



SOCIAL STUDIES CURRICULUM AT THE CROSSROADS: IMPLEMENTATION OF THE SECONDARY SCHOOL SOCIAL STUDIES CURRICULUM IN CHINGOLA DISTRICT OF ZAMBIA

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Abstract:

Curriculum implementation is one of the key aspects of the curriculum development process. The success of any educational policy depends on the accomplishing of the objectives of the policy. However, despite the desire to make learning more relevant to the needs of the learners by bringing into context all the skills, attitudes, values and competencies from the three subject areas (Geography, History and Civics) into one (Social Studies). The implementation of the 2013 revised junior secondary school Social Studies curriculum still remain a challenge. The purpose of this study was to analyse the implementation of the junior secondary school Social Studies curriculum in Chingola district. The researchers used a phenomenological research design. 71 participants comprising of 40 teachers of Social Studies, 20 learners of Social Studies, 10 secondary school head teachers and the District Education Standards Officer were sampled for the study. Data was collected from the District Education Standards Officer, Head teachers and teachers using interview schedules. From the learners, data was collected using focus group discussion schedules and then a document analysis schedule was also used to collect data from policy documents and school-based curriculum implementation documents. Thematic analysis was used to analyse the data. The findings revealed that the time allocated to the implementation of Social Studies in schools was inadequate. Further, Social Studies was being taught through specialization by teachers who were trained in subject areas like Geography, History and Civic Education a scenario which contributed to the poor performance of learners. The researchers recommended that the Ministry of General Education through the Curriculum Development Centre should consider allocating more time (periods) to the implementation of Social Studies, expedite

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the training and recruitment of Social Studies teachers and encourage Continuous Professional Development (CPD) meetings both at district and school levels for the purpose of capacity building.

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1. Introduction

The Zambian education system has evolved since political independence in 1964 to the present. Educational change in terms of curriculum adjustment has since 1966 been tailored to respond to the ever-changing needs of the society. The concept of curriculum has been defined by many scholars because of the relevance and interest it has attracted in formal education today. Commenting on Tanner and Tanner's definition of a curriculum, Mulenga (2018:17) observed that *"every learning institution is laden with the responsibility of reconstructing the experience and perceptions of the learner. The curriculum therefore becomes a lens, if properly followed, in which the learner would see the past, present and future of the world"*. From this we can deduce that a curriculum is planned, and it attempts to meet the educational objectives set by educational authorities. Thus, a curriculum of any society should aim to provide and help learner acquire knowledge, skills, values and attitudes that are desired by the society.

In order to respond to the changing needs of the society, the Ministry of General Education embarked on a revision of the education curriculum under the theme *"Empowering learners by putting theory into practice"*. Putting theory into practice was actually another way of saying that the curriculum focused on learner's acquisition of competencies. Mulenga and Kabombwe (2019:108) explained that;

"A competency-based curriculum seeks to link education to the real life experiences as it helps learners acquire knowledge, skills, values and attitudes to access, criticize, analyse and practically apply them to reality. In this regard, learners are provided with practical experiences during the teaching and learning processes that are likely to help them gain life skills."

Given the significance and importance of what was envisaged, the revised National Curriculum Framework brought about revision of the curriculum from primary education to tertiary education. Major changes were made at junior secondary school level among the notable one was the integration of subjects with interrelated and similar competences and content like Civics, History and Geography into Social Studies. The changes at junior secondary school level were meant to equip learners with skills, values, attitudes and competences that would enable a learner to respond to the changing needs of the society. Hence, the integration of Civics, History and Geography into Social Studies at junior secondary school in Zambia was viewed as one that would be expected to contribute significantly to national development if effectively taught. Supporting this

assertion, Chukwuemeka, (2014) indicated that Social Studies enables learners to acquire a relevant body of knowledge which can develop their positive values, attitude and skills. It is imperative to further assert that as an integrated holistic approach to learning, Social Studies offers effective citizenship education needed for national development.

It is against the foregoing that for a curriculum to be relevant and respond to the aspirations of a target group, implementation of the desired policy becomes the bedrock of the programme. Ornstein and Hunkins (1998) observed that the effective implementation of any given curriculum involves innovations, adequate time for personal interactions and contacts, in-service training among other support services. Therefore, if the integrated junior secondary school Social Studies curriculum was to become relevant to the learners and the national as a whole, there was a need for effective implementation of the subject. Curriculum implementation is at the centre of the success of any subject of which Social Studies is not an exception. Obanya (2004) contended that curriculum implementation is a daily act which the school management and teachers carry out in order to meet the objective of a given curriculum. In the words of Kantoma (2015:14), curriculum implementation is *“putting into action the planned curriculum. It is the actual classroom teaching which includes the use of infrastructure, personnel, materials, method and technique”*. Curriculum implementation, therefore, entails how the planned study is interpreted by the teacher into schemes of work and lessons to be taught to the learners. It implies carrying out the proposed curriculum with the use of relevant teaching and learning materials as well as different methodologies in order to foster knowledge, relevant skills, attitudes and values to the learners so that they function effectively in the society.

