



(RESEARCH ARTICLE)



## Challenges of implementing social studies curriculum: A case of selected secondary schools in Kafue district of Lusaka Province, Zambia

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### Abstract

**Overview:** The purpose of this study was to examine the challenges that schools are facing in the implementation of the Social Studies curriculum and its effect on learner's academic performance in secondary schools of Kafue district in Lusaka province, Zambia.

**Body of Knowledge:** The study was guided by the following specific objectives: to investigate whether the absence of teachers trained to teach social studies has an effect on implementation of curriculum of social studies in schools; to examine the extent to which absence of teaching and learning materials like text books for social studies affect the academic performance of learners; and to establish measures put in place to mitigate the challenges of curriculum implementation for social studies in schools.

**Methods:** The population of the study comprised head teachers, heads of departments, teachers, DESO officers, and learners. The total target population was 1500. The sample size involved a total of 150 respondents, which was 10% of the target population. A mixed method approach was used in this study in combination with the descriptive survey design. Interviews and questionnaires were used to collect data. Qualitative and Quantitative techniques of data analysis was used, and data was presented on the analytical tools such as tables, figures, charts and software; SPSS.

**Results:** The study established that the major challenges that affected curriculum implementation and influenced learners' academic performance were: absence of trained teachers of the subject, and inadequate teaching/ learning materials, physical facilities and the way the curriculum was being implemented itself. This undermined effectiveness of school administrators and teachers in ensuring there is smooth teaching and learning process in schools which eventually translated to poor academic performance among learners.

**Recommendation:** Ministry of Education should ensure that schools have adequate resources such as textbooks, teaching aids, and technology to support the implementation of the social studies curriculum.

**Keywords:** Academic Performance; Curriculum Implementation; Education; Social Studies; School

### 1. Introduction

Education is the key to the doors of success for most people in Africa and the world at large (Chanda et al, 2023). Junior secondary schools in Zambia serve as a crucial bridge in the educational journey of students, marking a transition from primary to secondary education. These institutions typically cater to students between the ages of 13 and 16, providing

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them with a foundational education that prepares them for more advanced studies. One significant aspect of junior secondary schools in Zambia is their role in offering a comprehensive curriculum that encompasses a broad range of subjects. This curriculum not only focuses on academic subjects such as mathematics, science, languages, and social studies but also includes practical skills training and extracurricular activities. This holistic approach aims to equip students with a well-rounded education that prepares them for future academic pursuits or vocational paths. Moreover, junior secondary schools play a pivotal role in fostering critical thinking skills, creativity, and problem-solving abilities among students. Through interactive teaching methods and experiential learning opportunities, these schools encourage students to engage actively in the learning process and develop the skills necessary to thrive in an increasingly complex and dynamic world (Chanda & Siyunda, 2023). Furthermore, junior secondary schools serve as platforms for promoting inclusivity and equity in education. By providing accessible and affordable education to a diverse range of students, regardless of their socioeconomic background or geographical location, these schools contribute to reducing disparities in educational attainment and empowering individuals to reach their full potential.

Understanding pupil academic performance in secondary schools in Zambia is a multifaceted issue that encompasses various dimensions. Firstly, it serves as a crucial indicator of the effectiveness of the education system in imparting knowledge and skills to students at this foundational stage of their academic journey. The performance of pupils reflects not only their individual abilities but also the quality of teaching, curriculum design, and learning resources available within schools. Furthermore, pupil academic performance carries significant implications for the future prospects of students (Chanda & Mwila, 2023). Success or failure during secondary years can profoundly influence students' educational trajectories, shaping their opportunities for further studies and future career prospects. Thus, a deeper analysis of academic performance can provide insights into the socio-economic dynamics and inequalities prevalent within Zambian society. Moreover, pupil academic performance serves as a yardstick for assessing the effectiveness of education policies and interventions aimed at improving learning outcomes. By examining trends in performance over time and across different demographic groups, policymakers can identify areas of improvement and tailor interventions to address specific challenges faced by students, teachers, and schools. Additionally, pupil academic performance is closely linked to broader societal goals, such as poverty reduction, economic development, and social mobility. A well-educated workforce is essential for driving innovation, fostering economic growth, and reducing inequalities. Therefore, understanding the factors that influence academic performance in junior secondary schools is critical for designing holistic strategies that promote inclusive and sustainable development in Zambia.

