

# **A Critical Reflection on the loss of the Popularity of History as a Subject among Learners in Secondary Schools in Zambia**

Victoria Silumba

*Kamwala Secondary School, Zambia*

## **ABSTRACT**

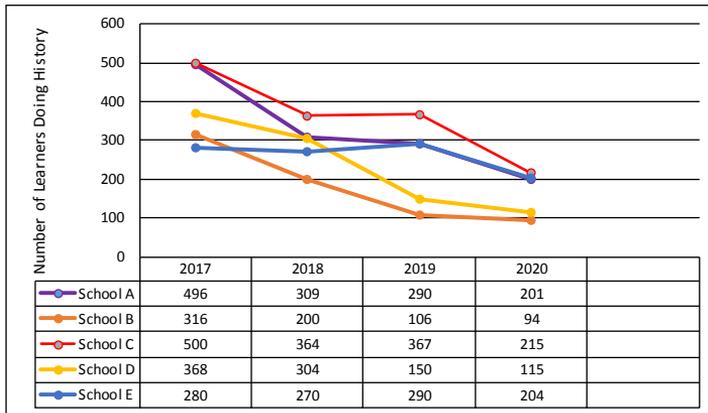
*The current status of history as a subject in most Zambian secondary schools is a cause for concern. There seems to be a loss of popularity of the subject among learners in most Zambian secondary schools. In this theoretical paper the author seeks to bring out some scholarly reflections based on narratives and lived experiences about history as a subject in relation to the loss of its popularity as a subject in secondary schools in Zambia. Using the narrative social construction thematic analysis method the author made scholarly interpretations of the narratives about history as a subject in the Zambian senior secondary school curriculum. In this account the author provides basic education about the significance of teaching and learning history in every society before narrowing in on reasons that may have led to its loss of popularity among learners.*

**Keywords:** history, popularity, teaching, secondary school

## **1.0 INTRODUCTION**

The learning of history in Zambia has been in existence from the pre-colonial days. Before the introduction of formal education by the European Christian missionaries, history had been in existence and was orally taught by the elderly to the younger generations mostly through folktales, music and other forms of art (Boadu, 2016). This form of history helped young people to acquire life skills, values, knowledge and attitudes which sustained and protected the human race from danger, suffering and extinction. It is through the passing on of the rich history of a people from one generation to another that scientific knowledge, culture, social norms and values have been preserved up to this very day. Thus, learning history as it is today in formal education is not something new to the African people and to the Zambian education system. In fact families' historical practices, traditions and norms are still valued and depended on today especially during special occasions such as funerals, weddings and other events which punctuate their existence. Additionally, scholars such as Kabombwe and Mulenga (2019), Chia (2012), Lévesque (2008) and Taylor (2006) have rightly observed that most well organised and functional governments use history as a tool for legitimization. The study of history in formal education does not thus occupy a novel or strange place in the school curriculum in Africa and even across the globe as rightly observed by scholars such as Bob (2011), Yilmaz (2008) and Terry (2012).

At independence, Zambia inherited a British education and the curriculum with a very Eurocentric orientation. However, the 1966 Educational reforms advocated for the Africanisation of the curriculum (MoE, 1966). This saw the revision of the content in the subject leading to the inclusion of topics related to West and East African history. Later on the curriculum included topics from Central and Southern African History. During this time, history was taught right from junior secondary (Grade 8 to 9) to senior secondary school level (Grade 10 to 12) as a compulsory subject (MoE, 1992). In 2013, the curriculum was revised to a competency based one where learners of history were aimed at acquiring historical knowledge, skills and values of understanding historical events. Learners were to acquire skills to evaluate sources of historical information so as to determine their authenticity. However, they seem to be a steady decline in the number of learners in senior secondary schools who are studying History. Five public secondary schools were randomly sampled from five educational zones in Lusaka district and this phenomenon was actually confirmed. Figure 1 shows an analysis of the numbers of learners who sat for the History school certificate leaving examinations over a period of four years from 2017 to 2020 as provided in the Examination Council of Zambia examination registers.