Never the less, the 2013 revised junior secondary school Social Studies curriculum has faced challenges. Samwimbila (2017) observed that the implementation process of the revised curriculum has had challenges which have impacted on classroom practice and proper implementation of curriculum changes among teachers. In their study on the development of social studies learners' textbook Musilekwa and Mulenga (2019:107) observed that *“it can be confidently concluded and confirmed that indeed, the Social Studies learners' textbooks were of poor quality”*. Furthermore, it was observed that Social Studies was one of the subjects with a largest proportion of candidates who performed poorly in the national examinations (ECZ, 2017; MoGE, 2019). This was a clear indication from the researcher's perspective that there was something worth investigating regarding the implementation process of the Social Studies curriculum. It is against this backdrop that this study aimed at analysing the implementation of the junior secondary school Social Studies in Chingola district while paying particular interest to the time allocated to its implementation and how the subject is taught in schools.

2. Theoretical Framework

The Curriculum Implementation theory developed by Rogan and Grayson (2003) guided the study. The theory is underpinned by three major theoretical constructs: support from

outside agencies; capacity to support innovation; and profile of implementation. The support from outside agencies describes the various actions carried out by outside organizations, such as the Ministry of General Education, community, well-wishers among others to influence school practices mainly through supporting school activities. The second construct capacity to support innovation is concerned with factors that are likely to support or hinder the implementation of new ideas and practices in the new or revised curriculum. The third construct, profile of implementation assists in understanding, analysing and expressing the extent to which the objectives of the reform programme are put into practice. Thus, in order for the curriculum implementation process to be effective, a number of factors should be considered both from within and outside the school environment. Such necessary conditions include; time allocated to the subject, teachers knowledge of the subject matter among others.

3. Brief Review of Related Literature

3.1 Social Studies Curriculum in Zambia

Social Studies is a newly introduced area of study at junior secondary school level in Zambia's education system. As earlier mentioned, the subject is a product of the integration of three formerly taught disciplines at junior secondary level (Grades 8 and 9) namely; Geography, Civics and History. Lam and Lidstone (2001) observed that to administrators, curriculum integration is a means to reduce the overburdened curriculum, to move toward more learner centred pedagogical approaches and increase the relevance of curriculum content to the learners. To the teachers, the purpose of integrating curriculum is to reduce the number of subjects to be fitted into the school timetable. Finally, to curriculum developers, curriculum integration carries more deep-seated fundamental meaning to the education sector in terms of learner output. Therefore, the integrated Social Studies curriculum is a new study area which was meant to respond to the learning needs of the learners who would later contribute to the development of the society. CDC (2013b) argued that Social Studies was in no way a political school of thought, a philosophy, a doctrine or a form of organisation. It instead denotes a "*new learning area on human relationships and behaviour*" (CDC, 2013b:ix). It can therefore be contended that the Social Studies curriculum is not a new ideology, but it is an area of study which would enhance the study of different human interactions in the society as well as human's interaction with the environment as a whole.

The need to come up with a curriculum that would be relevant to the learning needs necessitated the introduction of Social Studies at junior secondary school as a compulsory subject. The Ministry of General Education sought to integrate learning areas with interrelated content and competencies into a single learning area (CDC, 2013a). This move in the long run would entail a reduction on the teacher's workload and enhance the delivery of the needed competences to the learners. It should be noted that it is important to study the three learning areas (Geography, Civics and History) thus integrating them and making the study area compulsory was the way to render the

subject more relevant to the learners. This was in the view that History was becoming unpopular among the learners at junior secondary school level. Hence, it was likely not to be taken if it was made an optional subject (Samwimbila, 2017). Therefore, it was necessary to integrate the learning areas and consequently, make it compulsory in order to make the subject relevant to the needs of the learners and contribute to society as a whole.

CDC (2013b) asserted that the aims of Social Studies at junior secondary school is to enable social development through the understanding of the economic, political, civic, cultural, geographical and historical factors. It also purposes to accomplish an all-rounded development of a learner who will be able to make a meaningful contribution to society. This would in the long run develop into the learner knowledge and skills that would enable them to understand their political and socio-economic world and thereafter function effectively. It can be argued therefore that the principle behind the introduction of Social Studies at junior secondary school level was to focus on issues and problems relevant to the learner's experiences. For this reason, it was seen necessary that Geography, History and Civics be integrated due to its relatedness and its idealness to deal with the children's realities in the contemporary world.