Johnson (2010) described social studies as a dynamic process that uses knowledge and skills for greater understanding of self, others, societies, institutions, nations as well as the environment. At its core, Social Studies delves into the past to illuminate the present and guide the future. History provides a narrative of human experiences, showcasing triumphs, conflicts, and cultural evolution. By studying historical events, students gain insight into societal progress, patterns of behavior, and the consequences of human actions. They learn to appreciate diverse perspectives and develop empathy by understanding different cultures and contexts. Geography expands students' horizons beyond borders, exploring the physical and cultural landscapes of the world. Through map reading, spatial analysis, and exploration of natural resources, students grasp the interconnectedness of global systems and appreciate the diversity of environments and cultures. Understanding geographical factors such as climate, topography, and demographics equips students with a holistic perspective on societal development and challenges. Civics empowers students to become active participants in democratic societies (Chanda, 2024). By studying the principles of government, the rule of law, and civic responsibilities, students develop the knowledge and skills necessary for informed citizenship. They learn to analyze political structures, advocate for change, and engage in civil discourse, contributing to the collective well-being of their communities (Chanda, 2023). Economics introduces students to the fundamental principles of production, distribution, and consumption of goods and services. By exploring economic systems, market dynamics, and financial literacy, students develop critical thinking skills essential for navigating complex economic realities. Understanding economic concepts equips students to make informed decisions as consumers, workers, and global citizens. Anthropology enriches Social Studies by examining the cultural diversity and social dynamics of human societies. Through the study of anthropology, students explore the complexities of human behavior, belief systems, and social institutions across time and space. They develop cross-cultural understanding, tolerance, and appreciation for the richness of human heritage, fostering global citizenship and intercultural competence.

Curriculum is a standards-based sequence of planned experiences where students practice and achieve proficiency in content and applied learning skills. It is a central guide for all educators to what is essential for teaching and learning. It is thus, a blueprint used for passing on instructions by the instructor and ensures every learner has access to rigorous academic experiences. It has a structure which is put there to enhance learning on the part of the learner and facilitate instruction on the part of the educator (Adeyemi & Adeyinka, 2002). Learning is a process of bringing about a relatively permanent change in human behaviors. It is quite difficult to measure learning but one such measurement used in today's education spheres are examinations. Moobola & Mulenga (2020), opined that educational reforms were carried

out in Zambia to respond to the needs of society. Therefore, social studies is deemed as a subject that would, apart from fostering critical thinking in learners, also enable them to navigate through varieties of life obstacles which would hinder personal and national development.

Social Studies serves as a vital pillar in school curricula, offering a comprehensive understanding of human society, its structures, and interactions. Through a multifaceted approach, social studies integrate various disciplines such as history, geography, civics, economics, and anthropology, fostering critical thinking and civic engagement among students (Chanda, 2023). Going by the national performance of learners in the junior school examinations with particular reference to social studies, it is highly unlikely that the above stated objective is being met. This is so on account of the poor performance of learners in social studies since its inception. The Examinations Council of Zambia (ECZ) subject analysis showed social studies performed very poorly in 2016 National examinations at junior secondary school level with a pass rate of 39.65% which is even lower than the standardized pass mark of 40% (ECZ 2017). The grade nine external examinations results' analysis summary by ECZ revealed that social studies had the second highest proportion of candidates that failed (74.46%) in the national examinations (ECZ 2019). In the same year, ECZ subject analysis showed that social studies had the lowest performance at 48.53%. Since the inception of the subject "Social Studies", learner performance has been bad going by the ECZ analysis. This is a worry-some development that needs to change as this is not helping the learners nor the nation at all. Something needs to change so that learners start performing as expected.