**Figure 1:** Number of learners who sat for History at grade 12 examination in five secondary schools in Lusaka.

History being a study of the past so as to understand the present in order to take right decisions for the future, has come under several attacks as in why students should bother learning about the past which is already gone and forgotten. The lack of appreciation and understanding of history as it is taught in schools makes it seem as though history sometimes takes a “back seat” to other subjects in the curriculum. Fru (2015) argued that the fact that historians do not perform heart transplants, improve and build high ways or arrest criminals that does not make the subject worthless. He further added that in a society that expects tangible benefits of education on people’s lives, it is difficult for some people to see the

value and purpose of history. However, it is important to note that even though the results of history are not tangible and less immediate than those that stem from other disciplines, history is still very valuable and indispensable. Marwick (1970) also added that those who try to argue that history is not important should try to imagine a society in which no one knew any history. Imagination boggles, because it is through the knowledge of history that a society can have knowledge of itself. He further stated that a man without memory and self-knowledge is a man adrift and similarly that a society without a memory and self-knowledge will be a society adrift. The teaching of history promotes the cultivation and promotion of the ethical moral system whether as an individual or a corporate member of society (Marwick, 1970). Sir Charles Firth stated that, not only is history a brunch of learning to be studied for its own sake, but a kind of knowledge which helps man in his daily life to make him wise (Chang'acha, 2011). History is a discipline that cuts across all sectors of life. It involves what people have done and the events of the past. It includes the social, economic, political and religious aspects of life. As earlier mentioned, unfortunately even some people who have been to school seem not to know the value of history and it is from such wrong perceptions that history as a school subject in Zambia has lost popularity in the recent past.

## **2.0 STATEMENT OF THE PROBLEM**

In every education system, what the ministry responsible for education provides for learners to learn in different subjects is all important and vital in contributing to the acquisition of desirable skills, knowledge, values and attitudes so as to promote national development. This is equally true in the case of the History subject that learners in the Zambian secondary school system learn. However, as explained in this paper there seem to be a preference and deliberate promotion of science, technological and mathematics oriented subjects in Zambian secondary schools at the expense of social science oriented subjects such as History. History has in fact been given as an example even in impromptu and television interviews as a subject that has less benefit for learners. This view is misleading and distorted. The challenge that may come with such a position, perceptions and narratives by the society and especially if adopted by learners is that the Zambian education system may lose sight of a very significant discipline in human development such as History. It is for this reason that in this discourse a critical and concise analysis has been done so as to explain from an informed and scholarly point of view why such a position may not be of help for the future of education and development of the Zambian society. Thus in this article the author has tried to briefly explain the purpose of teaching history and then analyse some of the reasons that may have led to the loss of popularity of the history subject.

### **3.0 RESEARCH METHODOLOGY**

The researcher used a narrative analysis research approach which fall in the interpretivism qualitative paradigm. With this approach the researcher was able to use a Social Construction thematic analysis method to interpret and analyse the views and opinions of society about history as a subject of study in schools in Zambia. Narratives have been a ubiquitous feature in the history of humanity as vehicle for transmitting experience and meaning. Freeman and White (1980:5) also spoke of a human ‘inherent inclination to narrativise’ and of a human ‘impulse to narrate’ and it is actually for this reason that Punch (2009:35) argued that, ‘one of the ways human beings make sense of their experience is by casting it in narrative form’ – that is by ordering disparate events, real or imagined, into coherent and plausible stories, or plots, with a beginning, a middle, and an end. Through such inherently selective and interpretative processes of the narrative, people not only make the sense of reality but also as Mumby (1993:4-5) argued construct the social reality that constitutes the lived world of social actors’. Thus this method was used to analyse the narratives that go with the position of history among educational actors in secondary schools. It is these narratives that we believe have has a great influence on the popularity of history as a secondary school subject.

