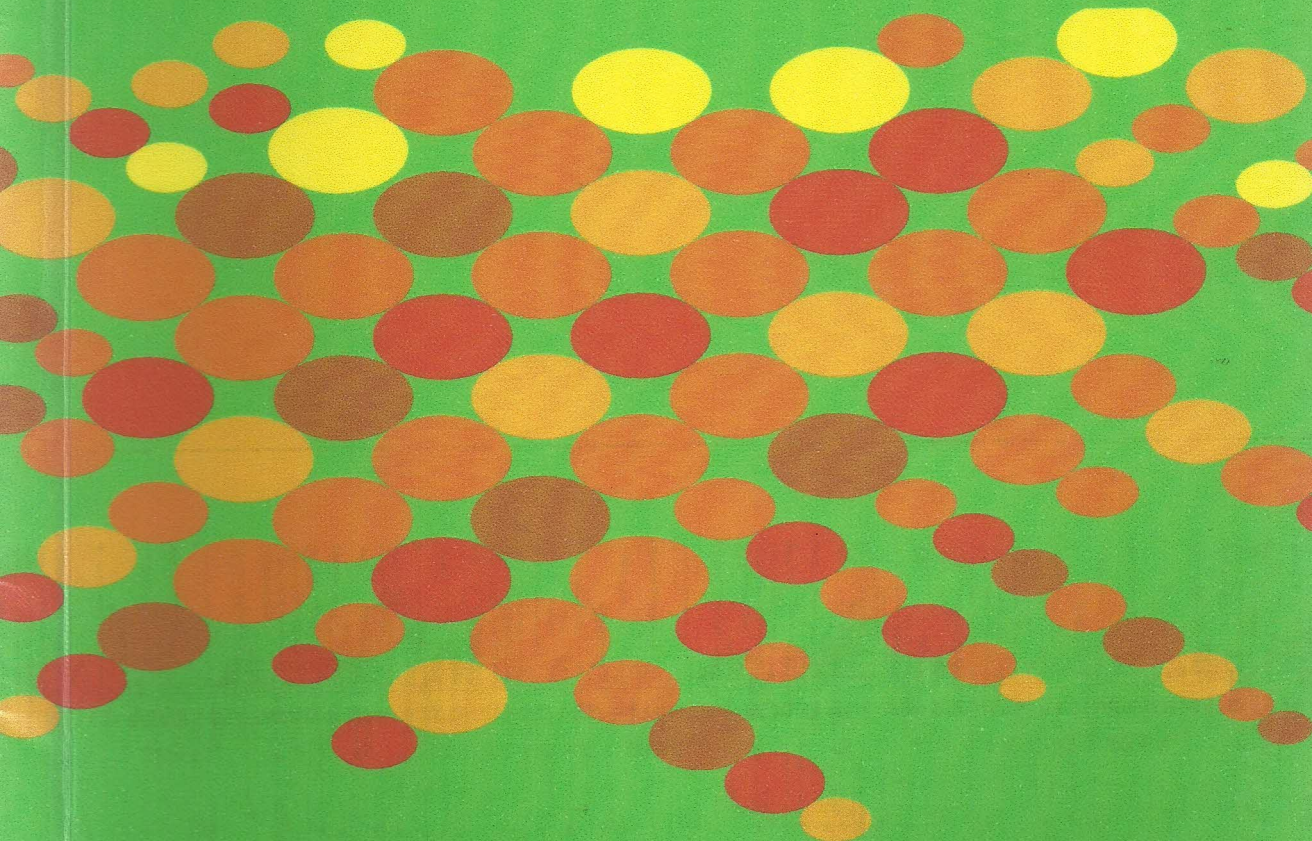


# SELECTED READINGS IN **EDUCATION**

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## CHAPTER 1

# Curriculum Re-Engineering and Development in Zambia: the Sociology of Education in the Face of Globalisation

*Mubita Likando Simamuna and Innocent Mutale Mulenga*

### Abstract

With so many definitions of a curriculum found in the literature, it can be challenging for a novice scholar of education to settle for all-encompassing definitions of curriculum and curriculum development. This chapter commences by giving concise but clear definitions of a curriculum and curriculum development. The authors then link these to the cultural and sociological concerns and demands of Zambian languages. Thereafter, the chapter discusses global and external curriculum influences and then explains how globalisation has influenced curriculum re-engineering. The importance and necessity of considering local needs in the process of curriculum change and reform is what cobbles the chapter.