### **1.1. Statement of the Problem**

The introduction of social studies in schools at junior secondary level seems to have impacted negatively on learner performance if ECZ subject performance analysis is anything to go by. The research aimed at establishing the reason as to why learner performance was generally below expectations and established a number of reasons including the fact that most schools lacked teachers trained to teach Social Studies. Another reason was the fact that social studies is a product of the combination of three subjects (Civics, Geography and History) which resulted in the emergence of a bulk subject called Social Studies which has posed a challenge to both teachers and learners as the teachers generally fail to cover the syllabus adequately and the learners find the subject too bulky to fully comprehend what is taught (Chanda & Siyunda, 2023). This is further supported by learner performance as analyzed by ECZ in their national performance analysis, 2021- 2023. This shows that in terms of quality passes, Social Studies had the lowest percentage of learners that got 75% and above in the last three years: 0.75% in 2023 and the same position in 2021. In the 2023 junior secondary school leaving examinations conducted by ECZ, Social Studies as a subject had an average to good performance with 0.75% learners scoring division one (75% and above), 12.29% got division two (60-74%), 22.05% got division three (50-59%), 27.73% got division four (40-49%) and 36.48% failed (CDC, 2023b). It is evident that learners are performing poorly in social studies as evidenced by the national results in social studies since its inception. Examinations Council of Zambia (ECZ) subject performance analysis showed social studies performed very poorly in the 2016 national examinations with a pass rate of 39.65% which was even lower than the standardized pass mark (ECZ) of 40% (ECZ, 2017).

### **1.2. The Purpose of the Study**

The purpose of this study was to investigate the challenges faced by schools in implementing the social studies curriculum at selected five junior secondary schools in Kafue district of Lusaka province, Zambia.

### **1.3. Research Objectives**

The objectives of the study were to:

- Investigate whether the absence of teachers trained to teach social studies had an effect on implementation of curriculum of social studies in secondary schools of Kafue district.
- Examine the extent to which absence of teaching and learning materials like text books for social studies affect the academic performance of learners in secondary schools of Kafue district.
- Establish measures put in place to mitigate the challenges of curriculum implementation for social studies in secondary schools of Kafue district.

### **1.4. Conceptual Framework**

The implementation of the social studies curriculum at junior secondary schools in Zambia presents various challenges rooted in both systemic and contextual factors. At its core, the conceptual framework addressing these challenges involves a multifaceted approach. Firstly, there's the issue of resource scarcity, encompassing both material resources like textbooks and teaching aids, and human resources, such as trained teachers with a deep understanding of the

curriculum. Additionally, cultural diversity and language barriers within Zambia add complexity to curriculum implementation, necessitating culturally responsive pedagogical approaches and linguistic accommodations. Furthermore, the challenge extends to the alignment of the curriculum with national educational goals and societal needs, requiring continuous evaluation and adaptation (Kanda & Kankum, 2015). Finally, there's the issue of assessment and evaluation methods, ensuring they are fair, inclusive, and reflective of students' diverse backgrounds and learning styles. Addressing these challenges requires collaborative efforts among stakeholders, including policymakers, educators, communities, and students themselves, to foster a supportive and conducive learning environment conducive to the effective implementation of the Social Studies curriculum.

### **1.5. Significance of the Study**

Studying the challenges of implementing the social studies curriculum at junior secondary schools in Zambia is critical for several reasons. Firstly, it sheds light on the effectiveness of educational policies in addressing the needs of students in Zambia. Understanding these challenges can help policymakers and educators make informed decisions to improve the curriculum and teaching methods. Secondly, the study can highlight disparities in access to quality education across different regions of Zambia. By identifying challenges faced by junior secondary schools, researchers can pinpoint areas that require additional resources and support to ensure all students receive a comprehensive education. Moreover, examining the challenges of implementing the social studies curriculum provides insight into broader issues within the Zambian education system, such as teacher training, infrastructure, and resource allocation. Addressing these challenges is crucial for enhancing the overall quality of education in Zambia and promoting socio-economic development. Furthermore, understanding the obstacles faced by educators in teaching social studies can lead to the development of targeted interventions and professional development programs. These initiatives can equip teachers with the necessary skills and resources to effectively deliver the curriculum and engage students in meaningful learning experiences. Additionally, studying the challenges of implementing the social studies curriculum at junior secondary schools in Zambia can contribute to the global discourse on education reform and curriculum development. Lessons learned from Zambia's experience can inform strategies for improving social studies education in other countries facing similar challenges.

