



Social studies and the teaching of history at senior secondary in Kabwe district, Zambia

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Abstract

Aim: This research aimed to evaluate Social Studies and History teaching in the Kabwe District of Zambia's Central Province. Junior high school students take a Social Studies course covering history, geography, and citizenship. There is no distinction between the three, and all are treated equally.

Findings: According to the findings, the introduction of Social Studies into the Zambian curriculum has resulted in a variety of different instructional approaches. Teachers in some institutions were expected to cover all three facets of Social Studies even though they may have only received instruction in teaching one or two of these areas. It's been my experience that in some schools, teachers teach the different parts based on their own areas of expertise. Despite its many benefits, it was discovered to have drawbacks, such as a dearth of properly trained instructors and appropriate teaching materials.

Implications/Novel Contribution: This research showed that the introduction of Social Studies has negatively impacted students' ability to perform well in history at the high school level. This is because most Social Studies teachers lack the proper credentials to teach the subject. Furthermore, government agencies failed to provide sufficient, high-quality resources for teaching. As a result, the study recommends that the government reconsider Social Studies and have extensive discussions with curriculum specialists and educators about how to best implement the subject.

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INTRODUCTION & LITERATURE REVIEW

This paper aims to investigate the state of social studies and history teaching in Zambia's central Kabwe District. At the junior high school level in Zambia, history, civics, and geography have all been treated as separate subjects since independence. The 2013 Revised Curriculum combined all three disciplines into a single course known simply as "social studies." To help readers better understand the Zambian education system's journey, some of the foundational educational reforms in the country have been outlined. The rationale behind social studies' expansion into middle schools has also been investigated. Another issue in this paper is how well social studies are taught in schools compared to what the ministry expects. The effect of social studies on high-teaching history classes has been studied.

Zambia has witnessed a number of reforms in her education sector from 1964 when she attained her independence to the present. These reforms have been done by government in partnership with other stakeholders like curriculum specialists, teachers, parents, political leaders and many more. The need to introduce some reforms in the Zambian education system was necessitated by different challenges that came out prominently in the education sector. According to Kelly (2015), the education system encourages young people to seek white-collar employment to the exclusion of jobs requiring manual and technical skills. The desire by most of the school-going children to acquire white-collar jobs was seen as a big threat to the Zambian society because it was not possible for all the school leavers to be accommodated in sectors with jobs that are described as white-collar jobs.

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In addition, Kelly (2015) observed that the curriculum was too bookish and theoretical, with little attention to practical and useful skills. Most educational institutions are non-productive, including many of those where excellent facilities exist for productive work. Kelly's observation was very accurate because the Zambian education system after independence did not put much emphasis on practical subjects. Theory subjects were the major subject that were covered in the education system then. Finally, Kelly (2015) observed that, the most central thing about the education we are at present providing is that it is basically an elitist education designed to meet the needs of a very small proportion of those who enter the school system. With a kind of education system that had a curriculum that encouraged learners to seek white-collar jobs, schools were non-productive and a curriculum whose education was directed towards meeting the needs of few people in society, it was prudent for the Zambian government to introduce some reforms in the education sector in order to come up with a curriculum that would accommodate and benefit everyone in the country.

As a result of the challenges discussed above and many other challenges faced in the education system, the Zambian government had no option but to come up with some education reforms. Notably of these education reforms were the *Education Policy Reforms* of 1977, *Focus on Learning* of 1992 and *Educating Our Future* of 1996. Alexander (2003) outlines that:

The need for major educational reform emerged from both a technical and functional viewpoint and from one concerned with more egalitarian social, economic and educational institutions. It was clear that piecemeal changes in the syllabus, expansion and improved teacher training, even if funds were available, could not rid the educational system of its effect of producing large numbers of primary and secondary school leavers with aspirations for jobs in the modern sector which were not available.

The first major educational policy document in the Zambian educational system was the Educational Reform of 1977 which was as a result of the comprehensive evaluation of the Zambian education system that started soon after Zambia became independent in 1964. The Ministry of Education (1977) expounds that:

These reforms stressed education as a tool for national and personal development. Formal institutional education, that is, the education provided through pre-schools, schools, colleges and institutes; organised institutional and learning through radio, television, correspondence and part-time classes, courses mounted at places of work or by community agencies and other forms of systematic education were emphasised in this policy document.