3.2 Factors that enhance Curriculum Implementation

Curriculum implementation is a very crucial stage at which the planned curriculum is actualized (Gbamanja, 2009). This is the stage that mostly take place in the school and teachers are at the center of it. Fullan and Pomfret (1977) observed that effective implementation of educational change requires time, personal interaction and contacts, teacher professional development and other forms of support. The recognition that teachers are cardinal in implementing new policy and reform in schools calls for a focus on teachers. The teacher is the most important resource in the implementation of the curriculum at every level of the education system. He/she is responsible for ensuring that curriculum objectives are achieved. Teachers are therefore an essential liaison between the society and future generation (Aguokogbuo, 2000). Hargreaves (1994) suggested that teachers, more than any others, are key to educational change. Teachers have an important role of translating curriculum documents produced by government or policy entities into teachable forms for the classroom. Mulenga and Luangala (2015:39) actually explained that teachers "*play a very important role in the facilitation of the learner's acquisition of desirable knowledge, skills, values and attitudes*". Additionally, one of the main roles of the teacher in curriculum implementation is to interpret the syllabus and break it into teaching schemes, and lesson plans. This later enables them to decide on what teaching and learning materials to use, the methodology to adopt and the amount of time to spend on each aspect.

Acknowledging the role of teachers in the implementation of any educational policy, Ukeje in Ebiringa (2012) observed that education is an important tool to unlock and orient the society on how to cope with different aspects of the modern world, but it is the teacher who holds the key. Therefore, it is the teacher who ascertain what happens

in the classroom especially in the social studies classroom. From the observation it can be argued that, effective implementation of any educational programme can only be made possible through teachers who have acquired necessary competencies in terms of knowledge, skills, values and attitudes. This view is maintained by Chukweumeka (2014) in her study, the evaluation of the implementation of the Social Studies curriculum in junior secondary schools in Enugu State, Nigeria. She contended that teacher knowledge of the subject matter and some level of qualification can make a difference in the teachers who teach social studies and most importantly in the implementation of Social Studies curriculum in junior secondary schools. This is not only true about Social Studies but for any other subject as Zulu and Mulenga (2019:281) explained about the teaching of Physics that *“a teacher with appropriate pedagogical content knowledge can effectively teach learners the knowledge and skills contained in physics in such a way that learners will be able to realise that physics was actually usable in real life”*.

In order for the requirements of the curriculum to be met the coverage of the syllabus is vital. The time factor puts a teacher in a position where he/she will be able to facilitate the lesson according to required standards. Omondi (2014) conducted a study on factors influencing implementation of the curriculum in public primary schools in Ukwala division of Siaya county in Kenya. The study brought out the significance of time allocation in the implementation of a curriculum. The researcher stipulated that it was important to allocate specific amount of time to the subject in the curriculum and be clearly scheduled. The time that is allocated to any subject area is mainly guided by considering teaching and learning methods which are strongly recommended to teach the subject. For example, participatory teaching and learning methods require more time than teacher centred teaching methods. Additionally, Mulenga and Lubasi (2019:62) explained that *“more engaged time for learning, allow broader and deeper coverage of curricula, as well as more individualized learning support”*. Therefore, adequate time allocation to a subject area is important in seeing to it that the whole content of the curriculum is covered without leaving out other important syllabus items.

Teaching and learning materials are important in the implementation of the curriculum at all levels of the education structure. Thus, the role of textbooks in fostering knowledge and relevant skills to the learners cannot be overemphasised. Textbooks are the main source of information in many developing countries of which Zambia is not an exception (Musilekwa, 2019). Teaching and learning materials are a source of knowledge acquisition and delivery in schools. Therefore, only stocking teaching and learning materials in school is not enough but the aspect of quality is of great importance. Despite the importance attached to the teaching and learning materials in Zambia’s education system, the study conducted by Musilekwa and Mulenga (2019) on the development of Social Studies learner’s textbooks for secondary schools in Zambia revealed that the Social Studies textbooks for the revised curriculum were of a poor quality and did not match with the content of the syllabus. This revelation brought out a major challenge in the implementation of Social Studies since most schools in Zambia relied much on textbooks in the teaching and learning process. The poor quality textbooks had negatively

impacted on the teaching and learning of Social Studies in many schools across the country.