**Keywords:** Curriculum, Curriculum development, Globalisation

### Introduction

The concept of curriculum is as old as the education system itself (Carl, 1995). This is logical and understood because a curriculum is a means of achieving educational goals. It is a programme that education systems develop and design in order to move learners towards the attainment of a set of educational goals. Ndlovu (1997), points out, however, that the concept of curriculum is in itself broad and comprehensive hence it sometimes lends itself to varied interpretations. The different interpretations that educators and other scholars find themselves making are partly because of their different perceptions,

contexts and conceptions of the curriculum which they experience. It is not the purpose of this chapter to analyse and discuss all the interpretations that have been advanced over the past years because it would be a massive undertaking and moreover skew the focus of this writing away from its intent. However, it would be scholarly important to briefly have a working definition of a curriculum for this chapter.

It is common to find writers and scholars who define curriculum as content. A curriculum defined as content or subject matter is an interesting one because it brings into question another term, namely the 'syllabus,.' A 'syllabus' is usually a summary statement about the content to be taught in a subject, course, or unit, often linked to an external examination. It is typically a list of content areas. A syllabus is clearly a subsection of a curriculum and as such is subsumed within the broader concept of a curriculum. This emphasis on what content is to be taught is a critical element of a syllabus, but a curriculum includes more than this. Characterising curriculum as a subject matter is the most traditional image of curriculum, which depicts it as the combination of subject matter to form a body of content to be taught. Such content is the product of accumulated wisdom, particularly acquired through the traditional academic disciplines. In fact, most teachers, when asked to describe the curriculum, provide a litany of subjects or subject matter taught to learners. A definition by Tanner and Tanner (1975: 12) sheds more light on the understanding of a curriculum as:

...the planned and guided learning experiences, formulated through the systematic construction of knowledge and experiences, under the auspices of the school, for the learner's continuous and wilful growth in personal and social competence. Thus, a curriculum is more than content, which in fact is just one of the elements of a curriculum.

Thus, it would be in order to agree with Print (2007: 16), who defines a curriculum as, 'All the planned learning opportunities offered to learners by the educational institution and the experiences learners encounter when the curriculum is implemented'. From the two definitions of a curriculum, it can be concluded that a curriculum is arrived at through a number of related processes. It is for this reason that Mulenga (2011: 19), defined a curriculum as 'All the selected, organised, integrative, innovative and evaluated educational experiences that are provided to learners consciously or unconsciously under the school authority in order to achieve the designated learning outcomes'. Therefore, based on these definitions, curriculum development is more than just updating subjects, such as replacing 'old' mathematics with 'new' mathematics. It is instead a purposeful and systematic construction of learning experiences and their continual evaluation. It captures all the processes that are necessary to design, implement and evaluate a functional curriculum. Moreover, the development of a national curriculum requires the

consideration of the general educational philosophy, aims of education, and the political ideologies of a particular nation.

In Zambia, the curriculum frameworks and the various national policies of education, such as the *1977 Educational Reforms*, *Focus on Learning of 1992*, and *Educating our Future; National Policy on Education of 1996* are equally indispensable for curriculum definitions, curriculum design, development and implementation. These national documents clearly state the curriculum contents, needs and requirements associated with the expectations of the Zambian society. Bishop (1985), states that a curriculum should be designed in the light of the major trends and developments of society and it should mirror the major social and cultural needs of the society and its learners; in this case reflecting the social and cultural needs of the societies in Zambia. However, it is most unlikely that one can learn the culture of the people whose language he/she can neither speak nor understand. The learning of culture in such incidences will certainly be very difficult and mostly unattainable. Cultural values are usually reflected in the people's language, ethics, social hierarchy, aesthetics, education, law, economics, philosophy and social institutions.

### **Curriculum Implementation and Society's Language Needs**

The current concerns of the Zambian cultures are that most of the younger generation especially those in urban areas do not speak their native languages fluently and some of them do not speak them at all but claim to know English only. If Zambia desires to pass on its traditional culture and native languages to its youth, then it should start with the promotion of its local languages, both in homes and in schools, as traditions are best acquired orally and practically.

How can the curriculum play a role in solving what seems to be a national problem? Does the solution lie in requiring that students select one Zambian language from the seven (Bemba, Lozi, Kaonde, Tonga, Luvale, Lunda and Nyanja that appear in the curriculum), as a compulsory subject from primary onwards, with examinations at grade seven and other levels? These are but a few questions for consideration. Although globalisation influence is intense, its impact would not be so much on the learners if they are exposed to their culture by way of learning local languages in the curriculum.

