

# Exploring Curriculum Hurdles in Implementing the Social Studies Curriculum in Zambia: Perspectives and Experiences of Civic Education Teachers

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## ABSTRACT

The study explored teachers' experiences in the teaching of Social Studies subject at Junior Secondary School in selected schools of Zambia. Employing the qualitative interpretivism research paradigm, the investigation utilized purposive sampling to select participants. Data collection instruments included interview guides for Head of Departments (HODs), Focus Group Discussions (FDGs), and observation checklists for Social Studies Teachers who included Civic Education instructors. Thematic analysis was employed to analyse the collected data. The study revealed a multifaceted perspective on the integration of Civic Education into the Social Studies curriculum. While the integration offered the advantage of streamlining the examination process by consolidating subjects, it also introduced challenges such as content overload, diminished academic performance, resource inadequacies, time constraints in completing the syllabus, elevated pressures on untrained educators, and deficiencies in teaching competency, skills, and techniques. Drawing from these findings, recommendations were made, including the need for the Ministry of General Education (MoGE) to increase the training of Social Studies teachers, provision of essential teaching resources to schools, engagement in seminars, workshops, and continuous professional development (CPDs), and enhancement of school infrastructure. Furthermore, the study proposes that the government should provide support to educators involved in the creation of Social Studies teaching materials, encourage action research practices among teachers, foster collaboration among colleagues to share best teaching practices, and allocate increased funding to schools.

**Keywords:** Social Studies, Civic Education, Teaching, Curriculum Reforms, Curriculum integration

## BACKGROUND

Like most countries in Africa, Zambia undertook some curriculum reforms soon after gaining political independence in 1964. Its colonizers. Curriculum reforms were done in order to Africanize and decolonize the former curricula to meet the growing demands of the Zambian societies and to promote the local cultures. In 2013, curriculum reforms were done in Zambia, which saw three subjects namely Civic Education, History and Geography merged as one subject, and called the subject as Social Studies. The rationale given for merging the three subjects was that they were interrelated, had similar competencies and content standards to equip learners with knowledge, skills, values, and attitudes that would enable them respond to the changing needs of the society (MoE, 2013). These changes were effected at Junior Secondary (grade 8-9) and was compulsory to all learners. Meanwhile, at senior secondary school level (grade 10-12) the contributory subjects of Social Studies in the Zambian Curriculum (Civic Education, History and Geography), continued being taught as independent subjects. Nevertheless, the teaching of Civic Education as part of the Social Studies subject in the Zambian curriculum has received mixed reactions with a number

of research highlighting challenges faced by teachers. In Zambia, a number of studies have been conducted on the implementation and teaching of Social Studies education in schools (Mufalo et al., 2021; Mambwe, 2019; Mambwe, et al., 2019; Mbulo, 2015). However, teachers' experiences in the teaching of Civic Education as part of the Social Studies subject in schools still need further investigation in order to appreciate the causes of poor performance among learners in Social Studies subject. It is against this background that this study was conducted to explore the teachers' experiences in the teaching of Civic Education as part of the Social Studies subject in selected schools of Luanshya district in the Copperbelt Province. However, teachers' experiences in the teaching of Civics as part of the Social Studies subject in schools still need further investigation in order to appreciate the causes of poor performance among learners in Social Studies subject. It is against this background that this study was conducted in Luanshya district in the Copperbelt Province.

### **Statement of the problem**

Research concerning the pedagogy of Civic Education within the broader framework of social studies education in the Zambian context has been notably scarce. Specifically, scholarly investigations that delves into the experiences of educators in the domain of teaching and learning of Civic Education as an integral component of the Social Studies curriculum still needs further interrogation. Previous scholarly work such as that highlighted by Mufalo et al. (2022), is one such researches that attempted to investigate a similar problem in Masaiti District. It is noteworthy that this prior investigation did not place a primary focus on the experiences of teachers engaged in the pedagogical endeavor of Civic Education within the broader context but rather within Masaiti District and had applied a methodology different from one applied here. Furthermore, it is imperative to underscore that previous research exhibited a restricted scope, thereby limiting its capacity for generalizability to diverse educational settings, including those situated in rural, peri-urban, and urban localities within the Luanshya District. This research endeavors to extend scholarship by undertaking an exploratory investigation into the experiences of educators involved in the instruction of Civic Education as an integral facet of the Social Studies curriculum within the specific context of the Luanshya district.

### **Purpose of the study**

The purpose of the study was to explore the teachers' experiences in the teaching of Civic Education as part of the Social Studies subject in selected schools of Luanshya district.

### **Research objectives**

The objectives of the study were to:

1.3.1 Explore teachers' views of teachers on the teaching of Social Studies at Junior secondary in selected schools of Luanshya District.

1.3.2 Establish the interventions instituted by schools to address the challenges experienced by teachers in the teaching of Civic Education at Junior Secondary school.

## **LITERATURE REVIEW**

### **Historical evolution, objectives and priorities in African Social Studies Education.**

Globally, Social Studies education initially started in the United States of America where the Social Studies movement was formed because of the influence of John Dewey (Salia-Bao, 1990). Drake and Burns (2004) pointed out that the movement towards integration of subjects in the curriculum emanated in the early 20th

century when John Dewey questioned the purpose of education and criticized what he saw as the prevailing educational environment.