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## **2. Research methodology**

### **2.1. Study Design**

A mixed method approach was used in this study in combination with the descriptive survey design. Bell (2013), states that descriptive study regulates and reports the way things are and generally involves assessing attitudes, opinions towards individuals, organizations and procedures. In this regard, descriptive design was used to explore the challenges of implementing social studies curriculum at junior secondary schools in Kafue district.

### **2.2. Research Site**

The study was carried out in Kafue district of Lusaka Province in Zambia at the 5 selected junior secondary schools from which respondents were sampled.

### **2.3. Population, Sample and Sampling Procedure**

The population of the study comprised head teachers, heads of departments, teachers, DESO officers, and learners from the 5 junior secondary schools in Kafue District in Lusaka province. The total target population was 1500. The sample size involved a total of 150 respondents, which was 10% of the target population. The sample included 5 head teachers, one coming from each school, 5 heads of departments, one coming from each school. 15 teachers, 3 coming from each school. 120 learners, 24 coming from each school and 5 DESO officers. The study used both purposive sampling on DESO officers, head teachers, and heads of departments. On the other hand, simple random sampling was used on the teachers and learners.

### **2.4. Data Analysis**

This study used descriptive analysis to analyze the data. Qualitative data for this study was analyzed thematically and this process involved the following steps; transcribing of data, cleaning up the data by identifying important aspects that will be necessary in answering the research questions. On the other hand, the quantitative data was analyzed using the analytical tools such as SPSS, tables, figures and charts.

## 2.5. Ethical Issues

Ethical issues are a very important component to any social research. Social scientists continue to have the freedom to conduct research involving other people in large part, the product of individual and social good-will depends on social scientists acting in ways that are not harmful and are just (Israel & Hay, 2006). This study was in line with the ethical requirements in that participants were not forced to take part but were given an opportunity to make informed and free choice to participate in the study. Issues regarding informed consent were addressed by providing informants with written information pertinent to the nature and purpose of the study. Additionally, the participants' identities were kept anonymous as a way of enhancing confidentiality and privacy.

## 3. Results and discussions

The following findings and discussions were presented according to set research objectives:

### 3.1. Absence of Trained Teachers in Social Studies and Their Effect on The implementation of Social Studies Curriculum in Schools

The absence of trained teachers in social studies poses significant challenges to the effective implementation of the curriculum in Zambian schools. This issue manifests in various ways, ultimately impacting both educators and students alike. Firstly, without adequately trained teachers, there is a lack of expertise in delivering the social studies curriculum effectively. Johnson (2015) says that trained teachers possess the knowledge and pedagogical skills necessary to convey complex concepts in a manner that is understandable and engaging for students. Without this expertise, students may struggle to grasp key principles and ideas, hindering their overall learning experience. Furthermore, the absence of trained teachers may result in inconsistencies in curriculum delivery. Teachers who are not properly trained in social studies may rely on outdated or inadequate teaching methods, materials, and resources. This inconsistency can lead to disparities in the quality of education received by students across different schools and regions, exacerbating educational inequalities.

Additionally, untrained teachers may struggle to adapt the curriculum to suit the needs and interests of their students. Social studies encompass a broad range of topics, including history, geography, civics, and economics, which require nuanced approaches to teaching. Trained teachers are better equipped to tailor their instruction to the diverse learning styles and backgrounds of their students, fostering a more inclusive and engaging learning environment. Moreover, the absence of trained teachers in social studies may impede efforts to promote critical thinking, citizenship, and social responsibility among students. Trained teachers are adept at facilitating discussions, encouraging inquiry, and fostering debate, all of which are essential components of a comprehensive social studies education. Without these skills, students may miss out on opportunities to develop the analytical and civic competencies necessary for active participation in society (Chanda, 2023). The absence of trained teachers in social studies has far-reaching implications for the implementation of the curriculum in Zambian schools. Addressing this issue requires investment in teacher training programs, professional development initiatives, and support systems to ensure that educators have the knowledge, skills, and resources needed to deliver high-quality social studies education to all students. Only through concerted efforts to enhance teacher capacity can Zambia effectively prepare its future generations to be informed, engaged, and responsible members of society.