In addition, these reforms stated the goals and principles of the education system that was desired for the Zambian people. The methods of implementing these reforms were outlined although other details like the curriculum and syllabuses were not covered as they were reserved for specialists, teachers and other concerned officials.

The second important and notable educational reform was the 1992 *Focus on learning* whose emphasis was on resource mobilization for the development of school education. The highest priority in the development of school education was given to primary school development. Primary school education development was to be attained through a number of strategies. Firstly, the government was to provide resources for the expansion, development and rehabilitation of primary schools and primary teacher training colleges. Secondly, the government was to provide an enabling environment for teaching and learning through the provision of textbooks, supplementary readers and library books and educational materials to primary schools. Thirdly, promoting professional growth among primary school teachers was to be another strategy to be used in the growth of education in primary schools. The last strategy was to improve the curriculum to suit community needs.

At secondary level, the government was to ensure that resources were allocated to different projects which would see the growth of education in the country. To start with, priority in the allocation of resources was given to rehabilitation of classrooms, laboratories and specialist rooms. These needed a lot of resources as most of them were in a deplorable condition. Due to lack of learning and teaching aids in most schools, priority was given to the provision of textbooks, library books and other needed educational materials. Moreover, the government saw it fit to re-equip laboratories in order for science experiments to be conducted successfully. The challenges faced by the ministry due to poor competences by school managers were to be addressed by improving the professional and

managerial competences of head teachers. Finally, school inspectors were to be given funding in order for them to carry out their professional activities.

The third and final major educational policy document done by the Ministry of Education (MOE) in consultation with other stake holders that was arrived at through review process of the formal education system that had begun in 1993 was *Educating Our Future* of 1996. The essence of the review was to find an appropriate framework for development of the education system of Zambia. Moreover, this policy document paid particular attention to democratisation, productivity and decentralisation. Curriculum relevance, cost-effective management, capacity building, cost sharing, diversification and many others are among other themes addressed by this policy. Due to the fact that the Zambian Government desired that all its citizens should have had access to quality education, interventions were put in place to make sure that education for all was attainable by all the citizens. According to the Ministry of education, the Zambian government recognises the basic right of every Zambian to good quality education. Hence, emphasis in this *National Policy* has been placed on such key factors of educational provision access, equity and quality maintenance at all delivery points in the system.

Having put *Educating Our Future* of 1996 in place, the Ministry of Education did not implement all the plans laid down at once. Some activities that required immediate implementation were done as soon as the document was done where as others which needed adequate time and resources were implemented in bits. It is vital to mention here that some of the policies in this document were not implemented there and then. They were to be implemented gradually. [Ministry of Education \(1977\)](#) asserts that:

Some of the policies set forth in this document can be implemented immediately, whereas others will require a more prolonged period of time. From time to time, a separate implementation or strategic plan will be produced on the basis of this *National Policy*, indicating the actual priority activities to be undertaken, the financial resources required, the time frames, and the major actors involved. As with the development of the document itself, development will be on partnership basis, in full consultation with all concerned parties.

Following the above discussed education reforms, the Zambian curriculum through a separate implementation plan called Zambian Curriculum Review of 2013 saw the birth of social studies. One may wonder as to why the Zambian government through the Ministry of Science, Vocational Training and Early Education decided to merge history, civics and geography into one subject, social studies.

The idea of subject integration is not new in the Zambian education policy documents. According to the Ministry of Education (*ibid*) several areas and issues, instead of being offered as independent subjects, needed to be integrated across the curriculum. This therefore confirms that the introduction of Social Studies was within the Zambian Educational Reforms. Furthermore, some scholars like Kochhar believe that to enhance quality education subjects with similar content should be integrated if the learners are to understand well what they learn in school. [Kochhar \(1984\)](#) observes that:

One of the most significant developments of the twentieth century education is the emphasis on imparting unified, integrated and meaningful knowledge,. It is believed that the child's mind is an integrated whole which welcomes experiences as a unity and not as a collection of separate unconnected fragments. The reciprocal relationship which exists among the diversity of subjects needs to be established. This relationship makes study easier, more interesting and more natural.