In Africa, when most countries were securing independence in the 1960s, there was the need for the new leaders and educationists to make changes in the education setting. The first conference was held in 1961 at the Endicott House, Massachusetts Institute of Technology to study some of the problems of education of the emerging nations of Africa and to suggest steps by which those problems could be solved. At the Massachusetts' conference, a Sub-committee on the Humanities and Social Studies was formed (Tamakloe, 1994). They agreed on the following three objectives for Social Studies. Firstly, to sensitize the student to his own culture, to social heritage and to the problems of developing African states and societies. Secondly, to induce a sharp awareness in the students of his own world and of involvement in the wider world of which he is invariably a part and thirdly, to develop the ability to identify and evaluate critically the economic, social, political and moral problems and situations he will face as a citizen (Carnoy, 1974).

Following Zambia's independence in 1964, educators from Zambia and other African nations were concerned about the suitability of the inherited British educational systems for the new emerging nations. This led to a collective effort to reform the educational system, with a particular focus on social studies education. Social studies education has evolved from its origins in Western cultures in the 19th century to its incorporation into teacher colleges and university-based teacher preparation programmes in the 20th century. However, when developing social studies education for junior secondary schools in Zambia, it was crucial to consider the unique definitions and issues associated with this level of education.

In September 1967, representatives from eleven African nations, including Zambia, convened at Queen's Oxford in England to discuss curriculum development priorities for Africa. A year later, they met in Mombasa, Kenya to address fundamental questions related to social studies education. These questions centered on defining social studies, establishing educational objectives, and determining the teaching approach. These discussions provided the framework for organizing social studies education in Zambia.

Merry field & Muyanda-Mutebi (1991) highlighted four key issues that African nations needed to address in their social studies education. Understanding of Interactions: Students should comprehend the interactions between various cultural, social, and physical environments. Appreciation of Heritage: Students should develop an appreciation for their homes and cultural heritages. Academic and Social Skills: The education system should foster the development of academic and social skills and attitudes expected of responsible citizens. Freedom of Expression: Students should have the freedom to express their ideas in various ways.

However, it was observed that many individuals responsible for implementing social studies education, including teachers and teacher educators, lacked a clear understanding of the concept of social studies and often could not differentiate it from the subjects it aimed to replace. Another prevalent challenge in Africa was the shortage of trained and experienced social studies teachers, which hindered the effective delivery of this curriculum.

### **Zambia's Curriculum Reforms and Adaptation**

Over the years, Zambia has undergone multiple curriculum reforms to adapt its education system to changing societal needs. Notable reforms included the 1977 Curriculum Education Reforms, which emphasized special education and the integration of the general education curriculum to meet individual student needs. Adequate funding for special education was also highlighted. The 1992 Focus on Learning curriculum reforms emphasized the importance of providing educational opportunities for all, from children to adults, and stressed the mobilization of resources for education. This policy introduced pre-service training in special education, special education in pre-schools, and established a special education

structure within the Ministry of Education.

The 1996 Educating our Future curriculum reforms aimed to enhance educational flexibility, responsiveness to students' needs, and the overall quality of education for all children. Prior to these reforms, it was noted that the old curriculum was burdened with excessive content, theoretical in nature, exam-focused, and inflexible. It lacked a career-oriented approach, overlooked essential skills and values, used a foreign language as the medium of instruction, and fragmented subjects with similar content. Some content was deemed irrelevant to individual and societal needs and failed to incorporate modern technological aspects, such as Information and Communication Technology (ICT), and crosscutting issues affecting the community.

This assessment of the pre-1996 curriculum led to a baseline survey in 2005, which identified the need for curriculum change. Subsequent activities, including a curriculum symposium and a national curriculum Indaba in 2009, resulted in the development of a revised curriculum that is currently being implemented. In response to evolving societal needs, the Zambian Curriculum Framework was revised in 2013, leading to the merging of Geography, Civics, and History into the subject of Social Studies. Social Studies is now compulsory for all primary and junior secondary school learners in Zambia, except for those in senior secondary school. The curriculum focuses on addressing societal problems, which can vary from one country to another and among different communities

### **The benefits of Social Studies**

In a global context, Social Studies education has been examined in various countries, revealing its significance in fostering awareness, critical thinking, and responsible citizenship among learners.

In India, Tanushree (2008) conducted research highlighting the importance of Social Studies in the school curriculum. This subject exposes students to a wide range of topics, from family and community to global historical events and great world leaders. By studying these subjects, students gain insights into the evolution of societies, significant historical events, enduring ideas, and influential figures. This knowledge equips students with a comprehensive understanding of the world's development and the structures and governance of different societies. Additionally, it helps students situate themselves within this broader global context.

In the United States, the National Council for the Social Studies (NCSS) (2009) emphasized the role of Social Studies in helping learners understand and appreciate real-world issues and society. Social Studies education sparks curiosity about contemporary issues and encourages students to explore the dynamics of society and their roles in shaping the future. Learners engage with topics such as governance, citizenship, diversity, and globalization, which are relevant to their lives as young citizens. This prepares them to take on future responsibilities effectively and actively participate in addressing policy issues rather than relying solely on the government.

### **Challenges in Implementing Social Studies Education in Africa:**

In Africa, particularly in Nigeria, Meziobi et al. (2012) conducted a study on the challenges faced by Social Studies educators in preparing teachers and implementing the Universal Basic Education Programme. Their findings highlighted that Social Studies education fosters critical thinking abilities and higher-order cognitive skills in students. Topics such as natural resources, social systems, and political ideologies encourage students to engage in comprehension, application, analysis, evaluation, synthesis, and creativity. This enables them to make observations, identify patterns and connections, and analyse various contexts and

resources effectively.