### **4.0 WHY TEACH HISTORY?**

#### ***Personal level***

History nurtures personal and collective identity in a diverse world. The teaching of history to learners enables them to discover their place in time through factual narratives of their families, communities and nation. History promotes an effective mechanism for promoting personal and collective national identity and making of good citizens (Bohnstedt, 1971 and Fumat, 1997). History also present an opportunity to learners to come to know about their countries past freedom and equality struggles, injustices, loss and achievements. Exposing learners to such kind of information therefore makes them to have great respect for their ancestors who took part in the struggles thus instilling a sense of pride and patriotism for their country (Boadu, 2016 and Emordi and Oghi, 2015, Levstik and Barton, 2015). Not long ago some sections of South Africans were involved in xenophobic attacks on African foreigners who had gone to work from that country. In condemning the attacks South Africans were reminded of how their political independence and end to the terrible South African years of apartheid came about as a result of the help they got from other African nations. History was used to remind them of the origin of their freedom they were enjoying at the time. History thus does not only unite nations but also shape the minds of individuals and hence their attitudes and subsequent behaviour. The condemnation of the xenophobic South African attacks for instance are a classical example because those who condemned the attacks further wondered what type of history was taught in South African schools if it

left out how other African countries helped them to disentangle from the yolks of white domination and the evils of apartheid.

### ***Critical Thinking***

Learning history in secondary should be aimed at developing students critical and analytical skills, this will enable learners to develop critical approaches to evidence and arguments (Levstik and Barton, 2015). Learners would acquire the skill to develop contextual understanding and historical perspectives, this would further encourage meaningful engagement with concepts like continuity, change and causation. Scholars of history such as Yilmaz (2008), Giliomee (2010) and Van Eden (2012) all argued that critical thinking can enable young citizens to distinguish facts from opinions, biases, prejudices and unwarranted claims; weigh contrasting evidence, recognize the core of one's argument and its logic along with strength of evidence. Learners would also be able to interpret and communicate complex ideas coherently and get the truth from conflicting perspectives (Emordi and Oghi, 2015).

### ***For Communities***

Teaching history to learners enables them to be good and responsible members of communities they live in. Yilmaz (2008) further stated that history as a term refers not only to what happened in the past but also to the account of past events situations and processes. Therefore, teaching history to learners should enable them to understand the increasing interdependent social world and their place in it. History is the foundation for strong vibrant communities and societies that we live in. The understanding and appreciation of the learners' culture and other people's culture and the cultivation of nationalism and patriotism is also one of the purpose for learning history (Chang'acha 2011, Emordi and Oghi, 2015). Additionally, teaching and learning of history promotes national harmony and unity as it is likely to enable learners appreciate and respect the cultures of other ethnic groups besides their own (Boadu, 2016, Yilmaz, 2008). Other than just respecting other peoples' cultures and living in harmony with each other, learning history may attract talent from those with a strong historical mind to make objects through art which have a historical meaning. The art objects which have historical meaning can sometimes can be a source of income or increase tourism revenue.

### ***For the future***

Learning of History may enable learners to be able to envision the future. History enables one to project the future and make informed decisions as rightly observed by Levstik and Barton (2015) and Soyer and Cagananga (2019). Therefore, weaving history into discussions of contemporary issues clarify differing perspectives and misperceptions and can lead to greater understanding and viable community

solutions. Since the end of 2019 to the time this article was being written, the whole world was ravaged by the threats and grave disruptions of the Corona Virus also known as COVID 19. In the quest for a vaccine and in tracing the origin of the Corona Virus, scientists and the World Health Organization have been refereeing to previous pandemics in trying to understand the dynamics and behaviour of the COVID 19 pandemic. This is the value of history. Learning of history should thus not just be a memorisation of dates and events but a critical analysis of the past so as to find solutions for the present and the future. Additionally, history inspires the youth who are the future leaders because good leadership derives largely from the background of the past leaders. History also provides today's leaders with role models, as they navigate through the complexities of modern life (Emordi and Oghi, 2015). Historical knowledge of a country is important as it helps with the preservation of democracy, by preserving authentic and meaningful documents, artefacts, images, stories and places, so that future generations have a foundation on which to build and know what it means to build. Mulauzi et'al (2014) noted that knowledge of the past is important in resolving wrangles in chiefdoms and nations and can also contribute to peace at all levels in society. The past in issues of governance is important at all levels, thus preservation of information of the past ensures the success and survival of future generations because the past provides the foundation upon which to build on (Mulauzi et'al, 2014). The forgoing is an indication that teaching history to secondary school learners has well thought out intents and motives. This therefore suggests that there is a purpose for the inclusion of history in the school curriculum. Having explained the value of history to learners and the society, what then could have led to the loss of popularity of this subject in *Zambian secondary schools*?