**Table 1** Heads of Department and Teachers' Responses on Problems Experienced in Schools Due to Absence of Social Studies Teachers

Problems experienced	Heads of department (n=5)				Teachers (n=15)			
	Yes		No		Yes		No	
	F	%	F	%	F	%	F	%
Failure to cover syllabus	4	80.0	1	20.0	22	73.0	8	27.0
Time allocation	5	100	0	0.0	30	100	0	0.0
Marking and setting	3	60.0	2	40.0	30	100	0	0.0
Accountability for results	5	100	0	0.0	20	67.0	10	33.0
Subject taught as three in one	5	100	0	0.0	24	80.0	6	20.0

**Table 2** Learners' Response on Most Common Learning Problems in Social Studies

Common learning problems (n=120)	Yes		No	
	F	%	F	%
Difficult to understand subject	259	86.3	41	13.7
Subject gets bulky	280	93.3	20	6.6
Combining 3 teachers' work confusing	278	92.6	22	7.3
Some teachers not good	150	50.0	150	50.0
Time allocation	295	98.3	5	1.6

Table 2 showed that the learners indicated that the major learning problems among them were the reduced number of periods (98.3%), the subject getting bulky (93.3%), getting confused to combine three teachers work into one (92.6%) and the subject being difficult to understand (86.3). Half the number (50.0%), were of the view that some of the teachers were not good. Other observations mentioned by learners were some teachers missing lessons, some teachers not being dedicated to work and others not enjoying their work. Furthermore, the study sought to determine how this affected academic performance of learners and implementation of the curriculum. Table 4 showed the effects of not having trained teachers of Social Studies on academic performance as reported by the learners.

**Table 3** Learners' Responses on the Effects of Lack of Trained Social Studies Teachers

Effects of lack of trained Social Studies teachers (n=300)	F	%
Poor academic performance	300	100.0
Dislike for Social Studies	150	50.0
Lack of concentration in class	281	93.7
Poor teacher-learner relationships	272	90.7
Truancy	80	26.7

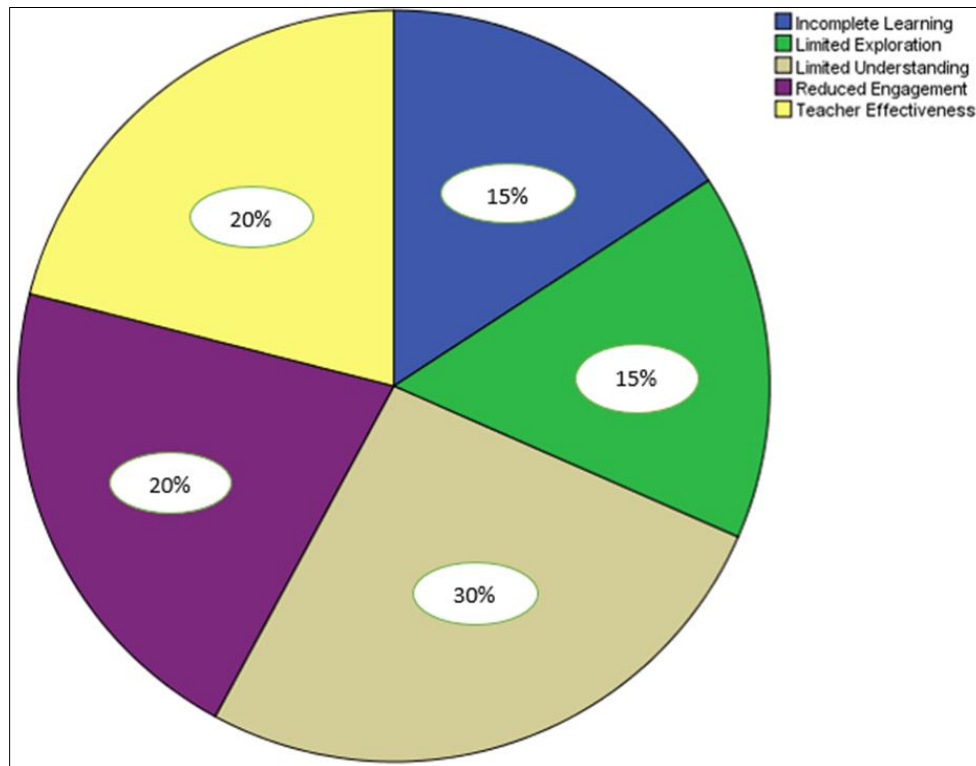
As shown in Table 3, majority of the learners reported that absence of trained Social Studies teachers resulted in poor academic performance (100.0%), lack of concentration in class (93.7%), poor teacher-learner relationships (90.7%), Other effects that were mentioned included; truancy (26.7%) and dislike for Social Studies (50%).