Similarly, Chukwuemeka (2014) evaluated the implementation of the Social Studies Curriculum in Junior Secondary Schools in Enugu State, Nigeria, emphasizing that Social Studies equips learners with a relevant body of knowledge, positive values, attitudes, and skills, making them better citizens. The subjects within Social Studies, including Civics and History, impart knowledge about political ideologies, constitutional laws, citizenship, rights and duties, morals, and social conduct. This awareness helps children understand their roles and responsibilities in societal and civic affairs, preparing them for active and reflective participation in society's development.

In Zambia, a number of studies have been conducted on the implementation and teaching of Social Studies education in schools. The findings point to the challenges faced by teachers in teaching Social Studies, including inadequate teaching and learning resources, limited time to cover the subject's content, overcrowded classrooms, and inadequate learning spaces (; Mambwe, 2019; Mambwe, et al., 2019). Mbulo's (2015) also examined lecturers' attitudes toward team teaching in social, spiritual, and moral education. It highlighted how Social Studies education promotes religious and cultural understanding. By exploring different religions, social and cultural beliefs, castes, nationalities, languages, festivals, and family types, social studies fosters an awareness of the diversity and interdependence of societies. This awareness leads to an appreciation of democracy, rights, freedoms, and the need for respect, trust, and balance among various opinions, values, lifestyles, cultures, practices, and ideologies within society. Furthermore, Yilmaz (2008), as cited in Mambwe (2019), emphasized that the fundamental goal of teaching Social Studies is to nurture responsible, critical, reflective, and active citizens capable of making informed decisions about societal issues at the local, state, and global levels.

Lastly, Samwimbila (2017) conducted research on teachers' attitudes toward the revised Social Studies curriculum in Zambia, specifically in Mufumbwe district. The revised curriculum was found to effectively integrate topics from Civics, History, and Geography, reducing redundancy and making syllabus completion more manageable for teachers. Additionally, the curriculum was tailored to local and national contexts, enhancing its relevance and impact on Zambian education. Samwimbila's findings resonate well with the rationale for introducing Social Studies at Junior Secondary in the 2013 curriculum.

### **Challenges in the teaching of Civic Education as part of the Social Studies subject**

Numerous studies conducted globally have examined the challenges faced by teachers in the instruction of Civic Education, History, and Geography as integral components of Social Studies. Each study has shed light on distinct issues related to the implementation of integrated curricula in various educational contexts.

In Turkey, Murat (2014) conducted research and identified challenges in terms of overcrowded classrooms and insufficient time allocated for teaching. Integrated curriculum implementation demands adequate time for preparation, which is hindered by teachers' heavy workloads. Furthermore, teachers faced difficulties in teaching skills relative to concepts and values, as well as teaching values relative to concepts.

In Canada, MacMath (2011) explored challenges arising from the integration of subjects in the curriculum. One significant challenge was the lack of knowledge among some teachers regarding the implementation of integrated subjects. Differences in perception between teachers and administrators regarding what effective implementation entails further compounded this issue. Additionally, teachers implementing an integrated curriculum had to manage co-planning and align their timetables and course plans.

In Africa, Meziobi et al. (2012) investigated the capability of Social Studies teachers to effectively implement the Universal Basic Education (UBE) program in Junior Secondary Schools in Nigeria's Orlu Education Zone. The study revealed that Social Studies teachers were not adequately aware of the objectives

of UBE. Moreover, teacher-training institutions did not adequately prepare Social Studies teachers for UBE implementation. The study also found that teaching did not foster creativity in students, and teachers lacked proficiency in using information and communication technologies (ICT) in instruction.

In Ghana, Ntumi (2016) investigated the challenges faced by pre-school teachers in implementing the early childhood curriculum in the Cape Coast Metropolis. It was found that many pre-school teachers struggled to deliver subject content due to the lack of adequate teaching and learning materials. The study recommended that both private proprietors and government authorities overseeing the pre-school program should provide sufficient resources to support curriculum implementation. The marginalization of Social Studies in classrooms has been well documented and discussed. At the university level, **social studies** methods instructors **face the challenge** of balancing content with pedagogy, ensuring that preservice **teachers** are provided with satisfactory disciplinary learning in subjects most often comprising **social studies, history, geography, civics/government**, and economics as well as the best ways to teach such content to very young children specifically (Fitchett, et al., 2014).

In Zambia, Samwimbila (2017) explored teachers' attitudes toward the implementation of the revised Social Studies curriculum in selected secondary schools in Mufumbwe district. The study revealed several challenges in the implementation of Social Studies at the junior secondary school level, including resource shortages, inadequate training, uncertainty regarding teaching content, and the absence of trained teachers and materials. Additionally, the timing of the curriculum implementation was criticized for not aligning with teachers' input and aspirations.

Similar findings were also echoed by Mufalo et al., (2021). In their research in Zambia, the study identified a significant shortage of teaching and learning materials in schools, which posed a barrier to delivering high-quality education at the junior secondary level. This finding echoes similar observations made by Nwaubani et al. (2016) in Nigeria, who noted a lack of essential instructional resources for Social Studies teachers in junior secondary schools. The finding underscores the importance of teaching and learning materials' availability and their effective utilization in achieving educational outcomes of any subject including Social studies.