[Kochhar \(1984\)](#) observation is very important in the Zambian education systems. This is so because learners easily understand similar concepts by relating them to what they learn in other topics from other subjects. For instance, merging history with geography as components in social studies is prolific because the two subjects have a lot of commonalities to share. According to [Kochhar \(1984\)](#),

History and geography are most intimately related; in fact, they are twins, one stresses time and the other space. History studies people of different times and geography deals with the people of different places. Historical facts can serve as a good basis for arousing interest for geographical studies: geography offers explanations for historical actions for mankind.

[Kochhar \(1984\)](#) adds that:

It is obvious that both are allied subjects. No history of a people or country could be complete without some reference to space nor can a geographical account be intelligible without reference to development in time. It is for this reason that it is said that history without geography and geography without history are unthinkable. Since the close of the 17th century, such a mutual and intimate relationship between these two vital subjects of human knowledge has come to be emphasised as an important part of the school curriculum.

Rao (2012) expounds that, “While discussing which came first, geography or history, German philosopher Kant said, ‘geography lies at the basis of history’, and Herder said that ‘history is geography set in motion’.”

With the above justification from Kochhar and Rao, the integration of history and geography does not deserve to be questioned because the two subjects complement each other when they are taught and learnt as one subject by young ones at junior level. Having achieved the basics of the two subjects at primary level, learners can easily comprehend advanced concepts when the two subjects are split at senior level. Brown (1967) supports this view by pointing out that:

Dealing with the needs of the present is not part of history. Other subjects are involved: Economics, Geography, Sociology, Citizenship to name but a few. These subjects - since everything and everybody has a history - cannot be considered as subjects isolated from History. For this reason, History, Geography, Citizenship and similar subjects are sometimes taught together as one subject: Social Studies.

Brown (1967) further expounds that:

In Africa a number of countries are adopting the idea of teaching Social Studies to younger students as a basis for either more intellectual citizenship for those who leave school at an early age or as the basis for the more specialised study of History, Geography, and possibly Economics, for those who are continuing their education.

Apart from the close relationship that exists between history and geography, there is also a closer relationship between history and civics. Just like it is with history and geography, history and civics complement each other when they are learnt as one subject by children in primary schools. Rao (2012) outlines that:

History helps in the understanding of other social science disciplines such as political science, economics and psychology. Mans eternal quest for power and orderly government suited to his needs constitutes the theme of political history. Again, mans eternal quest for better livelihood and material goods constitute the theme of economic history. The knowledge of both history and civics may enable the ruling elite to plan and work for a better future. History has studied human nature for centuries, and therefore is in a position to promote peace and happiness of mankind.

Integrating history with civics and geography was a good move which would yield positive results if well implemented and supported by all stake holders. This is so because, according to Kochhar (1984), history is not a subject at all but a house in which all subjects dwell. Kochhar (1984) adds that history gives all the separate art disciplines the best and most fruitful junction with the natural sciences also. It can, in fact, be treated as a temporal canvas against which the facts learned in other subjects can be arranged and made meaningful. Kochhar (1984) further states that history provides a basis and perspective to the important topics in social studies such as education, population, war, trade union movement, towns and cities, customs and social moves etc.

The other critical issue that led to the introduction of social studies was the desire by the government to introduce a broader curriculum that would incorporate technology and practical subjects in the education system. One would wonder how the integration of history, civics and geography would enable the curriculum to incorporate technology and practical subjects. The answer is simple. Firstly, merging the three subjects meant that the number of subjects on the time table reduced by two since the three become one. Moreover, social studies was allocated six periods in a week. Before the three subjects were integrated, each one of them had three periods in a week giving a total of nine periods for the three subjects. Having integrated the three subjects created three free slots on the time table which were given to technological and practical subjects. The government decided to broaden

the curriculum by introducing technological and practical subjects due to the fact that most of the school leavers could not find jobs in the labour market. “The Ministry will undertake an extensive review of the Grade 8 and 9 curriculum to ensure that it provides a broad and balanced education that caters for a wide spread of pupil ability and includes an increased emphasis on the vocational orientation of all subjects” (Ministry of Education, 1996; Meidrina, Mawaddah, Siahaan, & Widayarsi, 2017; Nuchso, Tuntivivat, & Klayklung, 2016). In addition, Serpell (2010) posits that in the context of rapid increasing numbers not being able to be absorbed into the labour market, some questions were raised about the relevance of schooling and attention was given to diversification of the curriculum and the idea of adaptation to the local environment. Snelson (1990) condemned an academic education by pointing out that:

An academic education was quite unstable for an African child. If education was to be a preparation for life, as it should be, then a considerable portion of a schools working week must be devoted to manual work. Apart from working in the school garden, older boys should learn woodwork and other practical skills.

Nyerere (1967) criticised an inherited educational system highlighting that such a system was an elite system, an alienating education, a bookish and qualifications-oriented education and non-productivity of students. Such an education system was not good for Zambia as it encouraged learners to target white-collar jobs which were rarely available in Zambia. Moreover, such an education system was not favourable for Zambia because it excluded jobs requiring manual and technical skills which could have led the nation to greater heights. Kelly (2015) adds that the curriculum was too bookish and theoretical, with too little attention to practical and useful skills. Most educational institutions were non-productive, including many of those where excellent facilities exist for productive work.

With the above challenges having been noticed in the Zambian education system, the government was left with no option but to change the curriculum in schools in order to accommodate technological and practical subjects. As earlier mentioned, this is what led to the introduction of social studies at junior level in the Zambian school curriculum.

METHODOLOGY

This study was conducted using various methods and sources in order to come up with the necessary data. Purposive sampling procedure was employed during data collection. The study used qualitative data collection method. Primary data was collected from primary and secondary school teachers in Kabwe District where as secondary data was collected from different written literature at Kwame Nkrumah University and the University of Zambia libraries. Moreover, internet sources were of great help during data collection. During data collection, questionnaires were given to teachers of social studies and history in primary and secondary schools respectively. The questionnaires used were semi-structured with open-ended questions. Twenty three teachers (14 males and 9 females) were interviewed from the twenty seven secondary schools whereas thirty teachers (19 males and 11 females) were interviewed from fifty nine primary schools in Kabwe District.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Most of the teachers interviewed from primary and secondary schools in Kabwe District did not know exactly why government introduced social studies. However, two prominent answers came out from the respondents as reasons for merging the three subjects. First, some teachers indicated that government merged the three subjects to save money because few teachers would be required to teach social studies at junior level hence reducing government wage bill. One respondent stated that the introduction of social studies is nothing other than a cost saving measure by the government. Secondly, teachers indicated that the integration of history, civics and geography as one subject was done politically. To justify this view, one respondent indicated that teachers, as stake holders in the education system, were not consulted in any way and this was proof enough to them that the introduction of social studies was a dictated policy on the system by politicians. The aspect of social studies being a dictated policy on the education sector seemed to have been true as one of my respondents from the Curriculum Development Centre (CDC) confirmed that curriculum specialist from CDC were not consulted when social studies was introduced in 2013. The implementation of social studies has taken different routes despite the Ministry of

Science, Vocational Training and Early Educations desire to have the subject implemented uniformly in all schools. Some of the salient features of social studies in its implementation had to do with teacher preparation or planning. As soon as social studies was introduced, the ministry sensitized teachers on how preparation was to be done. The ministry told teachers to make sure that when preparing a social studies schemes of work all the three components from the three subjects (History, Civics and Geography) were integrated in one scheme of work. This meant that none of the three contributing subjects was to be planned as a standalone subject in the schemes of work. When writing lesson plans, teachers were expected to write them as social studies lesson plans and not the contributing subject where the lesson came from. Moreover, the time table also was to reflect social studies and not History, Civics or Geography.