### 3.2. Extent to Which Absence of Teaching and Learning Materials for Social Studies Affect the Academic Performance of Learners in Secondary Schools

The second objective of the study was to establish if absence of teaching and learning materials like text books for social studies affect the performance of learners and implementation of Social Studies at the five selected schools of Kafue district. Chanda (2023a) observed that the success of implementation of a school curriculum and good performance from learners are closely linked to effective teaching and availability of teaching and learning materials. Despite a school having different curriculum materials that can be used in order to facilitate the teaching and learning process, UNESCO (2015) asserted that textbooks are considered as one of the most reliable resources for active and effective learning. Textbooks play an important role in education because of their close relation to the classroom teaching and learning process. If well written, textbooks guide how classroom lessons can be structured with suitable learning activities such as classroom exercises. Teaching and learning materials are important in the implementation of the curriculum at all levels of the education structure. Thus, the role of textbooks in fostering knowledge and relevant skills to the learners cannot be overemphasized. ECZ (2023), observed that textbooks are the main source of information in many developing countries including Zambia. Figure 1 below summarized these findings.

According to findings in table 4, the teacher is the most important resource in the implementation of the curriculum at every level of the education system. He/she is responsible for ensuring that curriculum objectives are achieved. Acknowledging the role of teachers in the implementation of any educational policy, Michael (2007) observed that education is an important tool to unlock and orient the society on how to cope with different aspects of the modern world, but it is the teacher who holds the key. Therefore, it is the teacher who ascertains what happens in the classroom

especially in the social studies classroom. From the observation it can be argued that, effective implementation of any educational programme can only be made possible through teachers who have acquired necessary competencies in terms of knowledge, skills, values and attitudes. This view is maintained by Chukweumeka (2014) in her study, the evaluation of the implementation of the Social Studies curriculum in junior secondary schools in Enugu State, Nigeria. She contended that teacher knowledge of the subject matter and some level of qualification can make a difference in the teachers who teach social studies and most importantly in the implementation of Social Studies curriculum in junior secondary schools.



**Figure 1** Extent to Which Absence of Teaching and Learning Materials for Social Studies Affect the Academic Performance of Learners in Secondary Schools

The absence of teaching and learning materials for social studies can significantly contribute to limited understanding among secondary school learners, consequently impacting their academic performance. This deficiency in instructional resources hampers the effectiveness of teaching methodologies and inhibits comprehensive comprehension of social studies concepts (Hangoma, 2020). Firstly, without adequate materials, educators may resort to traditional lecture-based methods, which often fail to engage students effectively. Visual aids, such as maps, charts, and multimedia resources, are essential for illustrating complex historical events, geographical phenomena, and sociopolitical structures. Without these tools, learners struggle to visualize abstract concepts, hindering their ability to grasp the subject matter fully. Chanda (2024) the absence of teaching and learning materials diminishes opportunities for interactive and experiential learning. Social studies inherently involve the exploration of diverse cultures, historical events, and contemporary issues. Hands-on activities, simulations, and field trips are invaluable for fostering critical thinking and empathy. Without access to materials that facilitate such experiences, students may struggle to contextualize their learning and develop a deeper understanding of societal dynamics.