Isiteketo (2019) conducted a study on the challenges and opportunities of teaching Geography as part of Social Studies in the revised curriculum in Mwandi district. The study found that a significant number of teachers lacked training in teaching an integrated Social Studies curriculum. Challenges included the shortage of qualified teachers and inadequate teaching and learning materials, especially textbooks. The available materials were often outdated and did not address contemporary societal issues. Isiteketo's study however, solely focused on the challenges associated with teaching Geography within Social Studies, and not Civic Education.

Similarly, Simakando (2019) assessed Social Studies and the teaching of History in Kabwe, Zambia. The study raised concerns about the shortage of qualified Social Studies teachers in Zambian secondary schools, many of whom lacked expertise in the subject. Inconsistencies were observed in the implementation of Social Studies, with some teachers compelled to teach all three components despite their specialization. Challenges included the lack of qualified teachers and teaching materials for the subject. However, this study primarily addressed the challenges of teaching History as part of Social Studies and not Civic Education.

A joint study by Moobola and Mulenga (2020) examined the implementation of the junior secondary school Social Studies curriculum in Chingola district, Zambia. The study identified inadequate time allocation as a significant challenge, as teachers struggled to cover the extensive syllabus within the allocated timeframe. Social Studies was allocated six periods per week, requiring teachers to cover all three integrated components (Geography, History, Civics), which was perceived as insufficient by educators. The study

raised concerns about how learners could effectively grasp the subject if teachers did not cover all topics in the syllabus.

### **Interventions to address the challenges experienced in the teaching of Civic Education**

To address the challenges related to the lack of teachers and learners' resource books in Social Studies, Moobola and Mulenga (2020) emphasized the need for the Curriculum Development Centre (CDC) to revise the Social Studies learner's textbooks for junior secondary school. This revision would aim to enhance the quality of the textbooks, ensuring that the correct content is available for students. It is important to note that the production of Social Studies textbooks is increasingly dominated by multinational corporations with a profit motive. These entities may not prioritize critical awareness of power and wealth dynamics, making it crucial for Social Studies teachers to rely on themselves, networks of critical educators, non-profit publishers, and their local communities as alternative sources of curriculum materials.

To address the challenges related to the shortage of trained teachers in Social Studies, Isiteketo (2019) recommended that the Ministry of General Education (MoGE) expedite the training and recruitment of Social Studies teachers who possess the necessary content knowledge to teach the subject as a single discipline. This would address the prevailing issue where teachers from different subject areas are compelled to teach Social Studies without proper training. The recruitment and distribution of qualified teachers should also be strategic so as to retain teachers where they are needed most (Mitchell, R., Hampton., & Mambwe, R. 2022). This would enhance the quality of teaching and learning, ultimately benefiting students. Additionally, MoGE, in collaboration with schools and resource centers, should organize Continuous Professional Development (CPD) programmes to orient teachers trained in traditional methodologies toward the new integrated curriculum approach. Such programmes would help teachers adapt to new teaching approaches and overcome curriculum-related challenges. To supplement government efforts, Social Studies teachers should also engage in regular in-service training to improve their skills and foster a positive attitude toward the new curriculum, ultimately leading to improved student performance.

Moreover, the challenges related to inadequate time allocated for teaching Social Studies, Moobola and Mulenga (2020) recommended that MoGE, through the CDC, consider allocating more time (periods) to the implementation of Social Studies. This additional time would provide teachers with sufficient opportunity to cover all the topics in the syllabus effectively. Additionally, teachers should prioritize teaching content that is most essential to excite students about the world, encourage critical thinking, and empower them to engage with societal issues.

To address the challenges related to inadequate learning and teaching aids, MoGE should devise strategies for providing high-quality and relevant teaching and learning resources aligned with the revised curriculum. Najumba (2013) highlighted the importance of well-equipped schools in enhancing student performance. Schools with access to appropriate educational facilities tend to perform better in standardized examinations. Therefore, procuring the necessary teaching and learning materials, including updated textbooks, should be a priority for MoGE and schools.

In addressing the challenges through instructional strategies, Sivakumar (2018) advocated for the use of technology in Social Studies education. Integrating technology into instruction can bridge the gap between academic content and real-world applications. The Internet and various technology tools offer diverse learning opportunities for students, making it essential for educators to incorporate technology into their teaching practices. Specific technological resources, such as SMART Boards, blogs, emails, iPods, software programmes, and Internet searches, can enhance the learning experiences of Social Studies students. Technology provides students access to a wide range of information sources and learning opportunities, promoting engagement and critical thinking.

Additionally, Sivakumar (2018) proposed the use of differentiated instruction as an instructional strategy to address challenges related to the integration of Civic Education, History, and Geography in Social Studies. Differentiated instruction aims to personalize learning for each student, recognizing their unique abilities and needs. Co-teaching, involving multiple teachers working with different groups of students in the same class, can facilitate differentiated instruction and accommodate students at various levels of ability and knowledge. This approach supports diverse learners and helps address individual learning needs.

To address the challenges related to the lack of monitoring and supervision of Social Studies in schools, Samwimbila (2019) emphasized the importance of improved monitoring and supervision of new programmes, such as the Social Studies curriculum. This responsibility should be vested in District Education Standards Officers and School Managers, who play a crucial role in overseeing the implementation of educational initiatives. Effective monitoring can identify successes, deficiencies, and challenges encountered during the implementation phase, providing valuable insights for improvement.