The Zambian curriculum is quite flexible, as evidenced in its embracing of the teaching of foreign languages both in government and private institutions. For example, since Zambia's political independence in 1964, French has been taught and well attended by Zambian learners of all ages. The reason for this popularity is that many students want to learn French either for social reasons or simply to foster a career. Recently, there have been a number of burgeoning schools for Chinese language to the extent that the University of Zambia has also introduced a bachelor's degree in Chinese language. Additionally, the Chinese language is strongly supported by the Ministry of Education, to the

extent that there is a chance it will become a standard part of the national curriculum. These foreign groups (French and Chinese) are likely to achieve the social and cultural needs of their people. With this in mind, some questions that beg answers include: what impact has the learning of French in Zambian schools upon the Zambian society? What impact will the learning of Chinese have upon the Zambian society? While learning a foreign language is generally a beneficial endeavour, it is nonetheless worth examining why the teaching of a language such as French is given more attention than the local dialects, simply because it is a foreign language. Apparently, the influence of globalisation may have led the Zambian education system to overlook the importance of its own local languages.

From a critical perspective, it can be said that the Zambian curriculum has, in the past, put forth more effort to embrace the learning and teaching of French in schools (though it has been optional) than the learning and teaching of Zambian languages. It is worth mentioning, however, that at the secondary level, Zambian languages have been taught by specialised teachers, as an optional subject. Zambian languages as envisaged in the new curriculum will be taught as core subjects for all learners pursuing a career pathway at the junior secondary level (MESVTEE, 2013: 34).

For a school to offer French as a subject, it will require that they employ teachers who are specially trained to teach the subject, regardless of whether or not they had studied French in school. The Ministry of Education (1996: 47) indicated that, every pupil shall be required to take a local language from Grade 1-4 and may continue to learn a local language as an option subject thereafter. The same initiative has been reaffirmed 16 years later in the new curriculum that was launched in 2013. Among the notable major changes in the 2013 curriculum is the requirement that, from early childhood to Grade 4, the language of instruction in all learning areas would be one of the local languages (*Times of Zambia*, 14<sup>th</sup> February 2013).

However, unlike French and now Chinese, there is no requirement that teachers should participate in specialised language training, prior to teaching any of the Zambian languages, as long as they are Zambians and have studied the local languages in college. The approach taken to teach the Zambian languages is built on the assumption that all Zambian teachers have studied all of the seven main local languages. Therefore, teachers are expected to teach any Zambian language in the primary school context, regardless of the local language in which one is specialised or conversant. Certainly, there are a number of potential issues associated with these minimal requirements. The fact of the matter is that when primary school teachers are deployed and posted to various schools, consideration of which local language one has studied or with which one is conversant with is not taken into consideration. Thus, a teacher who studied Silozi during training may be posted to Kasama where Bemba is the local language. At the primary level of Zambian schools, there is

no specialisation – it is one teacher per class for all subjects. While this is the existing norm, it would be beneficial to try new approaches. Is it not prudent for schools to utilise specialised or conversant teachers in the local language of the area to teach Zambian languages? With the localised curriculum now implemented, can the local residents assist when need arises? If so, are the local residents qualified to teach? The Zambian education system should endeavour to teach Zambian languages with the importance it deserves, just as it is currently doing with the teaching of French and Chinese.

### **The International/Global Influence**

Having discussed the perspective of a Zambian curriculum in respect with Zambian languages, it is obvious that international influence under the concept of globalisation has had some influence regarding foreign language teaching and learning. Much as a curriculum is developed by respective nations in line with their ideologies, international ideologies are likely to be inevitable when a nation like Zambia is part of the global community. Leonard (2003: 383-418), states that, 'Globalisation refers to a complexity of technological and economic factors including the global spread of communication technology networks, and the global interaction of products and labour markets.'

In view of this, Zambia has been caught in several phases of curriculum re-engineering in the effort to meet the global interaction of products and labour markets. This was intended to include some elements or programs, exclusions or entire restructuring of the curriculum. Since 1977, after the first major national curriculum reforms, the Zambian curriculum has not been stable; with some changes being minor while others were major. For example, AIEMS, SHAPE, CHILD-TO-CHILD, PAGE, ROC, NBTL, SITE, PRP, etc. Some of these programs or changes had come and gone under the influence of some donors such as USAID, WORLD BANK, UNICEF and Save the Children Norway.

As noted by Leonard (2003), globalisation includes the global spread of communication technology networks, which Zambia also adopted under *iSchool.zm* e-Learning package. The website reports that it is already established and working in urban and rural schools. This means, however, that only schools with a power supply and internet access are connected to this e-Learning curriculum package. In the meantime, schools without power or internet access are left out of this development. The fact that it is running only in urban and rural schools that can access it, is not ideal for the nation. It will be incumbent upon the Ministry of Education, Science and Vocational Training and Early Education to spearhead the spreading of e-Learning to all rural schools if its impact is to benefit all learners.