4. Research Methodology

This study employed a qualitative research approach to collect, analyze and interpret data. A qualitative research views respondents as a crucial source of information. Therefore, this study aimed to gain an in-depth apprehension of experiences of teachers, school administrators and learners on the implementation of the junior secondary Social Studies curriculum. This interactive nature of the qualitative approach enabled the researchers to interact closely with respondents within their own natural setting (Cohen et al, 2007). The phenomenon under study occurs in a natural setting, therefore schools were the natural setting where curriculum implementation occurred. Thus, the phenomenological research design was employed. The design attempts to understand people's perceptions and perspectives of a particular phenomenon, in this case the implementation of Social Studies in Chingola schools. Therefore, the rationale of the phenomenological design rest on the textual descriptions of what happened and how the phenomenon was experienced, because the experience is one that is common to the researchers and the participants. 71 participants comprising 40 teachers, 20 learners, 10 head teachers and a District Education Standards Officer were purposively sampled for the study. The researchers considered this sample adequate as it was composed of a sample population considered to have rich information for the study. Thematic analysis was used to analyze data.

5. Findings and Discussion

Curriculum implementation is one of the important aspects in the curriculum development process. The realisation of the goals of an educational system is dependent upon how the implementers put a plan, decision, idea or policy into effect. However, the researchers in this study give evidence which suggests that the junior secondary school Social Studies curriculum was not being implemented effectively owing to a number of inconsistencies which were observed during the implementation process in schools. This state of affairs is what the researchers referred to as the Social Studies curriculum being at the 'crossroads' and something needed to be done in order to correct the situation.

5.1 Time allocated for the Implementation

As one of the interest areas of this study, it was imperative for the researchers to elicit information on the adequacy of time that was allocated to the implementation of Social Studies. This was significant because time allocation to a subject plays a pivotal role in enabling teachers to facilitate the acquiring of necessary knowledge, skills, attitudes and values from the curriculum by the learners. When asked whether the time allocated to the implementation of Social Studies was adequate almost all the respondents who took

part in this study suggested that the time was inadequate to meet the curriculum requirements. From the study it emerged that syllabus coverage was a challenge and responsiveness of Social Studies to learners needs. From the interviews conducted with Head teachers, teachers of Social Studies and learners suggested that time was not adequate for teachers to cover the syllabus. Almost all the Head teachers who were interviewed indicated that coverage of the syllabus was a challenge due to limited time. For instance, one Head teacher explained that;

“In my view the time is not so much adequate, because when you look at Social Studies its covers three subjects which is History, Geography as well as Civics. In the past we could notice that each subject had about five periods per week. But since the implementation of Social Studies it has been reduced to six periods for all learning areas into one, meaning that topics are too much for the given period of time. So, you find that in most cases the syllabus is not completed.”

Commenting on the same question another Head teacher said that;

“No, the time aspect is not ok because the syllabus is bulky as compared to the time allocated to the subject.”

Social Studies teachers also shared the same view which was held by most of their supervisors in schools. The teachers lamented on the inadequacy of time given in the teaching of Social Studies which consequently affected the coverage of the syllabus in most cases. One teacher in Zone A explained that;

“Time is not enough six periods per week, and when you look at the components. They said they are going to remove some components. In the civics part almost everything is there, so you find that it is difficult to complete the syllabus. So you just pick the important topics you feel may come in the exam. Like now we are picking important topics that you see that the child cannot study alone.”

A teacher from Zone C also added that;

“No, it’s just that we are very lucky at this school there is enough time for holiday lessons and sometimes you just use up the prep time, but if we are going to strictly follow the timetable it’s not enough at all. When you look at the History part it’s quite bulky even up to now am not yet done with the topics. I just had to photocopy a few notes and give to individual learners and explain the notes just for the sake of finishing the syllabus.”

In responding to the same question, a teacher from Zone B indicated that;

“Actually, that is a challenge we are facing because since it is a combination of three subjects you find that even the guys who are doing the timetable you find that the time they allocate because of each subject is not enough. So you find that we struggle even to complete the syllabus, that is a challenge am having. But we improvise whereby you ask for some periods from other teachers those who are willing to help or you just make special arrangement like here normally what we do since it is a private institution, pupils like Grade nine’s in examination classes they come to learn that helps as well.”

The learners also made their submissions regarding the aspect of time and what was strongly coming out was that teachers hardly completed the topics in the syllabus. Most of the learners in the focus group discussions submitted that they had to cover a number of things especially in areas of Civics and History and in the long run they lagged behind in covering all the topics. One of the learners from focus group discussion in Zone D explained that;

“No there is not enough time because we don’t cover some topics. When that topics come at the exam we fail to answer the questions because there was no enough time.”

This view was also shared by other learners. For example, in a focus group discussion in Zone E learners reiterated that;

“No because there are many topics, they can’t manage to teach us all the topics.”

