CHALLENGES RELATED TO THE ZAMBIAN HISTORY CURRICULUM

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The value of history to Zambian society is indisputable. A person who does not know their history will have no sense of belonging and hence will have very little motivation to contribute to the well-being of the communities in which they live. According to Simakando, "to an ordinary person who has no historical lenses that can help him or her to appreciate the value of history, it is very difficult to appreciate why history should be taught to learners in Zambia" (Simakando, 2020: 9). It is for this reason that I write on the historical challenges in relation to the Zambian curriculum and see the appreciation of history by both learners and people who value human development.

The history curriculum has tended not to be liked by teachers and learners because it has not been practical. This is because the content is mostly theoretical. For instance, learners are never taken to historical sites where they can appreciate the features that are talked about (like *Ing'ombe Ilede*, the Mumbwa caves, *Isamu pati*, Victoria Falls, etc). This would help learners relate to and subsequently love the subject.

The phrase *Ing'ombe Ilede* is Tonga (one of the tribes in Zambia) and means "a sleeping cow". *Igo'mbe Ilede* is a historical site situated in the Siavonga district of Southern Province of Zambia. It was discovered by J H Chaplin while constructing Lake Kariba in 1960. Among the archaeological remains excavated at *Igo'mbe Ilede* are richly decorated skeletons with Indian glass beads, cloth, cowry shells, *mpande* shells, bracelets, gold, copper crosses and others. Hantobolo (2009b: 18) contends that "*Ing'ombe Ilede* therefore, became a centre of trade. Since many foreign traders visited *Ing'ombe Ilede*, the area developed an extensive network of trading contact with people in the interior of Africa".

Isamu Pati is also a Tonga phrase that means "a big tree". It is a historical site in the Kalomo district of Southern Province, Zambia. It was one of the earliest sites to be discovered, dating back to the early Iron Age. Archaeologists excavated bones of men, sheep, goats, cattle, dogs and chickens. This is one of the historical sites worthy of being visited by learners to help them appreciate history.

Mumbwa caves is a site that yielded artefacts dating from the Mesolithic, Neolithic and Iron Age. The caves are significant in the study of Zambian history because they have helped archaeologists reconstruct the history of prehistoric Africans. It is the length of

human occupation at this site that makes it interesting to study.

The curriculum has not been very inclusive, particularly in terms of the content that is taught in schools. There is some content that has seemingly been left out, and such information will be lost. Historical figures like Adamson Mushala, Captain Solo (Stephen Lungu), Harry Mwanga Nkumbula and Simon Mwansa Kapwepwe are left out. Local history is not prioritised, and learners may not know its importance.

The Mushala rebellion, led by Adamson Mushala, was a significant armed internal rebellion in the history of Zambia, and yet it is not included in the Zambian history curriculum. Miles Larmer and Giacomo Macola (2007: 471) state that "from the mid-1970s to 1990, Zambia experienced one of the most disruptive insurgencies in the history of the country, Adamson Bratson Mushala, the leader of 200 plus rebels organized the only significant armed rebellion against the United National Independent Party (UNIP) government". Adamson Bratson Mushala was a Zambian rebel leader who rebelled against the Zambian government during the rule of the first republican president, Kenneth David Kaunda, and was shot by Zambian Army soldiers in 1982.

Stephen Lungu, commonly known as Captain Solo, was a former Zambian Army captain who, in 1997, together with the late Captain Jack Chiti, attempted a coup d'ětat during the rule of the second republican president of Zambia, Dr Frederick Chiluba. This is rich history that should be included in the curriculum.

Harry Mwanga Nkumbula was one of the nationalist leaders who was involved in the movement for independence of Northern Rhodesia, as Zambia was known until the end of British rule in 1964. Simon Mwansa Kapwepwe was another Zambian politician, an anti-colonialist and author who served as the second vice-president of Zambia from 1967 to 1970.

The history curriculum is Eurocentric and does not show coherence because most writers who document it have a negative approach towards Zambian and African history. This is because some European authors assaulted and doubted Africa's historical heritage; one even went as far as saying Africa had no history. According to Trevor Roper (1963: 871), "Africa had no history prior to European exploration and colonization, but there is only the history of Europeans in Africa. The rest is darkness, her past …". Another European, Hegel (1956: 99), once asserted that "Africa is no historical part of the world, it has no movement or development to exhibit". Europeans took the absence of written records in Africa to mean there was no history in Africa before their arrival and that history only began after they started documenting it. It was written to favour them and not Africans. This calls for more care to have more locals involved in documenting local stories.

The history curriculum is quite bulky, which makes it impossible for the teachers to finish the syllabus within the stipulated time. It covers topics that are somewhat irrelevant, such as the history of Japan, Korea, China and Canada. Learners thus have little interest in the subject. Instead of covering a lot of world history, more local history should be included.

The merging of history at junior secondary with geography and civics to make social studies is a challenge for both teachers and pupils. This is because the curriculum was not revised by reducing topics from each subject to manageable levels that can easily be handled by both pupils and teachers. Simakando (2019: 116) observes that "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". Additionally, there are no teachers who have done a specialised course in social studies. Having teachers of different specialities take up the role of teaching things they never studied makes it difficult for them to deliver to the expectations of the curriculum developers.

There is no further training for history teachers, such as refresher courses on how to deliver their work. Once a history teacher graduates from college, it is unlikely that they will be accorded time and space to interact with others on the multidimensional issues that might ensue. If such a teacher decides not to further their education, chances are that they may be teaching outdated work with a heavy reliance on supplied books. This affects the curriculum in that some teachers may have difficulty in interpreting the curriculum. Simakando (2020: 11) further contends that "when facts are correctly presented by a historian, the readers will have confidence in the writer and finally develop interest in the subject, if the facts are presented to the contrary, people with less interest in history will completely lose it".

Teachers need proper orientation on the curriculum. The competence-based curriculum (that looks at reality and life skills) is difficult for teachers of history to deliver as it does not show the current realities on the ground relating to life skills. History talks about the past, and so it makes it difficult to match with the current undertakings (Zambia Education Curriculum Framework, 2013).

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