## **5. Reasons that may have led to the loss of popularity of the history subject**

### ***5.1. Wrong Misconceptions about history as held by Society***

Learners' perception of history is sometimes shaped by factors outside the classroom. Such factors include the general perception that history is dull and boring and has little or no relevance to every day existence. Chang'acha (2011) argued that history is considered by some people as a subject of no value and that it cannot provide bread and butter. In the same line of thought, Afolabi (2018) also noted that society is saturated with its belief that science rules the world and therefore history as a subject has been perceived as ancient and cannot add value to the industrialized society although the opposite is actually also correct. Because of such wrong notions commonly held about history some parents and sponsors to the learners tend to discourage them from taking history. These perceptions held about history are an indication that there is limited understanding in the society concerning the value of history (Subbiah, 2018). Other than the wrong notion held by the society regarding history, some teachers of other subjects have also

contributed to the loss of popularity of the history subject by discouraging learners from studying history as a subject. Learners look up to their teachers and they really trust what the teachers say to them, thus the discouragement of learners from taking history by their teachers of other subjects is taken seriously. A study conducted by Wasserman et al (2018) in South Africa titled *Rural learners and the choosing of History as a subject*, concluded that learners were told by their teachers of other subjects that there is no future in history and that if they wanted to have a better future they were better off taking subjects like commerce. This kind of advice given to learners was also noted by Mhlongo, (2013). Additionally, amongst themselves learners are also fond of discouraging each other from taking history. Moreover, studies have also revealed that learners who choose to take history instead of other subjects such as sciences, accounts and commerce are viewed as being weak academically (Wasserman et al, 2018).

It can be noted from the foregoing that the negative notions held by many people about the learning of history also applies to the situation in Zambia. The perception that history is of no value and therefore learners should avoid taking it is worrisome for a country because history is vital for every society and any field of study and it is difficult to imagine a generation which is totally blank of where it comes from and how it has transitioned to reach where it is. In Zambia for instance it is very common to hear parents asking their children and those that they are sponsoring at school as to what they would like to be in future. One of the fields of study that young people would mention is that they would like to be lawyers. Any parent having a child with such an academic ambition would be very proud of their child. But do such parents actually understand that the study of history and historical facts is very significant in Law? Lawyers in practice do not just interpret the law in a vacuum but they base its interpretation on historical facts which are related to the situation they may be looking at. How a judgement was past about some past case has implications on how future cases are handled. Therefore, instead of discouraging young people from studying history what should be discussed is what should be studied in history as a subject and how the subject should be taught for the benefit of learners and society. Berg (2018) noted that knowledge about the past is important in the attempt to understand the present and how it came to be. He further argued that the relationship between the past and the present is reciprocal because the past is intelligible to us only in the light of the present and the present can fully be understood only in the light of the past.

## **5.2. Teachers' Pedagogical Content Knowledge Practice in Teaching History**

As earlier hinted on, teachers of history have also in a way led to the loss of popularity of the subject. A teacher plays an important role in the cultivation of interest in the learners to learn a subject as Zulu and Mulenga (2019), and Mulenga and Lubasi (2019) had rightly shown in their studies. Brooks et al. (1993) actually noted that the more capable the teacher of history, the better the chances of learners

choosing to study history and enjoying it. Berg (2018) argued that one of the effective teaching traits a teacher should have is a unique style of teaching and instructing learners in a classroom. He further added that incorporating humour into the lesson and visibly being passionate and positive about one's subject and how they teach it, is important as it draws learners to the lesson. History being a subject that deals with events of the past, requires a teacher to make history alive, interesting and useful, by so doing learners will be willing to take up the subject. However, some teaching methods employed by some teachers of history have been identified as barriers to the teaching of the subject as Kabombwe and Mulenga (2019) had noted. Berg (2018) mentioned that methods such as lecture where the emphasis is on memorization of dates and facts have led many to conclude that history has little practice value outside of test taking. Boadu (2016) also added that history should not be taught to learners as a mere memorization of facts and dates but it should be presented in a way that shows its relevance to the present and national development; through the achievement of others. In such a way learners are likely to have a sense of patriotism and take pride in their heritage and be able to build it. Renowned historians such as Collingwood as cited in Fru (2015: 71) rightly observed that:

A man who taught history badly, when he was at school, and has never worked at it since, may think there is nothing in it except events and dates and places: so that wherever he can find events and dates and places, he will fancy himself in the presence of history. But anyone who has ever worked intelligently at history knows that it is never about mere events, but about actions that express the thoughts of their agents; and that the framework of dates and places is of value to the historian only because, helping to place each action in its context, it helps him to realize what the thoughts of an agent operating in that context must have been like.

It can be argued from the forgoing that teachers of history should avoid the presentation of history lessons that places emphasis on the memorisation of dates and facts, but instead learners should be taught the skill of being analytical so that they are able to critique different sources of information and thus make correct judgements. Additionally, learners should be helped to link and interpret events of the past to the present. Puteh et'al (2010) actually confirmed that the teaching of history provides opportunities to help learners to acquire skills such as critical thinking and data analysis and avoiding making unbiased judgements about different sources of information that they read.

However, the lecture method is viewed as the most efficient means of teaching history because in some education systems there is too much content to be covered and thus the use of the lecture method helps to catch up with the little time that may be available on the school calendar (Bob, 2011). Additionally, in a study carried out by Stephen (2003) it was reviewed that teachers of history were aware and appreciated the importance of using other teaching methods other than the

lecture method but they felt restrained by the wide scope of the syllabus they were supposed to cover and thus the lecture method seemed to help them cover many topics within the period that was available. However, it is difficult to carry the minds of the learners into the past life and making them appreciate, critique and analyse events using the lecture method. Thus, the use of various teaching methods such as picture study, document analysis and map study can help to bring in a historical mind to the learners and also may assist in clarifying difficult concepts (Mwathwana et. al, 2014). Use of various methods in teaching history can help make learners conscious of a sense of reality in referring to the past life of people. The continued use of the lecture method does not make learners acquire desired skills which they are supposed to have according to the *Zambian Competency based curriculum of 2013*. The competency-based curriculum for Senior Secondary History syllabus for Zambia aims at enabling learners to apply historical knowledge, skills and values to the understanding of historical events; evaluate sources of historical information to determine their authenticity; empowering learners with skills to write reasoned essays on some historical topics; assist learners to evaluate current social, political, economic and cultural challenges with a view to offering possible solutions. (Kabombwe and Mulenga, 2019). Therefore, there is a need to shift the teaching and learning of history because teachers need to know the competences that learners should acquire and focus on ways in which teachers can help learners cultivate those competences (Kabombwe and Mulenga, 2019).

Therefore, the inability to use various methods in teaching history that could enhance the acquisition of the desired competencies has contributed to the loss of popularity of the subject because learners tend to find the subject boring and thus think that the subject is all about memorising events and date. Especially that some of the places the teachers may be referring to are not known to learners, learners may tend to think that all they can do is to memorise them. The inability of some teachers to use various teaching methods also contributes to the poor performance in history which consequently leads to loss of popularity of the subject.

### **5.3. Bulky History Content and Some Irrelevant Topics**

The amount of content that is expected to be covered by secondary school learners of history in Zambia is a source of concern by teachers and learners. This is one of the factors that has led to some learners avoiding choosing history thus leading to the loss of its popularity. Bob (2011) noted with concern that the history syllabus is often overloaded with more topics that could not be covered within the stipulated time. Looking at the amount of content that is supposed to be taught, teachers wonder just how they are supposed to teach all that is prescribed and at the same time learners also wonder how they are supposed to learn and understand all that is prescribed in the syllabus. In Zambia learners taking history at senior secondary school are supposed to study a number of topics in Southern African history, Central African history and European history. Boadu (2016) argued that