The views of the respondents are clear evidence that the time that was allocated to the implementation of Social Studies was inadequate to cover the entire content in the syllabus. All the teachers who participated in this study admitted that they were unable to cover the syllabus due to limited time that was allocated to teach the subject. It was established that Social Studies was allocated six periods per week (CDC, 2013), where teachers were required to teach learners all the three integrated components (Geography, History, Civics), which according to the teachers was not enough in that there was a lot of content to be covered against the limited amount of time allocated to the subject in the curriculum. This came as a source of concern to the researchers because the Social Studies Junior Secondary School Leaving Examinations (JSSLE) were drawn across the syllabus and the examinations setters were not restricted to give a certain particular type of questions drawn from specific topics but they picked from any topic, and questions were generated from any topic as long as it was in the syllabus. This would lead to the national assessment not giving a true reflection of learners understanding of the subject matter. The researchers were left to wonder how learners would effectively understand this subject if teachers did not cover all the topics in the syllabus.

The responses from the head teachers also revealed that the time that was allocated to the teaching and learning of Social Studies was not enough for teachers to cover all the content in the syllabus. Almost all the Head teachers reiterated that there was too much

to cover in the subject as compared to the time allocated to the subject. This was seen as an impediment in meeting the requirements of the curriculum. This state of affairs is opposed by Omondi (2014) who advanced that adequate time allocation to a subject area is important in seeing to it that the whole content of the curriculum is covered without leaving out other important syllabus items. This is a clear indication that for a particular curriculum to be implemented effectively, there is need to be a balance in the content to be covered and the time allocation thereof. A study that was done by Mulenga and Lubasi (2019) showed that there was a lot of time that was wasted by teachers and administrators in most schools due to a number of factors. Given that Social Studies which is taught in all the schools in Zambia has this challenge which comes with the curriculum development itself, one can only conclude that with the addition of other ways in which time for learning is lost in schools the situation for the teaching of Social Studies in terms of time allocation needs very urgent attention.

Besides, it was interesting to note the comments that were made by the District Education Standards Officer (DESO) in her response when asked if there was a balance in the time allocation and the content to be covered in the syllabus. The DESO advanced that:

"Oh yes I feel there is a balance and enough time when you look at the number of periods I still feel the time is enough."

This position maintained by the DESO was giving a picture that there was nothing wrong with the time that was allocated, which she claimed was adequate. Mwanza (2017) cautioned that involving non-teachers or former teachers in the curriculum development process may have a different outcome on the implementation of the curriculum as compared with teachers who were currently practicing. This is because being in the classroom and school environment is significant in responding to the needs of the learners who are on the receiving end of the curriculum. Furthermore, teachers are in constant touch with the realities in the classroom. This puts them in a better position to understand the nature of learning, the challenges at hand, learner's abilities, set goals in the curriculum and can also come up with new ideas on providing more effective learner experiences. Therefore, teachers are at the center of the implementation of educational policies at school and this puts them in a much better position to understand the requirements of the curriculum. Unfortunately, as Mulenga and Mwanza (2019:38) noted that:

"...teachers are not given such chances and thus their voices are only heard as cries in the school wilderness. Teachers know what to teach and how they can contribute to the improvement of the curriculum development processes in Zambia, but the system seems to ignore them and only thinks of them at implementation stage."

5.2 Acquisition of Knowledge and Skills

Respondents were asked to comment on the appropriateness of the Social Studies content in meeting the learner's needs. From the responses it was revealed that the subject was responsive to the needs of the learners. The learners admitted that the content was immense and were able to acquire the much-needed knowledge and skills that would enable them function as citizens in the society. One of the learners in a focus group discussion in Zone A explained that;

"Social studies is of great benefit for example, Civics helps us to know about our human rights, democratic processes and thus helps us to be good citizens. So, it is quite a beneficial aspect of education."

Another learner from a focus group discussion in Zone B added that;

"It is fulfilling our needs. What we learn in Geography for instance are things such as weather and climate they teach us how we should keep our environment, how we should do all things. I think it is educating us more to care for our environment which keeps and saves the environment for the future. We keep things that we need more, our needs we keep them instead of spoiling them."

Thus, the researcher further sought to find out the views of the subject teachers on the appropriateness of the Social Studies content to meeting the learner's needs. Almost all the teachers that were interviewed agreed that the content was responsive to the needs of the learners despite some components being bulky. One of the teachers in Zone D mentioned that;

"Yeah the content is ok yes it is especially on the history part. You find that there were topics that we were teaching that seemed irrelevant to the learners, so those were removed from the new curriculum or syllabus for Social Studies. The history part is not all that bulky but I feel the Geography part is the one that is bulky, but the content is useful and the Civics part is very relevant to the learners."

Another teacher confirmed that;

"The content is very good, although I can say there is a lot of content for the child. It is too bulky if they had narrowed it maybe to certain topics."