Curriculum development and re-engineering traces its way from the independence era. Since independence, Zambia has undertaken six curriculum innovations in primary teacher education namely; Zambia Primary Course

(ZPC), Zambia Basic Education Course (ZBEC), Field-Based Teacher Training Approach (FIBATTA), Zambia Teacher Education Reform Programme (ZATERP), ZATEC (one year residential) course and ZATEC (two years residential) course. It was noted that most of these curriculum innovations had been on experimental basis without a solid philosophical foundation anchored in research (Kalimaposo 2010).

One other development by the Ministry of Education was the introduction of the Basic Education Sub-Sector Investment Programme (BESSIP) from 1999 to 2002, which resulted in the Basic School Curriculum reforms. These reforms were necessitated by the need to solve the long-standing problems in the existing curriculum such as; overloading, compartmentalisation, examination-oriented and inflexibility. The reforms were also an attempt by the government to capture the latest technology, economic, political and social developments of the fast-changing world (MoE, 2003). In response to these reforms, new syllabi were developed with five learning areas which involved integrating the eleven traditional subjects (Mathematics, English, Science, Physical Education, Religious Education, Social Studies, Music, Art, Home Economics, Handwriting and Zambian Languages) into the five following categories: Literacy and Language, Mathematics, Integrated Science, Creative and Technological Studies, Social and Development Studies (MESVTEE, 2013).

In Zambia, curriculum re-engineering has been an ongoing activity. The education system has been incorporating changes, inclusions, exclusions, replacements, and introductions of many curriculum elements with the support of the donors like UNICEF and DANIDA. Kalimaposo (2010: 195), noted that 'Some of the changes introduced in the curriculum by foreign experts did not suit the Zambian situation.' He further stated that the foreign initiated programmes were not sustainable and not compatible with the reality in the classroom, and thus reliance on foreign technical assistance was detrimental in the local contexts. Vevrus (2009) describes these changes and introductions in the classrooms as cultural politics of pedagogy.

Globalisation plays a significant role in curriculum re-engineering and development. *Education for All*, for example, has brought with it implications for the curriculum. *The Education for All* movement is a global commitment to provide quality basic education for all children and youth. This movement was launched at the *World Conference on Education for All in 1990* by UNESCO, UNDP, UNFPA, UNICEF and World Bank in Jomtien, Thailand. Ten years later, with many countries far from having reached this goal, the international community met again in Dakar, Senegal and affirmed their commitment to achieving Education for All by the year 2015 (*Zambia National Commission for UNESCO, 2008*). They identified six key education goals, one of which was improving the quality of education. However, improving the quality of education would not be achieved if the curriculum remained out of context. As stated earlier, globalisation brings in new ideas that influence third world

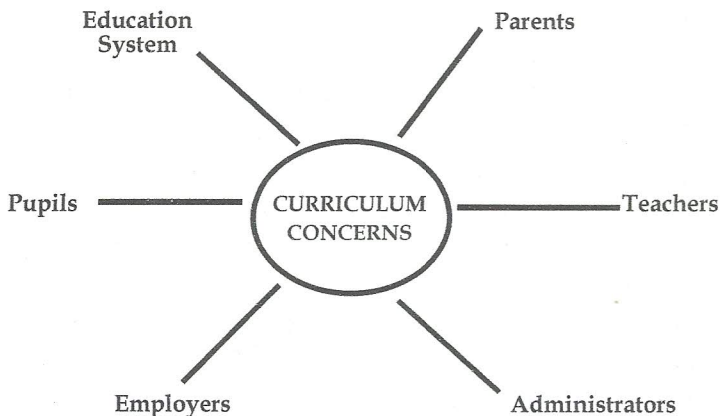
countries like Zambia to adjust their curricular. Universal Declaration, states that everyone has the right to education, education shall be free at least in the elementary and fundamental stages, elementary education shall be made generally available, and higher education shall equally be accessed to all on the basis of merit (*Universal Declaration of Human Rights Article 26*). After this declaration, many newly independent countries embarked on programmes of Universal Primary Education. They did so in response to the demands of the declaration. Thus, most nations expanded their existing educational systems, aimed at enrolling a large number and proportion of the youth population at each level. The dramatic increase in enrolment that followed has brought with it significant problems. Bishop (1985: 40) points out:

The figures hide the vast social waste and human tragedy in the high rate of drop-outs and failures and the large number of costly 'repeaters', and most important, they say nothing about the nature, quality and usefulness of the education received'.