When it came to teaching, the ministry expected one teacher to handle social studies in a given class. This was despite the fact that there were no teachers that were trained in social studies. A teacher handling social studies was not supposed at any point to write on the board or mention history, civics or geography in the process of teaching. For instance, when going to teach a lesson on human rights, or the origins of man, the teacher obviously knew that the competences he was teaching were from civics or history respectively but he was not supposed to mention that to the learners. If this was to be followed strictly, learners were not going to know in any way that social studies was an integration of three subjects because they never had any experience of learning the three components of social studies as standalone subjects. Learners, in short, were not supposed to know that social studies was an integrated subject. They were supposed to know it as a single subject just like they know English, Mathematics, Religious Education and many more.

Assessment was yet another aspect of serious consideration in the 2013 Revised Curriculum, particularly to do with social studies. Having integrated History, Civics and Geography, the teachers were expected to give integrated assessment. For example, in a mid-term or end of term test a teacher was supposed to prepare three parts drawing questions from each of the three components of social studies. A teacher could prepare a test in such a way that section A had questions from history, section B from civics and section C from geography. In such kind of an integrated test, at no point was a teacher supposed to write history, civics or geography. The only subject that was to come out was social studies.

Despite governments desire to have social studies implemented uniformly in all the schools, a lot of variations were observed in schools in Kabwe District during data collection. To start with, contrary to governments desire for teachers to write integrated schemes of work for social studies, some schools, especially primary and newly upgraded secondary schools, prepared three schemes of work i.e. history, civics and geography independently. One of my respondents from a primary school explained that it was not correct for one scheme of work to be written for three subjects. However, few secondary schools had integrated schemes of work. In addition, lesson planning was found to be a common problem in most schools as teachers wrote history, civics or geography instead of social studies on their lesson plans. Records of work also showed history, civics or geography write on top of each sheet of paper. By writing specific subjects on the lesson plans and records of work, it meant that teachers had not yet migrated from the teaching of the three subjects as independent ones to social studies.

Another serious challenge that was observed was to do with the time table. Despite some schools showing social studies on their time tables, other schools were found with time tables that reflected independent subjects, i.e. history, geography and civics. Furthermore, other schools timetabled social studies as SS1, SS2 and SS3. One of the respondents from the school where SS1, SS2 and SS3 were used explained that SS1 was history, SS2 geography and SS3 was civics. Finally, other schools indicated social studies on their time tables but with history, civics or geography in brackets for each period. When asked to explain why independent subjects were put in brackets, one of the respondents indicated that putting independent subjects in brackets helped teachers to know the actual subjects to teach because social studies was a combination of three subjects.

Instead of following governments decision where a class of social studies was to be taught by one teacher, schools implemented it differently. Some schools, especially established secondary schools, allowed two or three teachers to teach social studies in a class. Two teachers were given to teach a class of social studies if one of them was trained in any two components and then the other teacher taught the third component. If there was no one trained in any two of the components of social studies, three teachers were given to teach, each a component of

his/her specialisation. When asked to explain why two or three teachers were given to teach the same subject in one class, one of the head teachers stated that his school had no qualified teachers of social studies. However, there were isolated cases where social studies was taught by one teacher. This was very common in primary schools where there were no qualified teachers to teach any of the components of social studies. In such cases, primary trained teachers were willing to teach all the three components of social studies. One of my respondents explained that he was teaching social studies alone because she had interest in history, civics and geography. In contrast to classes taught by one teacher due to interest, in some schools social studies was taught by one teacher because of being forced by the head teachers. In supporting this view, one some of my respondents stated that their head teachers and District Education Board Secretaries (DEBS) dictated them to teach social studies saying that as long as they were trained in any of the component of social studies, they were able to teach social studies because all the components of social studies were social sciences which could be easily be taught as long as one was a trained teacher.

Assessment of learners was differently done according to schools. There were some schools which followed governments direction by giving integrated pieces of assessment. These were done by one teacher, if the class was handled by one person. When asked to explain why an integrated assessment was given to learners, one of the teachers teaching alone a class of social studies highlighted that social studies was one subject. In a scenario where teachers were team-teaching, each teacher prepared his/her questions and then the three parts were put together to make one paper. When it was time to mark, each teacher marked his section and then recorded the marks. The last person to mark the paper added up the marks and put the final grade. Other than making one paper, some teachers prepared assessment separately according to the components of social studies. Moreover, it was also found that in some schools mid-term tests were not integrated whereas end of term tests were. In schools where social studies was taught by one person, the teacher prepared the paper with all the components and then he/she marked it alone.