Furthermore, the lack of materials can lead to a reliance on outdated or incomplete resources, impeding students' ability to access accurate information. Inaccurate or insufficient content can perpetuate misconceptions and reinforce stereotypes, distorting students' perceptions of social phenomena. This limited understanding not only affects academic performance but also undermines the development of informed citizenship and societal awareness. Additionally, the absence of teaching and learning materials exacerbates inequalities in educational outcomes, disproportionately affecting learners from disadvantaged backgrounds. Students in under-resourced schools often face the brunt of inadequate infrastructure and instructional support (Chanda, 2023c). Without access to essential materials, these learners are further marginalized, widening the achievement gap and perpetuating social disparities. The impact of the absence of teaching and learning materials for social studies on the academic performance of secondary school learner's

manifests through limited understanding of key concepts. This deficiency impedes effective teaching and learning processes, inhibits critical thinking skills development, perpetuates inequalities, and compromises the overall quality of education (Hangoma, 2020). Addressing this issue requires concerted efforts to provide educators and students with access to diverse and up-to-date instructional resources, thereby fostering a conducive learning environment for holistic academic growth.

### 3.3. Measures Put in Place to Mitigate the Challenges of Curriculum Implementation for Social Studies in Secondary Schools

The major challenges that influenced learners' academic performance were: absence of trained teachers of Social Studies and inadequacy of teaching/learning materials and physical facilities. The head teachers, heads of department and teachers were asked to indicate how they manage these challenges. Table 5 shows their responses.

**Table 4** Coping Strategies Suggested by Head Teachers on the Implementation Challenges

Coping strategies (n=5)	F	%
Encouraging visits to nearby schools	3	60.0
Seeking CDF partnership in school development projects	3	60.0
Using local materials to make learning materials	2	50.0
Set up double class sessions	2	40.0
Fundraising activities	3	60.0
Acquisition of goods on credit from suppliers	1	20.0
Making budget readjustments	2	50.0
Borrowing some facilities from other schools	5	100.0
Leaving some tasks undone until funds are available	5	100.0
Seeking donor funding	3	60.0
Working on tight budgets	5	100

Table 4 showed that the strategies employed by head teachers to cope with inadequacy and curriculum implementation included working on tight budgets (100%), seeking CDF partnership in development projects (60.0%) like desk making, seeking donor funding (60.0%) and borrowing some facilities from other schools (100%). Other strategies included fundraising, acquisition of goods on credit from suppliers, making budget readjustments, visiting nearby schools and leaving some tasks undone until funds are released by the government.

The teachers and heads of department (HoDs) were also asked as to how they coped with the situation of no trained Social Studies teachers, lack of ideal text books and difficulties in implementation of the curriculum. Table 6 summarized their responses;

Table 5 had a number of suggested solutions to a good number of problems met with in the run to the implementation of the Social Studies curriculum in search for good academic performance from learners the most popular being; encouraging Continuous Professional Development (CPDs) in schools (100%), joining teacher social media groups (100%), attending subject meetings and workshops (97.1%), encouraging visits to nearby schools (85.7%), encouraging holiday and week-end tuitions (82.9%) and using local materials to make teaching materials (80.0%). Others included borrowing some facilities and items from other schools (74.3%), fundraising activities (51.4%) and double class sessions (57.1%).

Moving on, the study also found other strategies which can help implement social studies curriculum in schools. Professional development programs for teachers play a crucial role in enhancing their capacity to deliver the social studies curriculum effectively. Workshops, seminars, and ongoing training sessions should focus on pedagogical approaches, content knowledge, and instructional strategies tailored to the specific needs of social studies education. Teachers need to be equipped with the necessary skills and resources to engage students actively in learning about complex social issues, critical thinking, and inquiry-based learning (Mulemwa & Chanda, 2023). Additionally, providing teachers with adequate instructional resources is essential. Access to textbooks, supplementary materials, multimedia



resources, and technology tools can greatly enhance the quality of instruction and support differentiated learning experiences for students. Schools should invest in building comprehensive libraries, digital databases, and online platforms where teachers can access a wide range of resources aligned with the social studies curriculum.