These findings were a clear indication that despite learners being given a lot of content, it was relevant to the learning needs of the learners. The learners also mentioned that Social Studies was of great importance especially the Civics component where they were able to relate to most of the content. Aspects like Human Rights education, corruption was among the most referred to areas which would help the learners to

operate well in their communities. This finding is in line with the findings of Kissok (1981); Ezezobor (2000); Ramsook (2016) who noted that the significance of Social Studies in instilling in learners the knowledge, skills, attitudes and actions was important concerning human relationships. In many countries the subject was seen as a way of fostering social and economic development in the nation. According to CDC (2013b), Social Studies in Zambia was introduced to enable social development through the understanding of the economic, political, civic, cultural, geographical and historical factors. It was purposed to accomplish an all-rounded development of a learner who would be able to make a meaningful contribution to society. This would in the long run develop in the learner's knowledge and skills that would enable them to understand their political and socio-economic world and thereafter function effectively. Therefore, the content of Social Studies was argued to be relevant to the needs of the learners as it was likely to enable the learners to respond to the needs of the society.

5.3 The Teaching of Social Studies

The purpose of any curriculum content is to enable the recipients acquire the much-needed knowledge, skills, attitudes and values as prescribed in it. This can only be realised if effective teaching and learning takes place. In fact, scholars of educational pedagogy and ministry of education policies have consistently brought this to the fore as Banja and Mulenga (2019:176) actually explained this point refereeing to the Zambian situation that *"the Ministry of Education through policy advocated that essential competencies that are required in every teacher are mastery of the material that is to be taught and the skill in communicating that knowledge and skills to learners"*. Thus, in order for the Social Studies curriculum to be implemented effectively there is need for the subject to be taught effectively by the teachers tasked to handle the subject. The facilitation of Social Studies by the teachers has a huge bearing on learner's acquisition of the desired competencies. Therefore, it was imperative to establish the views of the various respondents on how Social Studies was taught in schools. To address this, information was sought from the teachers, learners, head teachers and the DESO to get their views on how Social Studies was being taught in schools. What emerged from the study was that Social Studies was being taught through subject specialization, which affected the performance of learners and it was also revealed that the teaching of Social Studies was adversely affected due to the use of poor-quality textbooks.

5.3.1 Subject Specialisation

Subject specialisation has been a distinctive attribute of secondary school teaching in Zambia. Teachers who are specialized in different subject areas teach according to their areas of expertise. Social Studies being an integration of three learning areas (Geography, History, and Civics) was also being taught by teachers who are specialized in the respective subject areas. Thus, responses from interviews and discussions from the respondents revealed that Social Studies was taught by more than one teacher and within their area of specialisation. In other words, the subject was taught by teachers who were

trained specifically either in Geography, History or Civic Education. All of the teachers who were interviewed revealed that Social Studies was being taught in three components as Geography, History and Civics as it was done before its integration in 2013. One of the teachers in Zone A indicated that;

"I concentrate on my area of specialisation like in my case it is Civics. You find that I would finish the civics part but History and Geography remain behind because am not competent enough to handle the children in those areas."

Another teacher in Zone E confirmed that;

"For me since am trained in History, I teach the History part. So, since I only meet them once in a week, I divide the minutes, sometimes I start by explaining the topic. If I have enough time, I give them work or notes."

The views that were brought out by the subject teachers were also shared by the District Education Standards Officer (DESO) and head teachers in separate interviews. When asked the DESO pointed out that;

"Currently Social Studies is being taught by a number of teachers. One subject you have this teacher teaching the component of Geography, the other one teaching History and the other Civics component. That is where things are not going well because even if somehow a child can do very well in this section where there is Geography, but the teacher of History didn't do his/her homework, that child will be bound to fail. But if it's one teacher teaching Social Studies it makes a difference."

One head teacher from Zone D echoed the same view shared by the DESO when responding to a question whether her school had qualified Social Studies teachers, she stated that;

"As at now we do not have, so you find that the very teachers who were teaching Civics, History and Geography are the ones that are teaching Social Studies and that has posed a challenge because you find that some teachers have maybe strengths in two subjects and they do not have in one. Like right now the one teaching Social Studies for Grade nine (9) has a strength of History and Civic Education without the other aspect of Geography. So, he has to learn from other teachers in order to teach Social Studies to the learners."

It was clear from the responses given by the respondents that there were no trained qualified teachers of Social Studies in schools and those who were tasked to teach the subject were compelled to teach the subject because they were thought to have knowledge simply because they were knowledgeable in their respective areas being Geography, History and Civic Education. This revelation left the researcher to wonder

how the subject would be taught effectively if in the first-place teachers who were teaching the subject were not trained in Social Studies. This finding is consistent with the findings of Kantoma (2015) who revealed that one of the problems that was faced in the implementation of Social Studies in Kaduna State, Nigeria was the inadequate qualified teachers that were used to teach the subject. Therefore, there was a resort to use teachers who specialized in history, geography, economics and government to teach the subject, although knowing fully well that they lacked Social Studies orientation.