In conclusion, addressing the challenges related to the teaching of Civic Education, History, and Geography as components of Social Studies requires a multi-faceted approach. Revising textbooks, recruiting and training qualified teachers, allocating more time for teaching, providing relevant teaching and learning resources, integrating technology, using differentiated instruction, and improving monitoring and supervision are all essential strategies to enhance the effectiveness of Social Studies education. By addressing these challenges, the teaching of Social Studies can better prepare students to engage critically with the world around them and become informed, responsible citizens.

## **METHODOLOGY**

### **Theoretical underpinning**

The study was guided by the Context, Input, Process and Product (CIPP) Evaluation Model devised by Guba, and later developed by Stufflebeam, in the 1960 s (Stufflebeam, 2008). The main purpose of this evaluation model is to measure and assess the work ability of a program. This model helped to assess whether the merging of Civic Education, as part of the Social Studies subject was really working or not. The model has four elements namely Context, Input, Process and Product that explain the work ability of a program. The Context element helped the researcher to assess the learning environments where Civic Education is taught by considering available contact time allocated to teach the subject, number of education periods are adequate, availability of teaching and learning resources and qualified teachers to teach Civic Education. The Input: This element guided the researcher in establishing the learning and teaching resources that are allocated in order to the meet the targeted needs and achieving the targets of teaching and learning of Civic Education. The process element helped the researcher to examine whether the instructional methods and techniques used in teaching Civic Education component of Social Studies are appropriate or not. The product element enabled the researcher to determine whether the merging of Civic Education has achieved its intended purpose. Based on the findings of the study, the researcher made recommendations to improve the teaching and learning of Civic Education, as part of the Social Studies subject (Stufflebeam, 2008).

### **Philosophical Underpinnings and research approach**

This study used the qualitative interpretivism research paradigm because of its strong emphasis on the pursuit of understanding and the exploration of meaning, prioritizing these aspects over the traditional scientific goals of measurement and prediction (Goldkuhl, 2012; Thanh, 2015). Proponents of interpretivism assert that reality is a socially constructed, multifaceted, and constantly evolving entity (Sinaulan, 2022). Consequently, interpretivism seeks to delve into the experiences, perceptions, and interpretations of individuals in order to uncover the underlying fabric of reality (Thanh, 2015). This paradigm has its roots in



a reaction against the dominance of positivism in early social science research (Willis, 2007), as it contends that human actions and behaviors cannot be comprehended through the methods employed in natural sciences (O'Donoghue, 2007). Interpretivism is intricately intertwined with qualitative research methods (Thanh, 2015; Ponterotto, 2005), such as interviews, observations, and document analysis, which are particularly well-suited for exploring the intricate tapestry of human experiences and the meanings individuals attribute to their lived realities (Willis, 2007).

This paradigm helped collect information about people's views, attitudes, and opinions on the challenges faced by teachers in the teaching and learning of Civic Education, as part of the Social Studies subject. 15 participants from three schools in Luanshya district, were purposively sampled comprising of 3 Heads of Social Science Department (one from each school) and twelve 12 Civic Education teachers (four from each school). Interview guides, focused group discussion guides and lesson observation checklists were used to collect data. Thus, aspects of trustworthiness such as credibility, transferability, confirmability and dependability were achieved through instrumental triangulation. Purposive sampling a non-probability sampling technique where researchers handpick participants based on their knowledge and experience with the research topic (Campbell, 2020; Tongco, 2007) was used to select Heads of Social Science Departments and teachers of Civic Education. These participants were believed to have the most information to achieve the objectives of the research (Campbell, 2020). Data was analysed using themes involving open, axial and selective coding of data to generate emerging themes.

## FINDINGS

The study revealed both positive and negative aspects regarding the integration of Civic Education into the Social Studies subject.

### Simplified Examinations

On the positive side, it was found that this merger benefited students as they were only required to take one subject during examinations instead of three separate subjects. This streamlined the assessment process and potentially reduced the burden on students.

In one focus group discussion with the Civic Education teachers from School A, one teacher <T4> pointed out that:

*"I feel the merging of Civic Education as part of the Social Studies subject is good because it benefits the learners as they only write one subject during the examination as opposed to three subjects" (T4, 2022).*

However, some respondents saw simplified examinations as not a good and something that had compromised quality. In one interview for instance, one Head of Department from School B <HOD2> said that:

*"The merging of Civic Education, as part of the Social Studies subject is not good because standards have been compromised, in that learners learn a lot of things but they are assessed on few things" (HOD2, 2022).*

Several other negatives were also identified including Bulkiness of the social studies curriculum, limited time to cover the subject's content, lack of trained social studies teachers, inadequate teaching and learning resources, overcrowded classrooms, and inadequate learning spaces.

### Bulkiness of curriculum

Firstly, the integration resulted in a more substantial and potentially overwhelming curriculum. The content

of three subjects was combined into one, without a corresponding reduction in the amount of material to be covered. This led to concerns that students might not have sufficient time to master all the required content, potentially compromising their performance in the subject.

In a focused Group Discussion, one Civic teacher from School A <T2> observed that,

*“Honestly speaking, I can say that the merging of Civic Education, as part of the Social Studies subject is not good because it has just increased the bulkiness of the subject. Three subjects have been combined as one subject, but the content has not been reduced” (T2, 2022).*

Another Head of Department from (HOD) School B during interviews <HOD2> observed that:

*“One of the barriers is that teaching is too involving due to bulkiness of the subject. Further, there are inadequate teaching and learning materials for teaching Civic Education in the classroom and school” (HOD2, 2022).*

### **Limited time to cover the subject’s content**

The reduced number of teaching periods dedicated to Social Studies, now including Civic Education, had adverse effects. The limited time available for instruction placed increased pressure on teachers, especially those who were not adequately trained or competent in delivering all three components of Social Studies effectively. This could have contributed to poorer student performance, as teachers may have struggled to cover the material comprehensively.