There were two major challenges encountered in primary and secondary schools due to the introduction of social studies. First, lack of qualified teachers to teach social studies came out prominently as a challenge since the introduction of social studies. It was found that the whole district had no qualified social studies teacher by the time of data collection. Due to lack of qualified teachers to handle social studies, some teachers taught social studies after being forced by their supervisors. Some teachers in schools where social studies was taught by more than one teacher lamented that it is difficult to know who is teaching well and who is not because when social studies results are out results dont come out as components but as one subject. "When learners have done well after the examinations, even teachers who did not do a good job are praise when the truth is that they rode on the backs of those who taught well," said one of my respondents.

The absence of qualified teachers of social studies has not left history at senior level without an impact. Most of the teachers of history at senior level lamented that the children they have been receiving from the junior level since the introduction of social studies have serious challenges of not having a good historical background. Most of the learners were reported to have serious problems such that they could not even manage to mention the parts of an essay. One of the respondents lamented saying that he did not know why government introduced social studies when there were no teachers to teach it. He added that teachers of history have been punished since social studies was introduced because learners who pass through social studies were not fully backed to handle history at senior level.

Furthermore, teachers of history at senior level complained that there was no way primary school teachers could be given to teach junior classes which were supposed to be taught by specialised teachers. The other observation was that some secondary school teachers who were not qualified historian but were forced to teach social studies were destroying the pupils because they did not understand some historical aspects like periodisation which learners needed to know as soon as they went into their junior level classes. Therefore, lack of qualified teachers to handle historical concepts at junior level was found to be a big hindrance towards the performance of learners in history at senior level.

The second major challenge in the teaching and learning of social studies was that some schools did not have relevant teaching materials like books, charts, maps and many more. Schools that had social studies books testified that some of the books they had, especially those published by MK Publishers had inadequate content. The absence of quality teaching and learning aids greatly compromised the standards of education in many schools.

One of the teachers of social studies complained that he didn't know why government could introduce a subject without relevant books. When asked to explain how teaching was done since there were books, she explained that they were encouraged to use the same books they were using for history, civics and geography. According to the [Ministry of Education \(1996\)](#), quality education requires the availability and use of textbooks and other educational materials. Without these aids to the learning process, effective teaching and learning, in the modern sense cannot take place. Suitable materials enable pupils to acquire and apply knowledge, to learn at their own pace and to assess their own progress. The legacy of years of resource starvation has left its mark on schools and teachers.

Academic achievement hinges on the availability of teaching and learning aids. Therefore, the absence of these aids contributed to poor performance of learners who had a social studies background when they were introduced to history at senior level. History requires that learners are exposed to a lot of written literature from an early stage. Due to lack of necessary teaching and learning aids in social studies, it was discovered that learners progress from junior to senior classes without adequate background.

The poor performance of learners in history due to the introduction of social studies at junior level was confirmed through a comparison of senior history examination results of learners who did history and those who did social studies at junior level. It was found that the performance in history at senior level final examinations dropped as soon as the first cohort of learners who did social studies at junior level wrote their final examinations at senior level. Most of the teachers of history attributed the poor performance of learners in history at senior level to lack of qualified teachers and teaching and learning materials in the teaching of social studies.

CONCLUSION, RECOMMENDATIONS AND IMPLICATIONS

This study has examined social studies and the teaching of history in Kabwe District of central Zambia. A number of reasons have been given as to why government introduced social studies in the Zambian curriculum. The implementation and impact of social studies have also been discussed. Through this study, government is urged to ensure that social studies is revisited through a serious consultation with curriculum specialist, teachers, and all the relevant stakeholders. This is cardinal as it will help some stakeholders like teachers and curriculum specialist who did not take an active role in the introduction of social studies to have their input. Moreover, government should encourage colleges and universities to train teachers of social studies who will be deployed to teach the subject as trained subject teachers. Finally, quality books and other teaching materials for social studies should be provided to the schools if good results are to be attained in schools.

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