5.3.2 Learner Performance

Assessment is one of the most critical component of curriculum implementation that is used to measure whether learners in a particular area of study had acquired the designed knowledge, skills, attitudes, values and competencies from the curriculum. In fact, Kabombwe and Mulenga (2019:33) clearly made an emphasis that 'assessment is an integral part of teaching and learning. Assessment can help education evaluators to assess the extent to which an innovation is being implemented' Therefore, the researchers sought information from respondents on how the performance of Social Studies had been in the Junior Secondary School Leaving Examinations. Almost all the respondents confirmed that the performance of the learners was not good. This was evidenced from a teacher in Zone A who stated that;

"It is very difficult for many learners to get a distinction. If there are distinctions, then they are few. Many may have passed but not with quality results."

Another teacher in Zone C confirmed that;

"I have right here the Social Studies 2018 examination analysis which was done this year 2019. You can see where we are, not good. The results were not good. I don't know why or what reasons. You see in, Social Studies there was only one who got a 1. Others they tend to bunch on 3 or 4, that's what I can tell you. These are not good results compared to how the same students performed on other subjects."

When asked during the interview, the DESO revealed that the results were not good during examinations for grades nine except only in some few schools. She contended that;

"So far the results are not so good yes. Although in some few schools the results which are coming out are ok. But in so many schools the results are not ok and that is what is obtaining. It worrying all of us."

The assertion that was made by the DESO regarding poor performance of learners in Social Studies was confirmed by a number of school-based assessments from different schools which showed the performance of learners to be very low. The documents

suggested that Social Studies was amongst the subjects with the lowest pass rate. For example, the statistics in most schools from zone D and E indicated that from 2016 – 2019 the results were below average that is the pass rate ranged from 31% to 41% in most instances. In zones A, B and C the majority of learners found it difficult to get a distinction as most of the scores tend to congest on Grades 3 and 4. These revelations were an indication that something was wrong in the implementation process of the subject or simply put the entire curriculum development process called for attention. Kisko (1981) stated that assessments present learners, teachers and curriculum developers with feedback on the success in achieving programme objectives and forms the basis of making sound decisions on how to modify and improve the programme. Moreover, assessment would later provide information on the adequacy of the method and material used by the Social Studies teachers and provide information on the weaknesses and strengths in the achievement of the subject.

The subject analysis at national level by the Examination Council of Zambia in 2016 revealed that the pass rate of Social Studies was 39.65% which was below the pass mark of 40 % (ECZ, 2017). In 2019 the national examination analysis for Grade 9 external indicated that Social Studies had the second largest proportion of candidates who failed from Mathematics which was at 74.46% meaning 25.54% was the pass rate (MoGE, 2019). This was a clear indication that there was poor performance of learners in Social Studies and much needed to be done to improve the performance of the learners. This phenomenon may be pointing to the competences of the teachers to teach a subject that is an integration of three subjects. Although the Ministry of General Education in Zambia may be claiming that these teachers are qualified, but they seem to be failing to integrate the three subjects since it is still being taught as three subjects as we have seen earlier. It is indeed for this reason that Masumba and Mulenga (2019:91) rightly observed that; *“when teachers have the appropriate pedagogical content knowledge in a specific subject area, they are able to effectively communicate the provisions of a curriculum to the learner”*. What we seem to see in the case of social studies is the exact opposite.

5.4 Quality of Teaching and Learning Materials

The importance of teaching and learning materials in the implementation of the curriculum cannot be overemphasised in enabling learners to assimilate the content so as to meet their learning needs. Thus, effective teaching and learning of Social Studies demands appropriate use of quality teaching and learning materials (Chukwuemeka, 2014). The findings of this study indicated that teaching and learning materials were readily available in most of the schools especially textbooks. The one aspect which most respondents were concerned about was the poor quality of the textbooks that were distributed in schools to be used in the implementation of Social Studies. One teacher from Zone C complained that;

“We have a set of textbooks which are not just up to the standard, not good. These textbooks that have come for this new syllabus some of them are almost scandalous. Written in very

poor English, with a lot of factual errors. I don't depend much on them; I have other sources of information that I use."

Another teacher in Zone B added that;

"I feel it's not good enough because as it stands, we have a lot of books. There is publication B in Social Studies which has supplied all these books but then you find that one book like for instance here we are using this Social Studies book, it doesn't have all the information some of it is too simplified. This year they have changed the books, but there was one topic that was missing in last year's book, it's the same but this year they have added that topic that was missing and it was in the syllabus but it was not in the book. There is so much confusion with this book. It is an educational scandal."