In another focused group discussion, one Civic Education teacher from School B <T5> lamented that:

*“The merging of Civic Education, as part of the Social Studies subject is not good because we do not even finish covering the whole syllabus. The syllabus has become wider than the way it used to be” (T5, 2022).*

One Civic Education teachers from School C during focused Group Discussion <T9>, reported that,

*“In fact, I can say that the merging of Civic Education, as part of the Social Studies subject has brought more harm than good things. This is because the failing rate of pupils in our school has increased” (T9, 2022).*

### **Lack of trained social studies teachers**

The negative impact on student performance was corroborated by reports of increased failure rates in some schools. Head of Department interviews revealed that teachers who were trained in only one component of Social Studies were feeling overwhelmed by the broader curriculum, potentially leading to reduced teaching quality and, consequently, compromised student outcomes. This has increased pressure on untrained teachers who had no skills and competency in teaching all the three components of Social Studies. This was reflected in following responses from one Head of Department from school A during interviews <HOD1>:

*“The merging of Civic Education, as part of the Social Studies subject is not good because it has increased pressure on teachers who trained in one component only. I think this has contributed to poor performance of pupils” (HOD1, 2022).*

Furthermore, One Head of Department <HOD1> from School A during interviews reported that:

*“All the Social Studies teachers I have in my department are trained in either History or Geography only,*

*so they don't have competence and skills for teaching Civic Education to the learners" (HOD1, 2022).*

In one focus group discussion with the Civic Education teachers from School A, one teacher <T12> pointed out that:

*"In most cases, the instructional methods used in the teaching of Civic Education are not appropriate because teachers lack of teaching skills among the teachers to teach all the three components" (T4, 2022).*

In another focus group discussion with the Civic Education teachers from School B, one teacher <T8> revealed that:

*"Since most teachers in our school are not trained in Civic Education, one would also question their ability to make modification in the instructional methods used in the teaching of Civic Education" (T8, 2022).*

During one focus group discussion with the Civic Education teachers from School C, one teacher <T12> highlighted that:

*"Most of the teaching strategies or techniques used in the teaching of Civic Education are not appropriate due to lack of teaching skills among the teachers" (T12, 2022).*

Further, during the interviews with one of the Heads of Department <HOD1> from School A, it was reported that:

*"Most of the teachers in my school lack teaching skills among the teachers to teach all the three components (HOD1, 2022).*

Furthermore, another Head of Department from School B during interviews <HOD3> reported that:

*"There is lack of teachers and learners' resource books, lack of trained teachers in Social Studies and inadequate time allocated for teaching. The inadequacy of Social Studies teaching materials most especially textbooks hamper effective delivery of Social Studies education" (HOD2, 2022).*

### **Inadequate teaching learning resources**

Furthermore, there were concerns about inadequate teaching materials to support the instruction of all three components of Social Studies effectively. This limitation could hinder teachers' ability to deliver the curriculum comprehensively. One interviewee from School C <HOD3> revealed that:

*"The merging of Civic Education, as part of the Social Studies subject is not good because there is inadequate materials to use to teach all the three components" (HOD3, 2022).*

### **Inadequate teaching spaces**

Clouded classrooms were equally reported as one challenge that made the teaching of social studies in integrated nature even more challenging. There was also unsuitable sitting arrangement due to lack of desks in the school, and inadequate learning space in schools due to overcrowded classrooms In one focus group discussion with the Civic Education teachers from School A, one teacher <T1> pointed out that:

*"The learning environment is appropriate for teaching and learning of Civic Education. However, the time*

*allocated to teach Social Studies in schools is inadequate and teachers do not complete the syllabus within two years. For example, Social Studies is allocated six periods per week, where teachers are required to teach learners all the three integrated components, which is not enough because there is a lot of content to be covered against the limited amount of time allocated to the subject in the curriculum” (T1, 2022).*

Another Civic Education teacher during focus group discussion from School B <T6> lamented that:

*“The classroom layout is appropriate for all the learners, but the only challenge is the sitting arrangement is not suitable for all the learners due to lack of desks in the school” (T6, 2022).*

One other Civic Education teacher during focus group discussion from School C <T10> observed that:

*“There is inadequate learning space in schools due to overcrowded classrooms. Therefore, it is difficult to make an appropriate sitting arrangement in the classroom” (T10, 2022).*

Further, during the interviews with one of the Heads of Department <HOD1> from School A, it was reported that:

*“With the introduction of the free education by the New Dawn government, there is inadequate learning space in schools due to overcrowded classrooms. Most classrooms have few desks, so in some classes learners are sitting 3 sometimes even 4” (HOD1, 2022).*

Furthermore, another Head of Department <HOD2> from School B during interviews pointed out that:

*“Although there is adequate lighting and ventilation in the classrooms, the greatest challenge is inadequate learning spaces. Some learners even sit on the mats due to limited desks in the school” (HOD2, 2022).*

Additionally, one other Head of Department from School C <HOD3> confirmed that:

*“Honestly, there is no sitting arrangement of any kind in my class. How can you arrange the desks if they are not there? Pupils have nowhere to sit in classrooms” (HOD3, 2022).*

In summary, while the integration of Civic Education into the Social Studies subject had certain advantages, such as simplifying examinations, it also brought about challenges, including a more extensive curriculum, time constraints, and increased pressure on teachers. These challenges appeared to have negative consequences for student performance and the quality of instruction.