Here globalisation had successfully re-engineered the curriculum of the third world states. Unfortunately, the individual states are left with the task of managing the negative effects of these programmes. Zambia too is a none exceptional case in that its education system has experienced over-enrolment, with up to 80 pupils per classroom. The recommended enrolment per class is 40-45 pupils. The over-enrolment was as a result of the effort made to meet the goals of *Education For All* by the year 2015. As Kelly (1999: 193) has noted, 'The focus of Basic Education must, therefore, be on actual learning acquisition and outcome, rather than exclusively upon enrolment, continued participating in organised programmes and completion of requirements.' An overcrowded class with 80 pupils is likely to result in inadequate learning due to, shortage of classroom space and materials, and the added teaching pressure placed on the teacher.

### **Key Local Curriculum Influences and Drivers**

Much as international forces are inevitable, domestic influences require attention; the curriculum should be developed or changed in order to achieve the objectives of the citizens of the nation. Moreover, curriculum change is a process that should be driven by local needs. The need for change may come from teachers, students, parents, administrators, employers, educational system or a combination of these sources (Kalimaposo, 2010). It is these same sources that are in the ideal position to understand the country's philosophy of education. However, change will not occur without the need being felt.



*Fig. 1: Complex network sources of curriculum determinants*

All the above-stated sources of curriculum concerns, as indicated in Fig 1, form a complex network that can analyse and synthesise its own curriculum and effectively meet the needs of its own nation. It is only when fiscal matters arise that a donor's influence is felt. At this level, the nation loses sight of what it really needs, and entertains the voice of a donor. The nation now creates a loophole for the donor to distort its desired curriculum. What is certain is that donors do not just fund, they bring with them their own ideas to replace the curriculum, or change it to some extent. When all is settled with the donor, the nations' desired curriculum will have been re-designed. The result may not be aligned with the needs of the nation because it is driven by the interests of the donors. Samoff (2007: 502) states that 'To secure funding and to meet aid requirements, African governments and education ministers regularly incorporate into their plans and programmes what they understand the funding agencies to expect.' He further noted that, the analytical challenge is to explore how and why technical assistance agency staff pursue strategies that, though intended to be helpful, limit and undermine educational innovations and reforms in Africa. Receiving countries are instead told that it is safer, prudent and cost-effective to use well-established ways of doing things, including curriculum and pedagogical approaches.

International ideas impact on the nation and its identity undermines the ability to determine its own future. This is supported by Burbules and Torres (2000: 1) when they describe globalisation as:

...primarily meaning the emergence of supranational institutions whose decisions shape and constrain the policy options for any particular nation-state; for others ; 'Globalisation' is primarily a perceived set of changes, a constriction used by state policy makers to inspire support for and suppress opposition to changes because 'greater forces' (global

completion, responses to IMF or World Bank demands, obligations to regional alliances, and so on) leave the nation-state with 'no choice' but to play a set of global rules not of its own making.

The *Zambia National Commission for UNESCO, Annual Report (2009: 14)*, states that:

The United Nations Decade of Education for sustainable Development (2005-2014), for which UNESCO is the lead agency, seeks to integrate the principles, values, and practices of sustainable development into all aspects of education and learning, in order to address the social, economic, cultural and environmental problems we face in the 21st century.

This is one aspect of global involvement in curriculum re-engineering and the global influences on the curriculum have their own merits. For example, Chinnammai (2005), noted that the introduction of technology into the classroom is changing the nature of delivering education to students; and is gradually giving way to a new form of electronic literacy. More programmes and education materials are being made available in electronic form. Teaching and learning materials including students' assignments and projects are generated in electronic age. Zambia can certainly not be left out of this electronic form. It is obvious that globalisation has successfully re-engineered the curriculum to fully embrace ICT in Zambia. It is for this reason that Chinnammai (2005) further stated that, in the 21<sup>st</sup> century, educational systems face the dual challenge of equipping students with the new knowledge, skills and values needed to be competitive in a global market while at the same time producing graduates who are responsible adults, and good citizens both for their country and the world.

## **Conclusion**

In summary, curriculum decisions are thus not about content only or the most effective ways of organising the teaching and learning of the subject matter; curriculum decisions involve a complex network from the grassroots, educators, the community, society, the state and international states. However, curriculum reforms are inevitable in this fast-paced and emerging technological world. Much as we may know that a curriculum is never static, it must not be forgotten that Zambians have various cultural backgrounds. These cultural backgrounds go along with their norms and traditions. However, not all traditions may be desirable, and not all elements of curriculum re-engineering through globalisation are desirable either. The best is to harmonise the two.

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