the consequences of having too much content in the history syllabus could be twofold: teachers may be compelled to rush through the topics in order to have a superficial coverage of the syllabus or may resort to selective teaching of only a few topics especially those that may be deemed to be examinable which may be taught in depth at the expense of the full coverage of the syllabus. In fact, at the time of writing this article, the history syllabus in Zambia had a lot of content to the extent that teachers could not even manage to practice the selective approach to teaching of only few examinable topics because the new examination format which followed the revision of the curriculum in 2013 in history had a lot of questions from so many topics. The format which followed the 2012 curriculum revision was different from the old type where learners would only choose three questions from paper one and three from paper two. Therefore, the incompleteness of the history syllabus due to its vastness is likely to result in many learners finding it difficult to prepare for the examinations thus they resort to avoiding the subject on the basis that it may be difficult to pass it. Additionally, too much content in the history syllabus is not good because it results in fragmentation of understanding where students acquire knowledge in pieces and are unable to weave what they learn into a coherent and usable picture of the past (Bob, 2011). Terry (2012) similarly observed that the fragmentary, disjointed and unbalanced nature of the history syllabus leaves learners without a coherent 'mental map' of the subject's content. Thus they tend to lose interest in the subject and opt for other subjects.

Furthermore, some of the topics in the history syllabus are irrelevant to the learners and thus having such topics makes them avoid the subject. For instance, it is absolutely not necessary to teach learners topics such as the Balkan wars which have completely nothing to do with countries such as Zambia. As Yilmaz (2008) rightly noted that the history syllabus contains vast amount of information to be taught to learners and that it is neither possible nor sensible to teach learners everything about the subject. He also mentioned that, the need for making a selection based on needs assessment of the topics from among the enormous historical knowledge was inevitable. Topics to be taught in history should be carefully selected by the experts in the area while guided by the curriculum developers as Mulenga (2018) has rightly put it. The significance of the topics selected should be demonstrated by their ability to promote historical thinking skills and to increase their understanding of the social world and their roles in it. Apart from that learners in history are supposed to learn topics that are relevant to their lives and are tailored to their local circumstances. History teachers' voices should be considered in coming up with the history curriculum because teachers' experiences are very important as they are the ones with first hand experiences from the classroom as Mwanza and Mulenga (2018) had explained. Yilmaz (2008) and Mulenga and Mwanza (2019) further argued that the failure by curriculum developers to value the voices and perspectives of teachers in curriculum change and reform is one of the reasons why curriculum implementation has not been effective. Therefore, it can be stated that

the presence of topics which are irrelevant to the Zambian history in the history syllabus has contributed to the loss of popularity of the subject. Learners tend to question why they have to learn certain topics whose content is so alien to them and worse still the lesson mainly focus on the memorisation of facts as earlier mentioned.

#### **5.4. Emphasis on Science, Mathematics and Technology Subjects in Secondary Schools**

The emphasis of natural sciences and technology in schools has led to the loss of popularity of subjects like history. Afolabi (2018) actually noted that in an attempt to catch up with the developing countries in the areas of science and technology, the Nigerian government paid greater attention to the teaching of physics, chemistry, biology and mathematics at the expense of art subjects such as history. Natural sciences and technological subjects are good and important as they equip learners with knowledge and skills they can use to be self-reliant and find employment in society. Scholars such as Carl (2009) have referred to such subjects as “bread and butter subjects” which will enable learners to gain from the world of work. Unemployment has been one of the major challenges in most developing countries such as Zambia and thus parents and guardians would want their children to focus on school subjects that will enable their children get into the world of employment and start helping them once they complete school. In view of this, most parents would be hesitant that their children study history as they perceive it not to be able to make someone get a job. However, this is not always the case because even those who studied science and technological subjects up to tertiary level seem not to get employed. In such cases the problem is not because such learners or graduates were learning history (Emorc and Oghi, 2015). This is an interesting scenario for countries like Zambia where everyone seems to sing praises of the importance of teaching science, mathematics and technology while the country is in reverse gear when it comes to national funding to education and is experiencing an almost collapsing industrial and manufacturing base in the whole country. Zambia heavily depends on imports even for small things which small scale industrial establishments are manufacturing in other countries. From an economic and developmental point of view, the lack of enough manufacturing industries in the country is not that the education system has not prepared citizens with scientific skills and knowledge to run such industries or have a shortage of pilots to run a national airline, or lack scientists to work in research centres but it is because of misplaced investment and national funding priorities. The emphasis on science and technology in developed countries has not obliterated the learning of history. For instance, Canada still offers the history of Canada as a compulsory subject to grades 8 to 10 (Emorc and Oghi, 2015). World class universities in Europe and America have well established and funded historical and archeologically research centres and educational faculties leading the scientific understanding and