Teacher from Zone E reiterated that;

"Social Studies has got enough teaching and learning materials although for Grade nine books we don't have many. The quality clearly show that these books were hurriedly written just to meet the syllabus. I think it has shallow points. It is so unfair to learners who when reading these books trust that all that they contain is correct."

In a focus group discussions learners of Social Studies also acknowledged the availability of some teaching and materials but what came out strongly was the missing of certain information in some books that were distributed by the Curriculum Development Center to the schools. One learner in Zone C confirmed that;

"The books which the government is making now they don't contain some topics and many topics that come into the exam they are not found in those books. We do not know what they are doing or up to."

In a separate discussion in Zone C another learner added that;

"Apart from books we have flip charts and maps. At times we also use past papers, they are very helpful as they cover most of the topics in the syllabus."

The responses from the teachers and learners of Social Studies was clear that some teaching and learning materials were available in the teaching and learning of Social Studies in the schools more especially the textbooks. The only challenge which most of the respondents revealed was regarding the poor quality of the textbooks that were found in schools. This finding was in line with the finding in the study by Musilekwa and Mulenga (2019) who observed that the Social Studies textbooks for the new curriculum were of a poor quality and did not match up with the content of the syllabus. They further noted a lot of mistakes that were made in the published textbooks. This in itself was a

problem when it came to the implementation process since most schools in Zambia relied much on textbooks in the teaching and learning process. The poor quality textbooks had most likely negatively impacted on the teaching and learning of Social Studies in many schools across the country. No wonder the learner's performance in the subject was not good enough.

This study revealed that a particular textbook publisher was singled out and given the mandate to publish the Social Studies textbooks for learners to meet the urgent requirement of the new curriculum. This is consistent to what Khaled (2005) established in his study that during the implementation process Social studies was being taught in Jordan using single textbook prepared by the Ministry of Education and taught as a ready-made descriptive body of content. Musilekwa and Mulenga (2019) also revealed that there was political interference in coming up with textbooks for learners in Zambia as it was evidenced in the mismatch of the syllabus that publisher A was given by CDC as a guide and the original approved syllabus which were totally different. This was a clear indication that the textbooks were hurriedly made without putting much detail to its outcome in the long run. Additionally, these findings entail that the Ministry of General Education in Zambia was not well prepared to implement the new Social Studies curriculum because it was rushed as evidenced from the poor textbooks that were distributed especially in government schools for this cause.

6. Conclusions and Recommendations

Based on the findings of this study, the researchers concluded that the junior secondary school Social Studies curriculum was not being implemented effectively as evidenced from a number of challenges and inconsistencies that prevailed during the implementation process. The researchers established that the time that was allocated to the implementation of Social Studies was inadequate to meet all the requirements of the curriculum. This was mainly observed in the non-completion of the content outlined in the syllabus. Most of the teachers found it challenging to complete all the topics in the syllabus which was a detriment to the learning experience of the learners. Therefore, the researchers reasoned out that there was no balance in the time that was allocated to the implementation of Social Studies and the content that was supposed to be covered in the specified period of time. Furthermore, the study established that Social Studies was being taught through specialization by teachers who were trained in History, Geography and Civic Education. Therefore, the researchers concluded that the subject was being facilitated by more than one teacher per class. The teacher that was trained to teach History was tasked to teach the History component of Social Studies, Geography trained teachers taught, the Geography and Civic Education trained teachers handled the Civics component respectively. This situation largely contributed to the poor performance of learners in Social Studies. Thus, at the time the study was being conducted, there were no trained teachers of Social Studies in schools. The researchers were able to deduce that teaching and learning materials were available in most schools for the purpose of

teaching and learning. Nevertheless, it was observed that the textbooks that were hurriedly published and distributed in schools for the implementation of Social Studies were of a poor quality. This negatively affected the teaching and learning of the subject. In view of the findings and have been concluded, the study recommended among other things that The Ministry of General Education (MoGE) through the Curriculum Development Centre (CDC) should consider allocating more time (periods) to the implementation of Social Studies so that teachers can have enough time to cover all the topics in syllabus. In doing so, this will enable the bulky content in the syllabus to be covered and prepare the learners adequately for the Junior Secondary School Leaving Examinations as well as acquisition of necessary knowledge, skills, attitudes and values for them to function in the society. The Ministry of General Education (MoGE) should expedite the training and recruitment of Social Studies teachers who will come with the content and knowledge to teach the subject as a single discipline unlike what was prevailing in schools where teachers in different subject areas were compelled to teach the subject they were not trained. Training and recruitment of qualified teachers will enhance the teaching and learning process as well as improve the performance of learners in the long run. There is need for the Curriculum Development Centre (CDC) to revise the Social Studies learner's textbooks for junior secondary school in order to improve on the quality of the textbooks. This will enable the right content to be learnt by the learners.

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