capital and the practical subjective contingencies derived from each of these recursively implicated factors. The foregoing discussion highlights some of the theoretical, conceptual and practical issues that are calling out loud for research and policy attention warrants a more detailed inquest that engages the youth as the primary sources of data and units of analysis on the drivers of youth participation under adverse socio-economic and political environment such as the current situation in Zimbabwe. The narrative of active citizenship among the youth needs to be re-written with the youth placed at the pivot of the process.

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