discovery of the planet and its past and yet this has not made them scientifically impotent. East and western developed countries have used science and technology to establish modern museums and national achieve centres in most parts of their countries. A little bit of education here would be vital to those who seem to compare subjects and judge them as to which one is important. The importance of a subject must not be viewed on the basis of its comparison with other disciplines. Each subject has its own unique key concepts which contribute to the overall picture of the education and preparation of a learner into a good and productive citizen. Thus, comparing subjects in this way would only be an exercise in futility which may just lead one into irrational conclusions.

Unfortunately in Zambia, the promotion of science and technology in schools has led to questioning the value of subjects like history because its benefits are not immediate and visible according to their measure. Yes, history may not be like the sciences and technology and the fact that its benefits may not be visibly immediate does not mean that it is a worthless subject. The role of history must not be underplayed as it is important in shaping and moulding people and the societies in which we live (Conati, 2015). For instance, people are a result of their history. Learners must be able to understand where they come from if they are to develop an understanding and appreciation of their existence. A greater understanding of the present and where one comes from may lead to more clear understanding of social responsibilities. Carl (2009) argued that history gives an insight and guidelines for future decision making. Furthermore, Conati (2015) illustrated that history is found in every discipline because even in natural sciences history plays an important role. He gave an example of one who may acquire the entirety of the medical knowledge of every kind of sickness and characteristics, but will still have to refer to the historic knowledge of the sick person. Thus, he argued that knowledge is not knowing every kind of sickness, knowledge is the historic knowledge of the sick person.

Therefore, it can be noted that instead of side-lining history in secondary schools due to the emphasis on technology and science, technology can actually be used to enhance the teaching and learning of history and vice versa. For instance, use of visual aids such as films can contribute to the teaching of history. Carl (2009) explained that the correct use of films can contribute to develop learners' creativity and their imagination because it can lead to a greater interest in history by the learners. Technology can actually be used to relive and recreate some of the events learnt in history.

### **5.5. Misinformation by Educational Administrators**

The other reason that may have led to the loss of popularity of the history subject in secondary schools in Zambia is because of the biased, unfounded and misinformation that is spread by some leaders in the administration of education regarding the significance of history as a subject. Some leaders have down played

and trivialised the teaching and learning of history in secondary schools stating that it does not add any value to the society and to the learners. This kind of statements from leaders have not only demoralized teachers of history but have also greatly contributed to the loss of popularity of the subject in secondary schools. Instead of openly bringing down a subject, educational administrators who are actually decision makers should call for curriculum review meetings with curriculum developers, researchers, evaluators and scholars of history and consult and learn from them on how best to select, sequence and assess the subject matter of history that is taught in secondary schools. Prof. Namafe a renowned and accomplished scholar of Environmental Education and Culture in Zambia actually confirmed the position that some people have taken about history as he wrote in the preface of a book by Mkandawire, Simoonga and Monde (2019:ix) that:

Some people have openly said that history is a dead subject and culture is nothing but primitive relics; I say lucky are those who can distinguish gold from ordinary stones. History is people's memory that help them reflect on the past, understand the present and project the future. Without historical memory, man is demoted to the lower animals.