**Table 5** Coping Strategies Suggested by Heads of Departments (HODs) and Teachers on Implementation Challenges

<b>Coping strategies (n=20)</b>	<b>F</b>	<b>%</b>
Encouraging visits to nearby schools	30	85.7
Using local materials to make learning materials	28	80.0
Set up double class sessions	20	57.1
Fundraising activities	18	51.4
Borrowing some facilities from other schools	26	74.3
Joining social media groups of teachers	35	100.0
Attending subject meetings & workshops	34	97.1
Encouraging cont. professional development. (CPDs)	35	100
Holiday and week-end tuitions	29	82.9

Furthermore, establishing collaborative learning communities among teachers can facilitate the sharing of best practices, lesson planning, and curriculum alignment. Regular meetings, peer observations, and collaborative projects enable educators to collaborate, reflect on their teaching practices, and collectively address challenges related to curriculum implementation (Mufalo et al, 2021). By fostering a culture of collaboration and professional growth, schools can create a supportive environment conducive to effective social studies education. Incorporating interdisciplinary approaches and real-world connections into the social studies curriculum can enhance its relevance and engagement for students. By integrating perspectives from history, geography, economics, civics, and other disciplines, students can develop a holistic understanding of social issues and develop critical thinking skills necessary for active citizenship. Moreover, providing opportunities for students to apply their learning in authentic contexts through community service projects, simulations, debates, and field trips can deepen their understanding and foster civic responsibility. Assessment practices should also be aligned with the objectives of the social studies curriculum and focus on evaluating students' understanding, critical thinking, and analytical skills. Formative assessments, performance tasks, project-based assessments, and alternative assessment methods can provide a more comprehensive picture of students' learning progress and inform instructional decisions (Chanda, 2023b). Moreover, feedback mechanisms should be in place to provide students with constructive feedback and support their ongoing growth and development.

Lastly, fostering parental and community involvement is crucial for the successful implementation of the social studies curriculum. Schools can organize parent workshops, community forums, and outreach programs to involve parents and community members in supporting students' learning experiences. Engaging families and community organizations in discussions about local and global issues can enrich students' learning experiences and cultivate partnerships that extend beyond the classroom (Orodho, 2005). Addressing the challenges of curriculum implementation for social studies in secondary schools requires a coordinated effort involving teachers, administrators, students, parents, and the broader community. By investing in teacher professional development, providing instructional resources, fostering collaboration, integrating interdisciplinary approaches, implementing effective assessment practices, and promoting parental and community involvement, schools can create a supportive environment conducive to meaningful social studies education.

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#### 4. Conclusion

The implementation of social studies curriculum in selected secondary schools in Zambia faces multifaceted challenges, hindering effective delivery of education. Inadequate resources, including textbooks, teaching materials, and technology, present significant hurdles, limiting educators' ability to engage students meaningfully. Moreover, overcrowded classrooms coupled with a shortage of qualified teachers further strain the system, impacting the quality of instruction and individualized attention. Socioeconomic disparities among students exacerbate these challenges, as some lack access to basic amenities, hindering their learning potential. Additionally, the curriculum's relevance and alignment with contemporary societal issues often come into question, highlighting the need for periodic review and

adaptation to reflect current realities. Addressing these challenges necessitates comprehensive reforms, encompassing resource allocation, teacher training, infrastructure development, and curriculum refinement, to ensure equitable and impactful social studies education for all Zambian secondary school students.

### *Recommendations*

The following are actions that should be taken on the basis of the findings of this study:

- Government should invest in comprehensive training programs for social studies teachers. This should not only cover subject matter knowledge but also pedagogical techniques, classroom management strategies, and approaches for engaging students effectively.
- Ministry of Education should ensure that schools have adequate resources such as textbooks, teaching aids, and technology to support the implementation of the social studies curriculum.
- Curriculum developers should recognize the diversity of students' backgrounds and experiences in Zambia and adapt the curriculum to make it relevant and engaging for all learners.
- Government should foster partnerships with local communities, organizations, and experts in social studies-related fields to enrich students' learning experiences.
- Schools should develop comprehensive assessment strategies that go beyond traditional exams to assess students' understanding of social studies concepts and their ability to apply them in real-world contexts.
- Schools should advocate for supportive policies at the national and regional levels that prioritize the importance of social studies education and provide the necessary resources and support for its effective implementation.
- Policy makers and stakeholders should implement a system for ongoing monitoring and evaluation of the social studies curriculum implementation to identify areas of improvement and make necessary adjustments.

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### **Compliance with ethical standards**

#### *Disclosure of conflict of interest*

No conflict of interest to be disclosed.

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