### **Interventions Instituted by Schools to Improve Teachers’ Experiences:**

The study identified various interventions that schools have implemented to address the challenges associated with teaching Civic Education within Social Studies:

#### **Teacher Professional Development**

Schools organized seminars, workshops, and Continuous Professional Development (CPD) programmes to orient teachers on effective teaching strategies for the subject. Head of Department from School A mentioned,

*“We usually have school-based seminars, workshops, and CPDs where teachers are oriented on the best teaching strategies for teaching the subject” (HOD1, 2022).*

### **Action Research Practices**

Some schools engaged in action research practices to discover new teaching methods and strategies for Civic Education. Civic Education teacher from School C stated,

“We are engaged in action research practices to discover new teaching methods and strategies for teaching the subject” (T9, 2022).

### **Consultation and Collaboration**

Teachers sought advice and consultation from colleagues to enhance their teaching approaches. Head of Department from School B mentioned, “No man is an island, sometimes we consult from our colleagues on how best we can teach the subject” (HOD2, 2022).

### **Improvisation of Teaching Resources**

In the absence of adequate teaching materials, teachers used their creativity to improvise teaching aids. Civic Education teacher from School A stated, “Although there are inadequate teaching and learning resources to make good teaching aids, we just improvise” (T1, 2022).

### **Remedial Support for Struggling Learners**

Some schools provided remedial work and increased learning time for students who struggled in Civic Education. Civic Education teacher from School A mentioned, “To help slow learners or those performing poorly in Civic Education, we provide some remedial works and we have increased their learning time especially during prep time” (T4, 2022).

### **Addressing Overcrowding and Desk Shortages**

Schools introduced additional learning streams to tackle overcrowding issues and the limited availability of desks in classrooms. Civic Education teacher from School C pointed out, “The school has introduced more learning streams to address the challenges of overcrowdings and limited numbers of desks in the classrooms” (T10, 2022).

### **Book Writing Initiatives**

Some schools engaged in writing books for Social Studies to mitigate the shortage of textbooks. Head of Department from School C mentioned, “We have engaged in writing books for social studies to address the challenges of shortages of books in schools” (HOD3, 2022).

In conclusion, the study highlights the complex nature of integrating Civic Education into the Social Studies subject, with both positive and negative implications. Schools have responded to the challenges by implementing various interventions aimed at improving the teaching of Civic Education within the integrated curriculum, including professional development, collaboration, resource improvisation, and remedial support for students

## **DISCUSSION**

The findings of this study provide valuable insights into the complex issues surrounding the integration of Civic Education into the Social Studies subject. It has brought about both positive and negative aspects, as revealed in this study. One positive outcome is the simplification of examinations, where students are only

required to take one subject instead of three separate subjects. This streamlined approach potentially reduces the assessment burden on students as noted by Hiebert and Morris (2012), who argue that integration can lead to more coherent and manageable assessments. However, some stakeholders argue that simplified examinations compromise quality by assessing learners on fewer aspects of the subject.

However, the concerns about the bulkiness of the curriculum and the limited time to cover content align with the challenges commonly associated with curriculum integration. Research by Darling-Hammond (2017) emphasizes that integrating multiple subjects into one curriculum can lead to content overload, making it challenging for teachers to cover all required material effectively. By combining the content of three subjects into one without reducing the material covered has raised concerns about students' ability to master all required content adequately. Additionally, the limited time allocated to cover the subject's content exacerbates this issue, placing increased pressure on teachers, especially those not adequately trained or competent in delivering all three components of Social Studies effectively. This is underscored by Al-Maamari et al. (2014) whose study revealed that Social Studies received insufficient instructional time, with only three to four class periods allocated per week. This limited timeframe unfortunately, adversely impacted the delivery of the subject, as many teachers struggled to cover the extensive syllabus within the given time constraints.

Moreover, lack of specialized training in Social Studies among teachers was a curriculum gap identified in this study and many other studies (Moobola and Mulenga, 2020; Eshun et al., 2019; Hollstein, 2018; Kanda and Kankam, 2015; Mambwe and Enala 2022). Most teachers assigned to teach social studies were trained in either one or two contributory subjects of Social Studies. Thus, teachers struggled to teach the broader curriculum of social studies, leading to compromised learning outcomes. The importance of effective teacher preparation to achieve learning outcomes is echoed in many literatures on teacher education and is consistent with the findings of Mambwe, (2019) and Mambwe et al., (2019) who emphasize the importance of teacher preparation and professional development in curriculum integration. Further, the lack of appropriately trained teachers and inadequate teaching resources identified in the study is a recurring issue in many educational systems and studies (Mitchel et al., 2022; Mufalo et al., 2022; Mambwe and Lufungulo, 2022; Mufalo et al., 2021; Mambwe, 2019; Mambwe, et al., 2019; and Sleeter & Stillman, 2013). This is further worsened by overcrowded classrooms, and inadequate learning spaces, which prevent effective classroom instruction.

To address identified challenges, schools have implemented various interventions. These include teacher professional development programmes, action research practices to discover effective teaching methods, consultation and collaboration among teachers, improvisation of teaching resources, remedial support for struggling learners, addressing overcrowding and desk shortages, and even initiatives such as book writing to mitigate the shortage of textbooks.