History should not be seen as the reason for underdevelopment as Carl (2009) rightly observed in South Africa that historical amnesia is not a cure for South African problems, it is just another disorder. History is important in every aspect of one's life. For instance, law makers and parliamentarians have always referred to past experiences of scenarios they are presented with. The teaching of history should not therefore be the scapegoat for Zambia's underdevelopment but be seen as part of the solution. It is a known fact that education in Zambia is geared towards highly competitive nationwide examinations which learners need to pass in order to obtain a place in Zambian universities and colleges. This has several implications for history teaching and other subjects, as the examination-driven education is blamed for promoting memorisation and limiting teachers' initiatives and flexibility (Xochelis, 2000). Thus, when looking for solutions to the challenges of an education system such as the Zambian one issues of national examination should be professionally evaluated and not only searching for faults in the nature of subjects.

Additionally, Boon (1988) mentioned that history is important to every society and that a society's identity is a product of many individual's forces and the events that occurred in the past. He therefore regarded history as the collective memory of the past and borrowing the words of an American Philosopher and Novelist he said that "A country without a memory is a country of Madmen". Similarly, Emordi and Oghi (2015: 34) also rightly stated that;

History is the memory of human group experience. If it is forgotten or ignored, we cease in that measure to be human. Without history, we have no knowledge of who we are or how we came to be, like victims of collective amnesia groping in the dark for our identity. It is the events recorded in

history that have generated all the emotions, the values, the ideals that make life meaningful, that have given men something to live for, struggle over, die for. Historical events have created all the basic human groupings – countries, religious classes – and all the loyalties that attach to these.

## **6.0 CONCLUSION**

In this article we have analysed some of the reasons that have led to the loss of popularity of the history subject in secondary schools in Zambia. Overall, it has also been noted from the literature cited that actually this problem is not unique to Zambia but seems to be wide spread in countries in Africa. The main reason seems to be lack of education on the significance of history as an academic subject and the benefits it offers to society. It is for this reason that we would like to conclude this analysis by clearly and concisely reinforcing this point. The Ministry of General Education in Zambia has this in its approved syllabus for history grades 10 to 12 as the intent of teaching history to learners; History as a school subject in Zambia is intended to promote a coherent Afrocentric philosophy of education, enhance an ‘appreciation of the cultural heritage of the nation, foster national unity, moral integrity and mutual responsibility, [and] nurture all-round development of the learners’ (MoE, 2013:6). One then wonders why this clearly focused intention of the subject could have been lost. As a learner during my school days, I never questioned what we were taught through the history textbooks. Whatever was in the textbook was gospel truth and I thought it could not be questioned. However, having studied the subject to a reasonably deeper level I have come to learn and realise that history is not about the memorisation of events and dates. Several scholars have argued that insistence on linear, mono-cultural narratives is not an effective way to educate learners of the 21st century (Mulenga, 2020, Kalmus, 2004). If we are to help future citizens deal with the demands of our interconnected world, contemporary scholarship increasingly emphasises the necessity to educate learners not to merely master names, dates, and events, but to teach them how to think historically and, therefore, how to think critically (Council of Europe, 2010; Levesque, 2008).

Connerton (1989:2-3) suggested that, ‘we experience our present world in a context which is causally connected with past events and objects... we may say that our experiences of the present largely depend upon our knowledge of the past, and that our image of the past commonly serves to legitimate a present social order’. One of the central tasks of the modern state is to create trustworthy, competent and, most of all, loyal citizens with a common identity. States propose several means for accomplishing this task, such as museums, media, the commemoration of national holidays and so forth (Wertch, 2002). However, as Smith (1991) noted, one of the most important institutions the state uses to inculcate national devotion and a distinctive homogeneous culture is a compulsory, standardised, public, mass education system. It is no wonder nations that have learnt this fact invest heavily

in the education of their citizens, and indeed the results have shown in the way such countries have developed to the admiration of others. As such, one of the basic functions of education was, and still is, to create a nation with a common national identity (Smith, 1995). This cannot be achieved with science, business studies, mathematics and technology alone but with a well development and balanced education system which include a holistic and well-rounded curriculum of all subjects including history. From the analysis we can easily conclude that not studying history is likely to leave learners ignorant of themselves, others and of their own origin, future and culture. Such learners are likely to end up inheriting a culture and society; that will be a floating weed on the ocean of nations for in concrete facts, he that rides a lion which leads into the bush, ends up in the lion's stomach.

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