The interventions instituted by schools align with strategies commonly recommended in the literature to address the challenges of curriculum integration. For example, the organization of school-based seminars, workshops, and Continuous Professional Development (CPD) programmes reflects the importance of ongoing teacher professional development (Lieberman & Miller, 2011). These initiatives are essential for equipping teachers with the skills and knowledge needed to navigate integrated curricula successfully.

Engaging in action research practices and seeking consultations from colleagues are strategies that promote collaborative learning and knowledge sharing among teachers (Hargreaves & Fullan, 2012). Collaborative practices can help teachers develop effective teaching strategies and adapt to the demands of integrated curricula.

The improvisation of teaching and learning resources echoes the resourcefulness of teachers in addressing resource shortages (Kusumawati et al., 2020). This practice aligns with the concept of "teacher agency,"

where educators take the initiative to create or adapt resources to meet the specific needs of their students (Priestley et al., 2015).

Addressing issues related to overcrowded classrooms and inadequate learning spaces is crucial for creating a conducive learning environment. Research by UNESCO (2019) emphasizes the importance of adequate infrastructure in schools to ensure quality education. Schools' efforts to introduce additional learning streams and increase learning time align with the goal of enhancing educational access and quality (UNESCO, 2021).

The paradox however, is that despite all these efforts meant to address the challenges, performance of learners in national assessments in social studies have below average.

In the 2016 national examinations, the Examinations Council of Zambia analysis report of subject performance, revealed a concerning trend in the junior secondary level's Social Studies scores nationwide. The findings indicated a remarkably low pass rate of 39.65%, falling even below the standardized pass mark of 40% (ECZ, 2017). The results summary from the 2019 grade 9 external examinations, also conducted by the Examinations Council of Zambia, highlighted Social Studies as having the second-highest proportion of candidates failing, standing at 74.46% (ECZ, 2019).

## CONCLUSION

In conclusion, while the integration of Civic Education into the Social Studies subject offers benefits such as simplified examinations, the study findings also revealed that it presents significant challenges that impact the quality of education delivery and student performance in social studies. Schools' efforts to address these challenges through interventions aimed at enhancing teaching practices and resource availability underscore the importance of ongoing support and innovation in education. The interventions instituted by schools are consistent with existing literature on curriculum integration and teacher professional development. It underscores the fact that addressing the challenges of curriculum integration requires a multifaceted approach that includes ongoing teacher training, collaborative practices, resourcefulness, and improvements in educational infrastructure. By aligning their practices with evidence-based strategies, schools can work towards improving the quality of education and the experiences of both teachers and students in integrated curricula.

## RECOMMENDATIONS

Based on the findings and discussions presented in the study, several recommendations can be proposed to address the challenges and capitalize on the advantages associated with the integration of Civic Education into the Social Studies curriculum.

### Curriculum Review and Streamlining

There is need to conduct a comprehensive review of the integrated curriculum to identify redundancies and areas where content can be streamlined. Consider reducing the volume of content in the integrated curriculum to alleviate the burden on both teachers and students. Ensure that the curriculum is designed to promote critical thinking, active citizenship, and real-world problem-solving skills.

### Teacher Training and Professional Development

There is also need to develop and implement targeted training programmes and continuous professional development (CPD) opportunities for teachers to enhance their competencies in teaching all three components of Social Studies effectively. Encourage educators to pursue specialized training in Social Studies to address the shortage of trained teachers in this area. Foster collaboration between experienced and

novice teachers to facilitate knowledge sharing and mentorship.

### **Adequate Teaching and Learning Resources**

Investment in the development and provision of up-to-date teaching materials and resources that align with the integrated curriculum is a must. Educators should be encouraged to create and share teaching aids and resources to supplement the limited resources available and establish a system for the regular assessment and procurement of necessary teaching materials, including textbooks, to ensure their adequacy.

### **Infrastructure Improvement**

Addressing the issue of overcrowded classrooms and inadequate learning spaces is a difficult one due to limited resource bucket under the Ministry of Education. However, by expanding school infrastructure and providing sufficient desks and seating arrangements as well as implementing staggered schedules or double shifts to accommodate all students and ensure an appropriate learning environment.

### **Research and Innovation:**

Promoting action research practices among educators to discover and implement innovative teaching methods and strategies tailored to Civic Education within the integrated Social Studies curriculum can help. Educators need to engage and participate in research collaborations and share best practices with colleagues to foster a culture of innovation.

### **Assessment and Evaluation:**

The need to develop a well-structured and comprehensive assessment system that evaluates students on a broader spectrum of knowledge and skills acquired from the integrated curriculum and also ensure that assessments align with the curriculum learning outcome that emphasize critical thinking, problem-solving, and active citizenship is a way to go.

### **Remedial Support:**

Based on the findings, the practice of offering remedial classes or support programmes for students who struggle with the integrated curriculum, and ensuring that no student is left behind should continue and be supported. This can be done by extending learning time during prep periods or after-school sessions to provide additional support to students, especially those facing difficulties.

### **Collaboration and Consultation:**

The need to foster a collaborative environment among teachers, schools, and educational authorities to exchange ideas and strategies for improving the teaching of Civic Education within the integrated Social Studies curriculum will go a long way. Regular consultations with educators to gather feedback on the challenges they face and seek their input on potential improvements should be encouraged.

### **Continuous Monitoring and Evaluation:**

Implementing a system for continuous monitoring and evaluation of the integrated social studies curriculum's effectiveness, lessons learned with regular feedback loops to make necessary adjustments and improvements should be encouraged.

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